

# Transitioning

A Biblical Understanding of Transgenderism

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# Introduction

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“The uncontested absurdities of today are the accepted slogans of tomorrow. They come to be accepted by degrees, by precedent, by implication, by erosion, by default, by dint of constant pressure on one side and constant retreat on the other—until the day when they are suddenly declared to be the country’s official ideology.”<sup>1</sup> This prescient warning by novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand is exemplified in the world’s acceptance of transgenderism. Today numerous countries are aggressively endeavoring to incorporate transgenderism into their country’s official ideology, and America is no exception. As Americans, we find ourselves on the cusp of being legally required to accept an individual’s personal feelings over objective truth and scientific data. Already, failure to embrace such personal feelings can lead to social ostracism, loss of employment, and discrimination lawsuits. Corporations and political leaders around the world seem determined to impose a celebration of transgenderism upon the people regardless of their preferences and beliefs. However, with this embrace of transgender ideology comes a host of unsettling questions. As an example, Adam Hobbes writes:<sup>2</sup>

“If the legal criteria for a thing’s identity is mere belief on the part of the subject, why shouldn’t a child be allowed to have a romantic relationship with an adult if he believes himself to be an adult as well? Children are too young to make that choice you say? Then why are there transgender children? Surely you can’t argue that a small child ought to be able to take hormones and change their gender (a decision that will have a massive impact on the rest of their lives), yet cannot consent to sex. If feelings are good enough in one case, then why not the other?”

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<sup>1</sup> Rand, *The New Primitive*, “The Cashing-In: The Student ‘Rebellion.’”

<sup>2</sup> Hobbes, “Why We Need to Fight Against Transgender Acceptance.”

The logic under-girding transgender ideology is incompatible with the logic under-girding many societal laws and protections. A crisis of ideology is brewing. Many of our society's most fundamental beliefs are being shaken, and this has given rise to widespread fear and anger. As Christians, we must guard against these feelings. Instead, this could be a prime opportunity for us to share the gospel and to minister to others. Rather than fear this societal change, we should view this as an opportunity to showcase why what we believe about the creation and purpose of mankind is significant in our daily lives. Those who understand the issues can demonstrate how the Bible offers stability and certainty in times of cultural shifting and turmoil. Furthermore, as transgender individuals come out of the closet, we as Christians have opportunity to extend hope and love to an entire community of people who are confused, hurting, and ostracized.

Humility, combined with conviction that is based upon the teaching of the Bible, will be key in our ability to navigate these uncertain times. We do not have simple answers for all of the questions that accompany this transgender ideology, and it is OK to admit this. Dr. Jack Drescher is a psychiatrist who was part of the American Psychiatric Association's work group on gender identity. After an in-depth study of transgenderism, Dr. Drescher admits, "The truth is we actually don't know what it is. Is it a mental disorder or does the cause of gender dysphoria lie somewhere else? We don't know what causes it..."<sup>3</sup> At present, there simply is not enough reliable data to conclusively answer many of the questions associated with transgenderism. Moreover, the Bible does not specifically address transgenderism. As such, there are not always simple answers to these questions. Nevertheless, the Bible does provide us with the principles necessary to evaluate this ideology. Equipped with the unchanging and infallible teaching of the Bible, we do have answers to the key questions under-girding transgenderism. There can be little doubt what God thinks about such behavior.

As Christians, we should equip ourselves with these Biblical principles so that we will not be shaken by pseudo-scientific arguments and emotional appeals, and so that we will be prepared to minister to others. Understand, however, that apart from these Biblical principles, there are no silver bullets that will destroy the transgender argument. Transgenderism is highly resistant to self-definition, choosing instead to rely upon subjective feelings and anecdotal evidence. As such, an argument that is valid for one individual may not be perceived as being valid for another. Furthermore, the chief arguments in favor of transgenderism defy Aristotle's principles of logic. Consequently, it is nearly impossible to create universal arguments against transgenderism. Instead, we as Christians must be so familiar with the teachings of the Bible that we can tailor arguments specific to each individual.

With this in mind, let us embark upon a brief overview of transgenderism. By no means is this book intended to be comprehensive. Instead, we will focus our attention upon what appear to be the chief issues in transgender ideology, as well as the Biblical principles that answer these issues.

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<sup>3</sup> Jayson, "What 'Transgender' Means, and How Society Views It."

## Why Is Sexual Expression Important?

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“**E**x-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty!” splashed across the front pages of *The New York Daily News* in 1952 when George Jorgensen Jr. returned home from a sex-reassignment surgery in Sweden as Christine Jorgensen. Six decades before Caitlyn Jenner, and among the first to undergo such a procedure, Christine Jorgensen was America’s original transgender sweetheart.<sup>4</sup> Crowned Woman of the Year by the Scandinavian Society, she sparked a new phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> In fact, *People Today* stated in 1954, “Next to the recurrent hydrogen bomb headlines, reports of sex changes are becoming the most persistently startling world news.”<sup>6</sup>

King Solomon declared nearly 3,000 years ago that there is nothing new under the sun ([Ecc. 1:9](#)). Certainly, within the United States transgenderism and sex-reassignment procedures are nothing new. Why then is America so obsessed with the transgender community? Furthermore, how is the matter of how a person chooses to present themselves sexually, significant for the Church?

It can be said that 2015 was the year of transgender awareness. In June of 2015, former transgender activist Riki Wilchins announced, “We are at a social inflection point on transgender issues.”<sup>7</sup> *Collins English Dictionary* listed “transgender” as a word of the year, and according to the Human Rights Campaign, “TV shows like *Transparent* and *Sense8* and reality shows like *I am Jazz*, *Becoming Us* and *I Am Cait* have brought transgender people into living rooms across America ...”<sup>8,9</sup> Winning two Golden Globe Awards and five Emmy Awards, *Transparent* made history when Jeffrey Tambor became the first actor to win an Emmy for playing a transgender character, and *Vogue* reports, “After winning a SAG Award for being part of the *Orange Is the New Black* ensemble cast—as well as taking

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<sup>4</sup> Meyerowitz, “America’s Original Transgender Sweetheart.”

<sup>5</sup> Long, “Dec. 1, 1952: Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty.”

<sup>6</sup> Hadjimatheou, “Christine Jorgensen: 60 Years of Sex Change Ops.”

<sup>7</sup> Griggs, “America’s Transgender Moment.”

<sup>8</sup> Williams, “Transgender Named as 2015 Word of the Year.”

<sup>9</sup> Miller, “Best of 2015: Transgender Visibility Continues to Break Down Barriers.”

home a Daytime Creative Arts Emmy—[Laverne] Cox was immortalized as the first trans person to get a wax figure in Madame Tussauds wax museum.”<sup>10, 11</sup>

In the world of print media, Olympic icon, Bruce Jenner, graced the cover of *Vanity Fair* as Caitlyn Jenner in 2015.<sup>12</sup> This was later named cover of the year by The American Society of Magazine Editors.<sup>13</sup> Aydian Dowling, a 28 year-old trans man, was runner-up for the *Men’s Health* fitness cover competition.<sup>14</sup> And a photospread of transgender model Andreja Pejic was featured in *Vogue* magazine’s article, “Has the Fashion Industry Reached a Transgender Turning Point?”<sup>15, 16</sup>

In April of 2015, the Human Rights Campaign reported that two-thirds of Fortune 500 companies offer explicit gender identity non-discrimination protections, and 34% offer transgender-inclusive health care benefits.<sup>17</sup> In August of 2015, the White House appointed its first openly transgender staff member. According to *The Washington Post*, “Freedman-Gurspan ‘demonstrates the kind of leadership this administration champions,’ Valerie Jarrett, senior adviser to President Obama, said in an e-mailed statement confirming the appointment. ‘Her commitment to bettering the lives of transgender Americans – particularly transgender people of color and those in poverty – reflects the values of this administration.’”<sup>18</sup>

The year 2015 was certainly a watershed year for transgender awareness. Similarly, the year 2016 is shaping up to be a watershed year for transgender rights. The Pentagon has announced plans to lift the ban on transgender soldiers in 2016, and within the first ten weeks of the new year, the battle to define transgender rights, religious freedom, and personal privacy resulted in the introduction of nearly 200 legislative bills designed to protect religious organizations, businesses, and citizens from the demands of the LGBT community.<sup>19, 20</sup> Conversely, President Barack Obama’s administration has chosen to interpret laws preventing discrimination on the basis of sex to include all aspects of gender identity. *Think Progress* reports that on May 13, “the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a new rule regarding the implementation of nondiscrimination protections under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). It guarantees that transgender people cannot be denied health care by professionals that receive federal funding, and also that it is discriminatory to refuse them access to transition-related services. ... Notably, the rule does not include a blanket religious exemption for faith-based providers who would prefer not to provide such services because of their religious beliefs.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Taylor, “Why 2015 Was the Year of Trans Visibility.”

<sup>11</sup> Rich, “Transparent’s Emmy Wins Make Two Kinds of History.”

<sup>12</sup> Bissinger, “Caitlyn Jenner: The Full Story.”

<sup>13</sup> Bacardi, “Caitlyn Jenner’s Vanity Fair Issue Named Cover of the Year.”

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, “Why 2015 Was the Year of Trans Visibility.”

<sup>15</sup> Gregory, “Has the Fashion Industry Reached a Transgender Turning Point?”

<sup>16</sup> Griggs, “America’s Transgender Moment.”

<sup>17</sup> Halloran, “Survey Shows Striking Increase in Americans Who Know and Support Transgender People.”

<sup>18</sup> Ohlheiser, “Meet the White House’s First Transgender Staffer.”

<sup>19</sup> Rosenberg, “Pentagon Moves to Allow Transgender People to Serve Openly in the Military.”

<sup>20</sup> Griffin, “The Path Forward on LGBT Equality.”

<sup>21</sup> Ford, “Epic Week for Transgender Rights Expands with Health Care Protections.”

Religious organizations have failed to find refuge since the *Bergefell v. Hodges* Supreme Court ruling in favor of same-sex marriage. In March *The Washington Post* reported:<sup>22</sup>

“

Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal (R) on Monday vetoed a controversial religious liberties bill that had provoked outrage from Hollywood, sports leagues and corporations for what critics said was its discrimination against gay and transgender people. ... Deal's decision comes two weeks after the state legislature passed a bill aimed at shoring up the rights of religious organizations to refuse services that clash with their faith, particularly with regard to same-sex marriage. Deal, who had already expressed discomfort with the measure, came under enormous pressure to veto the bill after the National Football League suggested it might pass over Atlanta for future Super Bowls, and leading Hollywood figures threatened to pull production from the state.

On April 19, the Fourth Federal Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Evan Grimm, a Virginia transgender student who was born female but who wishes to use the boys' high school bathroom. According to *The New York Times*, “[I]t is the first time that a federal appellate court has ruled that Title IX protects the rights of such students to use the bathroom that corresponds with their gender identity.” This ruling stands in conflict with a North Carolina state law prohibiting cities from enacting non-discrimination policies that allow people to use the bathroom corresponding with their gender identity. This law also requires that students in the state's schools use the bathroom and locker room that matches the gender on their birth certificate.<sup>23</sup>

In response to the law, PayPal and Deutsche Bank abandoned expansion plans in North Carolina, popular musicians cancelled performances, and the National Basketball Association threatened to move the 2017 All-Star Game from Charlotte if the law is not changed.<sup>24, 25</sup> Unlike Georgia's Governor Nathan Deal, North Carolina's Governor Pat McCrory has refused to succumb to political and economic pressure. On May 5, the Department of Justice presented North Carolina with an ultimatum: Overturn the state law within three business days or lose billions of dollars in federal funding.<sup>26</sup> According to the Obama administration's interpretation of law, North Carolina's state law violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act which prohibits discrimination against workers on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, and religion.<sup>27</sup> In response, the state's university system announced its intention to defy the governor and state legislature, choosing to act “in compliance with federal law,” but the state chose to file a lawsuit, accusing the federal government of “baseless and blatant overreach” and calling the Justice Department's position a “radical reinterpretation of

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<sup>22</sup> Somashekhar, “Georgia Governor Vetoes Religious Freedom Bill Criticized as Anti-gay.”

<sup>23</sup> Graham, “North Carolina Overturns LGBT-Discrimination Bans.”

<sup>24</sup> Berman, “North Carolina, Justice Dept. Filing Dueling Lawsuits Over Transgender Rights.”

<sup>25</sup> Sterling, “North Carolina, U.S., Square Off Over Transgender Rights.”

<sup>26</sup> Berman, “North Carolina, Justice Dept. Filing Dueling Lawsuits Over Transgender Rights.”

<sup>27</sup> Sterling, “North Carolina, U.S., Square Off Over Transgender Rights.”

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.”<sup>28, 29</sup> The Department of Justice then counter-sued North Carolina. According to *CNN*, “The federal suit also says the state is in violation of Title IX, the Education Acts Amendment of 1972 that bans gender discrimination in education, and the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act that outlaws discrimination on the basis of sex.”<sup>30</sup>

What began as a state issue in North Carolina is now a national issue.<sup>31</sup> The Obama administration is endeavoring to define the transgender community as a protected class. If the Department of Justice succeeds in forcing this interpretation of the Civil Rights Act, then every state in the nation will be required to open bathrooms and locker rooms to anyone who identifies with the gender of those facilities. Failure to comply will result in the withholding of federal funds, and there can be no exemptions for religious organizations. However, defining transgender individuals as a protected class would grant them far more than mere access to bathrooms and locker rooms. As a protected class, Christian business owners and religious organizations would not be permitted to refuse to hire transgender individuals based upon their transgender lifestyle, refuse to officiate wedding ceremonies for transgender individuals, refuse health coverage for sex changes, and a host of additional issues which would compromise their religious and moral convictions.

In addition to the Obama administration’s intervention regarding transgender rights in the military, health care, and North Carolina, the Department of Education issued a “Dear Colleague Letter” on May 13 directing all public schools to allow students to use the bathroom and locker room that corresponds with their gender identity.<sup>32</sup> *The New York Times* reports:<sup>33</sup>

“

A school may not require transgender students to use facilities inconsistent with their gender identity or to use individual-user facilities when other students are not required to do so,” according to the letter ... A school’s obligation under federal law “to ensure nondiscrimination on the basis of sex requires schools to provide transgender students equal access to educational programs and activities even in circumstances in which other students, parents, or community members raise objections or concerns,” the letter states. ... As soon as a child’s parent or legal guardian asserts a gender identity for the student that “differs from previous representations or records,” the letter says, the child is to be treated accordingly – without any requirement for a medical diagnosis or birth certificate to be produced. It says that schools may – but are not required to – provide other restroom and locker room options to students who seek “additional privacy” for whatever reason.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Berman, “North Carolina, Justice Dept. Filing Dueling Lawsuits Over Transgender Rights.”

<sup>30</sup> Sterling, “North Carolina, U.S., Square Off Over Transgender Rights.”

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Cassella, “U.S. Tells Schools to Give Transgender Students Bathroom Rights.”

<sup>33</sup> Hirschfeld, “U.S. Directs Public Schools to Allow Transgender Access to Restrooms.”

Clearly the transgender issue cannot be avoided, and it is not going away. There is no longer any merit to the common challenge, “How will the way a person chooses to present themselves sexually affect you?” Or, as Siobhan Lynch phrased it, “Its *[sic]* not about you ... Its *[sic]* about me. My experience, my reality, my body. How does it hurt for you to humor me, even if you don’t agree and your worldview is based upon a Judeo-Christian one that has erased the allowances for non-binary genders and sexes *[sic]*.”<sup>34</sup>

Regardless of how personal a matter this may be for the transgender individual, it is no longer a private matter. It ceased to be a private matter when the transgender community began lobbying for special rights and privileges. Such requests transform this issue into a public matter, and it is unreasonable to expect that the public will not discuss, critique, debate, and at times oppose an issue and a movement which is seeking to alter such fundamental issues of society and government as the nature of sexual identity. As Carlos Flores notes in his article for The Witherspoon Institute:<sup>35</sup>

“

LGBT activists are actively working to make it the case that the state and private businesses cover “gender-reassignment” surgeries, that men who identify as women be able to use women’s restrooms, that girls who identify as boys be able to play on male sports teams, that we consider it immoral to refer to infants as male or female lest we insidiously impose upon them a “gender” they might not identify with, that we ban therapy to treat gender dysphoria, and that we generally co-opt language and social norms to reflect pernicious falsehoods about the human body.

How a man’s identifying as a woman will personally affect me, you, or John Doe is irrelevant. What is relevant is whether we will make public policy and encourage social norms that reflect the truth about the human person and sexuality, or whether we will obfuscate the truth about such matters and sow the seeds of sexual confusion in future generations for years to come.

Although reliable data is limited, there is reason to believe that the increased awareness and acceptance of gender issues is resulting in an increased number of children who are confused about their sexuality.<sup>36</sup> A *Telegraph* article titled “Rise in Child Transgender Referrals” reports, “The number of children aged 10 or under who have been referred to the NHS because of transgender feelings has more than quadrupled in five years, according to new figures. ... A spokesman said: ‘It is probably fair to say that young people are increasingly interested in exploring gender.’”<sup>37</sup> Likewise, according to a *BBC* article titled “Child Gender Identity Referrals Show Huge Rise in Six Years,”

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<sup>34</sup> Lynch, “Male vs Female: Social Construct or Biological Fact?”

<sup>35</sup> Flores, “The Absurdity of Transgenderism: A Stern but Necessary Critique.”

<sup>36</sup> McKenzie, “Child Gender Identity Referrals Show Huge Rise in Six Years.”

<sup>37</sup> Donnelly, “Rise in Child Transgender Referrals.”

“The Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) said 969 under-18s have been referred in the UK in 2015-16, including nearly 200 aged 12 or under. This compares to just 94 in 2009-2010.”<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, the American College of Pediatricians has released a statement declaring its belief that gender ideology harms children.<sup>39</sup> As gender confusion becomes increasingly accepted and promoted within society, children are more likely to become confused and to embrace a lifestyle that is harmful to their health and well-being. According to the American College of Pediatricians’ statement:<sup>40</sup>

“

Conditioning children into believing that a lifetime of chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex is normal and healthful is child abuse. Endorsing gender discordance as normal via public education and legal policies will confuse children and parents, leading more children to present to “gender clinics” where they will be given puberty-blocking drugs. This, in turn, virtually ensures that they will “choose” a lifetime of carcinogenic and otherwise toxic cross-sex hormones, and likely consider unnecessary surgical mutilation of their healthy body parts as young adults. (emphasis removed)

This rise in sexual confusion is concerning because sexual confusion makes one vulnerable to sexual immorality. The Bible repeatedly condemns sexual immorality as sinful behavior ([Matt. 15:19](#); [Gal. 5:19](#)) in contradiction to God’s will ([1 Thess. 4:13](#)) which results in judgment ([Jude 1:7](#); [Rev. 2:20-22](#)). The Christian is told to flee from sexual immorality in [1 Corinthians 6:18](#), to put to death this carnal impulse in [Colossians 3:5](#), and to refuse to indulge in sexual immorality in [1 Corinthians 10:8](#). The Bible clearly identifies sexual immorality as harmful behavior which is offensive to God, as our Creator.

Although it does not bear the modern title of transgenderism, behavior associated with gender dysphoria is identified in [1 Corinthians 6:9](#) as sexual immorality, “*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God* (NASB).” The word translated “effeminate” is the Greek word *malakoi*, which means “soft to the touch,” and “Figuratively it means effeminate or a person who allows himself to be sexually abused contrary to nature.”<sup>41</sup> Associate professor of theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and expert on Pauline theology and sexual issues in the Bible Dr. Robert Gagnon observes:<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> McKenzie, “Child Gender Identity Referrals Show Huge Rise in Six Years.”

<sup>39</sup> American College of Pediatricians, “Gender Ideology Harms Children.”

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, G#3120, 939.

<sup>42</sup> Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 308-309.

“

In [1 Cor. 6:9](#) *malakoi* are sandwiched in between adulterers (people who commit an act of immoral sexual intercourse) and *arsenokoitai* (people who have something to do with an immoral act of same-sex intercourse). Immoral sexual intercourse, then, would appear to be an identifying mark of the *malakoi*. Furthermore, the epithet “soft” itself suggests males playing the female role in sexual intercourse with other males.

These suppositions are confirmed by reference to the views of another first-century Jew, Philo. Philo twice uses the word *malakia* (“softness, effeminacy,” alongside of the term *anandria*, “unmanliness”) in his discussion of homosexual behavior in *Spec. Laws* 3.37-42 to refer to the behavior of passive homosexual partners (*hoi paschontes*) who cultivate feminine features. He describes men who braid their hair and who use makeup and excessive perfume in an effort to please their male lovers. He does not limit himself here to “call boys”; the effeminate partner could become the active partner’s mistress or even wife. ... Some of these ... Philo says, have mutilated their genitals in a desire to be permanently transformed “into women.” ... Indeed, his critique focuses ... on the deliberate effacement of the masculine stamp by these male-females, first by allowing themselves to be penetrated as women by other men, second by taking the further step of feminizing their appearance. They are those “who, accustoming themselves to be infected with a female disease, drain away both their souls and their bodies, leaving no ember of the male gender to smolder. . . . and with devotion practicing as an art to transform the male nature into female, they do not blush.” The law sentences to death this “male-female (*androgynon*) who counterfeits the coin of nature.”

In [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#), the Apostle Paul teaches that those men who embrace the appearance, behavior, and sexual role of women are committing sexual immorality. Moreover, those who are defined by this behavior—those for whom it is their identity—will not inherit the Kingdom of God. As such, the matter of how an individual chooses to present themselves sexually is of paramount importance. The transgender lifestyle is a lifestyle that prevents people from receiving the transforming salvation of God. Far beyond any social implications, there are eternal consequences to this lifestyle. Fortunately, the Apostle Paul does not conclude his teaching in [verse 10](#). Instead, [1 Corinthians 6:11](#) says, “*And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God*” (emphasis added). Some of the members of the church at Corinth had rejected their biological sex, but God transformed their lives so that they were able to live in accordance with God’s intended plan for them. The incredible teaching of [1 Corinthians chapter six](#) is that God offers every person a new identity in Christ, regardless of their past.

# Discussion Questions

*These questions are intended to stimulate thought and discussion. They are particularly designed for use in Sunday school and small group settings.*

1. Is it surprising to hear that *People Today* stated in 1954, “Next to the recurrent hydrogen bomb headlines, reports of sex changes are becoming the most persistently startling world news”?
  - A. Does this change your thinking about the “phenomena” of sex-reassignment surgery? If so, how?
  - B. Why do you think people continue to be surprised by reports of sex changes if this dominated the news as far back as the 1950s?
2. How significant is it that television shows like *I Am Jazz*, *Becoming Us*, *I Am Cait*, *Sense8*, *Orange Is the New Black*, and *Transparent* are bringing transgender individuals into people’s living rooms?
  - A. How do you think this changes people’s perception of transgenderism?
3. How do you think the events of the year 2015 changed the average person’s thinking regarding transgenderism?
  - A. How do you think the events of the year 2015 changed the Church’s thinking regarding transgenderism?
4. How is it significant that religious organizations have failed to find refuge since the *Bergefell v. Hodges* Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage?
5. Is it appropriate for Hollywood, large corporations, and sports leagues to use their influence to encourage controversial social change?
6. Is it discriminatory to require that individuals use the bathroom and changing facilities which correspond with their biological sex?
  - A. What if the individual has undergone sex-reassignment surgery?
  - B. What if the individual clearly presents as the opposite gender, so it would appear to others that a man walked into the women’s bathroom, or *vice versa*?

7. What are some examples of how defining transgender individuals as a protected class may result in a conflict of interest between providing services and opportunities to transgender individuals and adhering to religious and moral convictions?
  - A. How should Christians respond if forced to choose between following the law and following the Bible?
  - B. Imagine a scenario where a Christian school is unable to prevent, or even to speak against, a student's decision to present themselves as the opposite gender. How would this affect the school's ability to conform all of its instruction and practice to the teaching of the Bible?
8. Can today's Christian ignore or avoid the issue of transgenderism? Why?
9. Should local churches assume that transgender individuals will not seek to join their church? Why?
10. Why is the issue of transgenderism no longer a private matter?
11. Why is it unreasonable to expect that the public will not discuss, critique, debate, and at times oppose an issue and a movement which is seeking to alter such fundamental issues of society and government as the nature of sexual identity?
12. Do you think the increased number of children with transgender feelings is a consequence of greater exposure to transgenderism, or a result of children feeling safer about admitting their feelings?
  - A. Should the increase in the number of children who are confused about their sexual identity change the way we communicate sexual roles with children? If so, how?
13. Do you agree with the American College of Pediatricians that gender ideology harms children?
  - A. Do you agree with the American College of Pediatricians that conditioning children into believing that a lifetime of chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex is normal and healthy is tantamount to child abuse?
14. How does sexual confusion make one vulnerable to sexual immorality?
  - A. What is the consequence of sexual immorality?
15. How is the Christian told to respond to sexual immorality?
  - A. How does a Christian flee sexual immorality when sexual immorality pervades the culture and society?

- B. How can a Christian expect to be culturally relevant if they continually flee sexual immorality in a sexually immoral culture?
  - C. How does a Christian put to death the carnal impulse?
  - D. What is the difference between being exposed to sexual immorality and indulging in sexual immorality?
16. In what way does [1 Corinthians 6:9](#) identify behavior associated with gender dysphoria?
- A. The word translated “effeminate” in [1 Corinthians 6:9](#) is the Greek word *malakoi*, which means “soft to the touch,” and “Figuratively it means effeminate or a person who allows himself to be sexually abused contrary to nature.” In today’s society, could we substitute *malakoi* with gender dysphoria that is acted upon?
17. What does [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#) say is the consequence of those who are identified by their gender dysphoria?
- A. How should this influence the way we as Christians think about transgender individuals?
  - B. How should this influence the way we as Christians speak about transgender individuals?
  - C. How should this influence the way we as Christians speak with transgender individuals?
18. According to [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#), why is the issue of transgenderism of paramount importance?
19. How does [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#) offer hope for those suffering from gender dysphoria?
20. Is anybody beyond the transforming and sanctifying power of Jesus Christ? Why?

## Are Gender & Biological Sex Social Constructions?

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Although transgenderism has long sought refuge amid the acronym LGBT, standing for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender, the transgender community increasingly argues for a distinction between biological sex, sexual preference, and gender. According to a *Time* magazine article titled “The Transgender Tipping Point”, “[S]ex is biological, determined by a baby’s birth anatomy; gender is cultural, a set of behaviors learned through human interaction. ... Sexual preferences, meanwhile, are a separate matter altogether. There is no concrete correlation between a person’s gender identity and sexual interests; a heterosexual woman, for instance, might start living as a man and still be attracted to men. One oft-cited explanation is that sexual orientation determines who you want to go to bed with and gender identity determines what you want to go to bed as.”<sup>43</sup> However, this idea that gender is a social construction independent of one’s biological sex is not limited to the transgender community. According to the World Health Organization’s genomic resource centre, “Sex and gender are both important determinants of health. Biological sex and socially-constructed gender interact to produce differential risks and vulnerability to ill health, and differences in health-seeking behaviour and health outcomes for women and men. (1) ‘Gender’ describes those characteristics of women and men that are largely socially created, while ‘sex’ encompasses those that are biologically determined. However, these terms are often mistakenly used interchangeably in scientific literature, health policy, and legislation.”<sup>44</sup>

Objective standards for determining and defining gender have been largely abandoned. Instead, gender is now widely believed to be a fluid concept that is shaped by one’s culture and social environment. Some even go so far as to claim that biological sex is also a social construction.<sup>45</sup> According to The Feminist Agenda blog, “A social construction is something that doesn’t exist independently in the “natural” world, but is instead an invention of society. Cultural

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<sup>43</sup> Steinmetz, “The Transgender Tipping Point: America’s Next Civil Rights Frontier,” 40.

<sup>44</sup> World Health Organization. “Introduction: Genetics and Gender Mainstreaming.”

<sup>45</sup> Mey, “It’s Time for People to Stop Using the Social Construct of ‘Biological Sex’ to Defend Their Transmisogyny.”

practices and norms give rise to the existence of social constructs and govern the practices, customs, and rules concerning the way we use/view/understand them. In other words, we all act as if they exist, and because of our intersubjective agreement, they do.”<sup>46</sup>

This concept of gender and biological sex as being social constructions traces its origins to the feminist movement. In an article for the Population Research Institute, Babette Francis explains:

“

Liberal feminists of the '60s, or what Christina Hoff Sommers, author of *Who Stole Feminism*, refers to as “equity feminists,” believed that women should have as much freedom and opportunity as men and that discriminatory laws should be eliminated. However, within a decade, liberal feminism was overtaken by the far more radical “gender feminism,” which, building on Marxist ideology, requires the elimination not only of economic classes but of sex classes, i.e. the division of humans into male and female.

Hence the substitution of the word “gender” for sex. “Gender” is primarily a grammatical term, which may be determined by a distinguishing characteristic, i.e. sex, but gender can also be arbitrary like the gender of some nouns in Spanish and French – “table” in Spanish is feminine (la mesa), in French it is masculine (le table). This malleable view of gender and the expansion from two sexes to five genders was most clearly expressed in the writings of Marta Llama at the Regional Conference and Non-Government Organisations Forum (prelude to the U.N.'s 1995 Beijing Conference on Women) in Argentina, in September 1994. According to Llama:

Biology shows that outwardly human beings can be divided into two sexes; nevertheless, there are more combinations that result from the five physiological areas which ... determine what is called the biological sex of a person: genes, hormones, gonads, internal reproductive organs and external reproductive organs .... a quick but somewhat insufficient classification of these combinations obliges us to recognize at least five biological sexes .... our dichotomy man/woman, more than a biological reality, is a symbolic and cultural reality.

According to Llama man/woman, masculine/feminine are merely cultural constructions, and thinking that heterosexuality is the “natural” sexuality is only another “example of a ‘biological’ social construction.” At the U.N. World Conference on Women in 1995, feminists claimed that the sexuality of multiple genders found expression as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual, hermaphrodite, transvestite and transgendered, the latter group being further sub-divided into those who were awaiting surgery, those who had surgery, and those who had surgery but now wished to revert back to their original condition.

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<sup>46</sup> “The Social Construction of Gender.”

The views of Llama and other gender feminists has dominated the United Nations agencies for the past decade, requiring the U.N. and member States to “mainstream the gender perspective” in all documents and Plans of Action. According to a booklet published by the UN International Research & Training Institute for the Advancement of Women:

To adopt a gender perspective is .... to distinguish between what is natural and biological and what is socially and culturally constructed, and in the process to re-negotiate the boundaries between the natural – and hence relatively inflexible – and the social – and hence relatively transformable.

This radical re-orientation of sex has been aggressively promoted by governments around the world for decades. Caroline Moser notes, “In 1997 the UN adopted gender mainstreaming as the approach to be used in all policies and programmes [sic] in the UN system, while governments and civil society organisations [sic] across the world sought to implement the PFA [Beijing Platform for Action] by developing gender mainstreaming policies, strategies and methodologies.”<sup>47</sup> And there has been little toleration for countries who do not conform to this perspective of gender. Founder of Endeavour Forum Babette Francis, recounts that during the 2000 Beijing+5 United Nations Women’s Conference:<sup>48</sup>

“

[W]e discovered that the policy was not so much the promotion of a unisex society as the promotion of multiple genders: they were lobbying for five genders: male, female, asexual, transsexual, and hermaphrodite. The situation reached high drama at a session of the Commission on the Status of Women when the development agencies of the Scandinavian countries threatened to withhold development money from Nicaragua unless the Nicaraguan government sacked the head of its delegation, Max Padilla, from his then-Cabinet post as Minister for the Family.

His offense, ongoing from the 1999 International Conference on Population and Development in New York, was to refuse to accept the European Union definition of “gender” as an arbitrary social construct which could include several “genders.” He insisted that “gender” be defined in its common meaning of two sexes, male and female. The hapless Mr. Padilla was duly recalled ...

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<sup>47</sup> Moser, “Gender Planning and Development,” 16.

<sup>48</sup> Eagle Forum, “The Deconstruction of Gender.”

Today even the notion of there being five genders appears radically confining. In 2014, Facebook users were given the opportunity to select one of 50 gender options when creating their profile.<sup>49</sup> A few months later, Facebook worked with United Kingdom activist groups Press for Change and Gendered Intelligence to add 21 new gender options to this list.<sup>50</sup> With the removal of objective standards for determining gender, anyone is now capable of creating a new gender label based solely upon their personal feelings and preferences at the time. This is why by January of 2016, individuals on the popular microblog Tumblr had self-identified 325 distinct genders.<sup>51</sup>

This ever-expanding gender continuum only exists where there is a vacuum of objective standards for determining truth. In contrast, there is a growing body of scientific literature affirming both a gender binary and universal distinctions between these human males and females. Numerous scientific studies exist, such as: “Sociosexuality from Argentina to Zimbabwe: A 48-nation study of sex, culture, and strategies of human mating,” “Gender Differences in Personalities Across Cultures: Robust and Surprising Findings,” “A Cross-Cultural Analysis of the Behavior of Women and Men: Implications for the Origins of Sex Differences,” and “Universal Sex Differences in the Desire for Sexual Variety: Tests from 52 Nations, 6 Continents, and 13 Islands.” These studies consistently report that gender distinctions fall into two categories—male and female—and they are universal distinctions rather than social constructions. According to the abstract for the paper “The Persistence of Gender Stereotypes in the Face of Changing Sex Roles”:<sup>52</sup>

“

Prevailing explanations for gender differences rest upon the sociocultural model, which treats personality as a consequence of socialization for social roles. Though sex roles and attitudes toward them have changed dramatically in the United States over the past three decades, a review of 18 longitudinal studies of gender stereotypes and self-ratings shows stability in perceptions of sex-typed personality traits. Our study of 3600 students surveyed in six waves from 1974 to 1991 also shows stability and even a slight increase in sex typing. This accumulating evidence is inconsistent with the sociocultural explanation. It is more consistent with the currently emerging sociobiological research that holds gender differences reflect innate differences between the sexes resulting from their different reproductive strategies. We conclude that valid social psychological explanations for gendered personality traits cannot rest upon sociocultural models alone but must include interaction of this unchanging genetic underlay with changeable social structures and processes.

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<sup>49</sup> Sparks, “Facebook Sex Changes: Which One of 50 Genders Are You?”

<sup>50</sup> Williams, “Facebook’s 71 Gender Options Come to UK Users.”

<sup>51</sup> STSAdmin, “Complete List of Tumblr Genders (SO FAR).”

<sup>52</sup> Lueptow, *et al.*, “The Persistence of Gender Stereotypes in the Face of Changing Gender Roles: Evidence Contrary to the Sociocultural Model.”

In their book *Brain Sex: The Real Difference Between Men and Women*, Anne Moir and David Jessell write, “There has seldom been a greater divide between what intelligent, enlightened opinion presumes – that men and women have the same brain – and what science knows – that they do not.”<sup>53</sup> They also write, “It is time to cease the vain contention that men and women [from a biological sense] are created the same. They were not and no amount of idealism or Utopian fantasy can alter that fact. ... The truth is that virtually every professional scientist ... has concluded that the brains of men and women are different.”<sup>54</sup> In keeping with this assessment, Simon Baron-Cohen concludes in his book *The Essential Difference*, “The female brain is predominantly hard-wired for empathy. The male brain is predominantly hard-wired for understanding and building systems.”<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, the idea of a gender spectrum has been embraced by societies and countries around the world. This is the natural byproduct of a culture that has embraced the post-modern rejection of universal truth, choosing to believe that we are nothing more than a cosmic accident. However, we as Christians stand apart from our culture in that we accept the Bible to be God’s unchanging standard for truth and the foundation for our purpose in life. What then does the Bible have to say regarding gender and biological sex?

Similar to the scientific studies, the Bible does not distinguish between one’s biological sex and one’s gender. Instead, these are inextricably linked together. [Genesis 1:27](#) teaches, “*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*” The Hebrew word translated as “man” is *adam* and means “humanity,” or “mankind.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, [Genesis 1:27](#) reveals that God made mankind in His own image, and mankind was created as consisting of two categories—male and female.

“Male” in [Genesis 1:27](#) is the Hebrew word *zakar* which, according to *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, is “A masculine noun indicating a man, male, human. It indicates a person as male as opposed to female ([Gen. 1:27](#); [Lev. 18:22](#)). ... In its collective and plural forms, it denotes men ([Ex. 13:12](#); [Judg. 21:11](#); [1 Kgs. 11:15](#)).”<sup>57</sup> Likewise, “female” is the Hebrew word *neqebah* which is simply “A feminine noun meaning female.”<sup>58</sup> According to [Genesis 1:27](#), God created mankind, and these human beings are subdivided into two distinct categories—male and female.

It is conceivable that one could claim [Genesis 1:27](#) is speaking only of biological sex, if taken in isolation; however, this creative act of God is expounded upon in [Genesis 2:18–23](#):

“

*Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of*

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<sup>53</sup> Anne Moir and David Jessell, *Brain Sex: The Real Difference Between Men and Women* (1991), 5, Source: Family Research Council, “The Scientific Objectivity and Universality of Gender Difference.”

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Simon Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference* (Basic Books, 2003), 1, Source: Family Research Council, “The Scientific Objectivity and Universality of Gender Difference.”

<sup>56</sup> Baker, *et al.*, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, H#121, 16.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, H#2145, 290.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, H#5347, 751.

*the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."*

The reason God created a second category of human being was not simply for sexual purposes—meaning for pleasure and reproduction. Instead, God sought to create someone who could help Adam in accomplishing his divine mandate. In English, this word *neged* is often translated as a “fit,” “meet,” or “suitable,” helper, but it means “counterpart,” or “one who corresponds to but is opposite from.”<sup>59</sup> In other words, God determined to make a helper for Adam who corresponded with Adam—one who was a human being—but who was also opposite from Adam—one who did not have the same tendencies, strengths, or physical features as Adam. To accomplish this, God removed a piece of Adam’s sacred architecture (something we will examine in another chapter)—part of his side, or rib—and from this sacred piece, God created Adam’s counterpart. It is only after this act that the Genesis account begins to refer to Adam in terms of gender.<sup>60</sup> In [Genesis 2:23](#), Adam declares himself to be an *iys*, a man, and his counterpart to be *issah*, a woman, “*Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’*”

At this point, gender is established, and new words are chosen to describe male and female. Adam names his counterpart *issah* which is “A feminine noun meaning woman, wife, or female.”<sup>61</sup> She is not merely a biologically distinct individual, a female, she is also his counterpart—a woman and, for Adam, a wife. Likewise, Adam names himself *iys* which means “a man, to be strong, firm.”<sup>62</sup> Inherent in these titles is the individual’s biological sex. However, these titles encompass far more than merely one’s biological sex—they also encompass the individual’s gender and its accompanying role.

This concept of gender as being counterparts unto each other for the purpose of accomplishing mankind’s divine mandate is pictured throughout the Bible. Men are uniquely equipped physically and emotionally to accomplish specific roles, as are women, and together the two genders can accomplish far more than they could ever hope to accomplish individually. Although the Bible presents men and women as being equal in value, the Bible never presents the two as being equal in purpose and function. The reality of distinct gender roles is perhaps most clearly portrayed in [Ephesians 5:22-33](#) where the gender roles in marriage are presented as an illustration of the Church’s relationship with Jesus Christ.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, H#5048, 704.

<sup>60</sup> Jim Garlow, “Robert Gagnon: The Bible & Homosexual Practice - The Old Testament - Genesis 1 & 2.”

<sup>61</sup> Baker, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, H#802, 104.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, H#376, 46.

Gender and biological sex are not social constructions. Gender, and its accompanying gender roles, exists because mankind has a unique purpose and responsibility before God. Just as God lives in relationship within the Trinity, so also God chose that mankind should image Himself by accomplishing its mission through two distinct sexes/genders living in relationship with one another. As such, God created two sexes/genders—male/man and female/woman—who are distinct from one another both physically and emotionally.

# Discussion Questions

*These questions are intended to stimulate thought and discussion. They are particularly designed for use in Sunday school and small group settings.*

1. How does the transgender community distinguish between biological sex and gender?
  - A. If gender and biological sex are distinct, and if they can be in conflict with each other, then how should we determine which is superior to the other?
2. How is gender said to be shaped by one's culture and social environment?
  - A. What is a social construction?
  - B. Do you agree that gender is a social construction? Why?
  - C. Do you agree that biological sex is a social construction? Why?
  - D. If a social construction is something that doesn't exist independently in the "natural" world but is instead an invention of society, and if biological sex is a social construction, then would there be no such thing as male or female in the "natural" world if there were no social customs? Obviously this does not match our reality, so why are people intent on defining biological sex as a social construction?
3. From where does the idea that gender and biological sex are social constructions originate?
  - A. What is the difference between "equity feminism" and "gender feminism"?
  - B. How is the idea that gender is a social construction an integral part of the transgender argument?
  - C. How is the idea that biological is a social construction an integral part of the transgender argument?
4. How can there be 325 (and growing) distinct self-identified genders?
  - A. What is the basis for distinguishing between genders?
  - B. Why is it that this ever-expanding gender continuum only exists where there is a vacuum of objective standards for determining truth?

5. How should the growing body of scientific literature affirming both a gender binary and universal distinctions between males and females influence our discussion about what constitutes gender?
  - A. Do universal distinctions between males and females disprove the idea that gender is a social construction? Why?
6. As Christians, how should we reconcile the fact that sometimes the Bible and scientific studies appear to contradict one another?
  - A. Have scientific studies proven to be a consistent (unchanging) standard for determining truth over the years? Why?
  - B. How does believing the Bible to be our unchanging standard for determining truth set us as Christians apart from our culture?
7. Why did God create 2 genders?
  - A. If God created woman as a suitable counterpart for Adam, why is it significant that God did not create a third gender?
  - B. Why does gender and its accompanying roles exist?
8. How is gender a reflection of the image of God?
  - A. If the 3 Persons of the Trinity are equal in value but not in function and responsibility, does it follow that the male and female imagers of God should likewise be equal in value but not in function and responsibility? Why?
  - B. What does gender teach us about our purpose in life?
9. How does eliminating gender roles compromise the Bible's illustration of the Church's relationship with Jesus Christ in Ephesians 5:22-33?
10. Do we as Christian men and women embrace our gender roles, or are we abdicating them? In what way?
  - A. How is abdicating our God-given gender roles any better than denying our gender altogether?

## Do Intersex Individuals Disprove the Gender Binary?

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“She might have the physical attributes of a woman but Jennifer Pagonis was in fact born intersex, meaning she is genetically male and has the reproductive organs to match.”<sup>63</sup> This was the opening sentence in a *Daily Mail* article titled “I Exist in the Gray’.” Pagonis was born with a rare genetic condition called Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome. The article explains, “Androgen insensitivity syndrome (AIS) is when a person who is genetically male (who has one X and one Y chromosome) is resistant to male hormones (called androgens). As a result, the person has some or all of the physical traits of a woman, but the genetic makeup of a man.”<sup>64</sup> The Intersex Society of North America further explains:<sup>65</sup>

“In an individual with complete AIS and karyotype 46 XY, testes develop during gestation. The fetal testes produce mullerian inhibiting hormone (MIH) and testosterone. As in typical male fetuses, the MIH causes the fetal mullerian ducts to regress, so the fetus lacks uterus, fallopian tubes, and cervix plus upper part of vagina. However, because cells fail to respond to testosterone, the genitals differentiate in the female, rather than the male pattern ... The newborn AIS infant has genitals of normal female appearance, undescended or partially descended testes, and usually a short vagina with no cervix. Occasionally the vagina is nearly absent.

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<sup>63</sup> Whitelocks, “I Exist in the Gray’: 29-Year Old Who Looks Like a Woman but Has Male Genitalia Speaks Out About Rare Intersex Condition.”

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Intersex Society of North America, “Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS).”

The reality of intersex individuals is commonly presented as evidence refuting a gender binary and a universal definition of biological sex. According to an article titled “It’s Time for People to Stop Using the Social Construct of ‘Biological Sex’ to Defend Their Transmisogyny”:<sup>66</sup>

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Since “biological sex” is actually a social construct, those who say that it is not often have to argue about what it entails. Some say it’s based on chromosomes (of which there are many non-XX/XY combinations, as well as diversity among people with XY chromosomes), others say it’s genitals or gonads (either at birth or at the moment you’re talking about), others say it’s hormone levels (which vary widely and can be manipulated), still others say it’s secondary sex characteristics like the appearance of breasts, body hair and muscle mass (which vary even more). Some say that it’s a combination of all of them. Now, this creates a huge problem, as sex organs, secondary sex characteristics and hormone levels aren’t anywhere close to being universal to all men or women, males or females. ... While it is true that gender and sex are different things, and that gender is indeed a social construct, sex isn’t the Ultimate Biological Reality that transphobes make it out to be.

The implication of such arguments is that intersex individuals represent a third gender that is neither male, nor female. However, as in the argument cited above, this line of reasoning is usually extrapolated out to refute any objective and universal classification for biological sex, thus affording the possibility of a vast array of sexes. The assumption is that because intersex conditions are exceptions to the normal classifications of male and female, these individuals cannot be male or female.

According to the Intersex Society of North America, “‘Intersex’ is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.”<sup>67</sup> The U.S. National Library of Medicine divides intersex into 4 categories:

- 46, XX intersex—“The person has the chromosomes of a woman, the ovaries of a woman, but external (outside) genitals that appear male. This most often is the result of a female fetus having been exposed to excess male hormones before birth.”<sup>68</sup>
- 46, XY intersex—“The person has the chromosomes of a man, but the external genitals are incompletely formed, ambiguous, or clearly female. Internally, testes may be normal, malformed, or absent.”<sup>69</sup>
- True gonadal intersex—“The person must have both ovarian and testicular tissue. This may be in the same gonad (an ovotestis), or the person might have 1 ovary and 1 testis. The person

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<sup>66</sup> Mey, “It’s Time for People to Stop Using the Social Construct of ‘Biological Sex’ to Defend Their Transmisogyny.”

<sup>67</sup> Intersex Society of North America, “What Is Intersex?”

<sup>68</sup> Medline Plus, “Intersex.”

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

may have XX chromosomes, XY chromosomes, or both. The external genitals may be ambiguous or may appear to be female or male.”<sup>70</sup>

- Complex or undetermined intersex—“Many chromosome configurations other than simple 46, XX or 46, XY can result in disorders of sex development. These include 45, XO (only one X chromosome), and 47, XXY, 47, XXX - both cases have an extra sex chromosome, either an X or a Y. These disorders do not result in a condition where there is discrepancy between internal and external genitalia. However, there may be problems with sex hormone levels, overall sexual development, and altered numbers of sex chromosomes.”<sup>71</sup>

Despite the transgender community’s dependence upon intersex in their efforts to disprove the gender binary, the Intersex Society of North America readily acknowledges that “many intersex people are perfectly comfortable adopting either a male or female gender identity and are not seeking a genderless society or to label themselves as a member of a third gender class.”<sup>72</sup> Intersex individuals are still born male or female, even if their anatomy is not considered to be typically male or female.<sup>73</sup> As Darreact notes in an article at *Darwinian Reactionary*, “[S]ex is a functional biological norm, and individuals can deviate from this norm in many different ways. ... And so, being a male isn’t whether you are XY, it is whether you are supposed to be XY; it is whether this is what would have been the biologically normal result had the process that determines sex worked as designed.”<sup>74</sup> The presence of the Y chromosome is supposed to trigger a whole series of events which will result in a biologically distinct male, but just because something may interfere with and distort the original design such that it does not function in the way it was intended does not negate that it was supposed to have a specific function. This is why we speak of brain damage, heart deformities, sterile sperm, and other such abnormalities by using qualifiers which indicate that something is failing to function according to its biological intent.<sup>75</sup> The heart remains a heart; the sperm remains a sperm, and the brain remains a brain even if they are not functioning properly. A deformed heart remains a heart, even if it is an exception to the norm. Likewise, a person’s biological sex remains male or female even if it is an exception to the norm and does not function according to its biological intent.

An analogous example is the story of Jaxon Buell who was born with a rare birth defect that occurs when the beginnings of the nervous system develop incorrectly. This condition prevented most of Jaxon’s brain from forming, leaving half his skull flat.<sup>76</sup> Most likely he will never be capable of talking and of walking independently.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, he remains human. Without most of a brain, he does not fit into the normal classification for humans, but the mere fact that his brain did not develop according to its biological intent does not negate his humanity. In the same way, the mere fact that sex organs may not develop according to their biological intent does not negate the individuals’ biological gender.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Intersex Society of North America, “Why Doesn’t ISNA Want to Eradicate Gender?”

<sup>73</sup> Intersex Society of North America, “What’s the Difference Between Being Transgender or Transsexual and Having an Intersex Condition?”

<sup>74</sup> Darreact, “Sex Is Not A Social Construct.”

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> “Presents Pile Up for ‘Miracle Baby’ Born Missing Most of His Brain.”

<sup>77</sup> Wright, *et al.* “Florida ‘Miracle Baby’ Born Without Most of His Brain Beating the Odds.”



Picture from ABC News: David Wright, et. al. "Florida 'Miracle Baby' Born Without Most of His Brain Beating the Odds."

Despite the ambiguity of sex organs in intersex conditions, most intersex individuals are still discernably male or female. For example, in the case of 46, XX, the U.S. National Library of Medicine reports, "The person has the chromosomes of a woman, the ovaries of a woman, but external (outside) genitals that appear male. This most often is the result of a female fetus having been exposed to excess male hormones before birth."<sup>78</sup> Thus, a 46, XX individual is biologically female. A "female fetus" develops abnormal physical features because of "having been exposed to excess male hormones before birth", but the individual remains biologically female.

Likewise, as in the case of Jennifer Pagonis, a 46, XY individual is "genetically male" but "unable to respond to the hormones that produce a male appearance."<sup>79</sup> Despite the possible presence of female sex organs, these organs are not fully developed, lacking a uterus, fallopian tubes, and a cervix.<sup>80</sup> As such, the individual is unable to conceive or even to menstruate. The presence of female sex organs is not because the individual was biologically intended to be female. It is evident that the individual was biologically intended to be male, but the developmental process was hindered by a genetic deficiency in the X chromosome.<sup>81</sup> The fact that his body failed to fully mature in a biologically normal manner does not negate the fact that he is genetically male, and he was supposed to develop male genitalia. As such, a 46, XY intersex individual is biologically male, despite his appearance.

Citing the Consortium on the Management of Disorder of Sex Development's *Clinical Guidelines for the Management of Disorders of Sex Development in Childhood*, the American College of Pediatricians released a statement, saying, "The norm for human design is to be conceived either male or female. Human sexuality is binary by design with the obvious purpose being the

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<sup>78</sup> Medline Plus, "Intersex."

<sup>79</sup> Whitelocks, "I Exist in the Gray': 29-Year Old Who Looks Like a Woman but Has Male Genitalia Speaks Out About Rare Intersex Condition."

<sup>80</sup> Intersex Society of North America, "Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS)."

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

reproduction and flourishing of our species. This principle is self-evident. The exceedingly rare disorders of sex development (DSDs), including but not limited to testicular feminization and congenital adrenal hyperplasia, are all medically identifiable deviations from the sexual binary norm, and are rightly recognized as disorders of human design. Individuals with DSDs do not constitute a third sex.”<sup>82</sup> Intersex conditions do not negate the reality of the male and female binary any more than mutations and defects negate any other objective reality. Likewise, the reality of intersex conditions does not prove that biological sex is merely a social construction. Biological sex exists independent of what we choose to call it. As the blogger EvolutionistX notes, “Reality doesn’t care what you call it.”<sup>83</sup> He also writes:<sup>84</sup>

“

All “socially constructed” really means is that the definition of a word—or concept—is agreed upon via some form of common consensus. Thus, the meaning of words can be changed if everyone decides to do so.

“Gay” was once socially constructed to mean “happy.” Now, by popular consensus, “gay” means something else. ... When people start making a big deal out of social constructivism, it is natural to think this must be some big, profound, important insight, otherwise they wouldn’t be going on for so long.

But people only pull out this argument when they want to deny the existence of actual reality, not when trying to argue that your notion of “ornamental shrub” is socially constructed and you should plant a blueberry bush.

Reality exists, no matter how we care to conceptualize it and organize the data we’re getting about it. Most categories that weren’t invented for the sake of a novel (“elves” probably *are* totally made up,) exist because they serve some sort of functional purpose. Being able to call someone “male” or “female,” “black” or “white” or “Bantu” or “Japanese” allows me to convey a bundle of information to the listener—a feature of language obvious to virtually everyone who has ever engaged in conversation, except to folks trying to eliminate such words from the language on the grounds that they are made up and so carry no information.

What makes this subject difficult to discuss is that we are speaking about real human beings whose bodies failed to develop in the way they were biologically intended to develop. As such there are very real emotions attached to this idea that some people do not fit the normal classifications of male and female. By no means do we wish to convey the idea that such individuals are less valuable because they are intersex. When speaking of biological intent—or what is a biologically normal

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<sup>82</sup> American College of Pediatricians, “Gender Ideology Harms Children.”

<sup>83</sup> EvolutionistX, “Reality Is a Social Construct.”

<sup>84</sup> EvolutionistX, “Transsexuals Prove That Gender Is Real.”

function—we are compelled to question what God’s intent was when He created intersex individuals. Does God make mistakes when He creates some people? And if God does not create mistakes, then how can we say that something is not functioning according to its biological intent?



*Baby born without a nose. Picture from ABC News: Pelletiere, “Alabama Baby Born Without a Nose, Mom Says He’s Perfect.”*

Examples abound within creation where something fails to function according to its biological intent, and human bodies are no exception. Children are born with deformed limbs, life-threatening diseases, mental retardation, and all kinds of additional defects. This is not because God created these defections. When God designed mankind, He created male and female in perfection. [Genesis 1:27 and 31](#) says, “*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ... And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.*” However, mankind chose to sin, and with that sin came a corruption of God’s original design. As such, God continues to create in perfection, but God also permits sin to influence His creation ([Rom. 8:19-21](#)). Sometimes the influence of sin is evident, such as in the development of children who are born to alcoholics and drug addicts. Sometimes it is not as evident, such as the children of healthy parents who are born with physical abnormalities. Regardless, sin has a corrupting influence upon all of God’s creation. God does not make mistakes, but He has chosen to permit His creation to live with the consequences of mankind’s mistakes.

Every person has suffered the corrupting effects of sin. For some it is manifested in temptations. Maybe they are naturally inclined toward addictive substances, fits of rage, sexual immorality, or any number of additional temptations. For others it is manifested in a mental condition such as autism, schizophrenia, multiple personality disorder, or any number of additional mental challenges. For still others it is manifested in physical defections such as predisposition to diseases, physical handicaps, physical deformities or abnormalities, and any number of additional physical challenges. Regardless of how the corrupting influence of sin may manifest itself in our lives, we all suffer its effects to varying degrees. As Pastor Brad Neese teaches, we are all broken people in need of a Savior. This is the essence of [Romans 3:23](#), “[*A*]ll have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...”

Our weaknesses—our defects—testify to our need of a Savior who can redeem our bodies. Without these evident defects, we may never realize the extent of our plight. Therefore, God permits sin to wreak havoc upon His creation in order that we might recognize where the rebellion of sin leads, and we might repent of our sinful behavior, submit to God’s commandments, and accept the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made on our behalf ([Rom. 8:19-23](#)). For this reason, [Romans chapter 3](#) goes on to say, “[*A*]ll have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by [*G*od’s] grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.” Likewise, [Romans 10:9-11](#) says, “[*I*]f you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For

*with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.'*"

From what will we be saved? We will be saved from the due punishment for our sins ([Rom. 6:23](#)), but we will also be saved from the corruption of sin upon our bodies. [Romans 8:23-24](#) reminds us that all who have placed their faith and confidence in Jesus Christ will eventually experience a complete redemption of their body, *"[W]e ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved."*

Intersex conditions are not evidence of a third gender; intersex conditions are evidence of the effect of sin upon God's creation. More importantly, intersex conditions are evidence of our need for a Savior who will redeem not only our souls, but also our bodies.

# Discussion Questions

*These questions are intended to stimulate thought and discussion. They are particularly designed for use in Sunday school and small group settings.*

1. How would your life be different if, like Jennifer Pagonis, you were born male with male internal sex organs but with female external sex organs?
  - A. If you had a child born with an intersex condition, where would you turn for help and assistance in making life-changing decisions for your child? Would you turn to the Church for help? Why?
2. What determines whether an individual is male or female?
3. Does the reality of intersex conditions prove that mankind is not biologically intended to be male or female? Why?
4. What are examples of something failing to develop according to its biological intent?
  - A. Was Jaxon Buell biologically intended to be born missing most of his brain? Are intersex individuals biologically intended to be born with ambiguous sex organs?
  - B. How should we classify someone who is born missing most of his brain? Is Jaxon Buell a different classification of human? How is this analogous to individuals born intersex?
5. If an intersex woman (46, XX) is biologically female despite her appearance as being male, is she truly female? Why?
  - A. Can we tell an intersex woman (46, XX) who is biologically female despite her appearance as being male that she cannot be genuinely female based upon her appearance? Why?
  - B. If an intersex woman is female because of her DNA despite her appearance as a male, then does a biological male remain a male because of his DNA despite his appearance as a female due to sex-reassignment surgery?
6. Could it be that intersex individuals prove the immutability of gender—that abnormalities and physical appearance are not determinative of gender? Why?
7. Do you agree with the blogger EvolutionistX's statement, "Reality doesn't care what you call it"? Why?
  - A. How should this influence the way we talk about transgenderism?
8. Why is an individual no less valuable because they are born intersex?
  - A. Did God create intersex individuals? Did He create them intersex? Why?
9. If God does not make mistakes when He creates, then why do some people fail to develop according to their biological intent?
10. What are examples of the corrupting influence of sin upon creation?
  - A. Why does God allow sin to have a corrupting influence on His creation?
  - B. Would we be better off if our sin corrupted us spiritually—it separated us from God and His purpose for our lives—but it did not corrupt us physically—it produced no physical abnormalities or deformities? Why?
11. Do you agree with Pastor Brad Neese's statement that we are all broken people in need of a Savior? Why?
  - A. Is it unloving or demeaning to tell someone they are broken? Why?

- B. Is it unloving or demeaning to pretend like a broken individual isn't truly broken?  
Why?
- 12. When God redeems our bodies, will we be free from gender? Why?
  - A. Is gender a corrupting influence of sin upon our bodies? Why?
  - B. Do you believe there will be a purpose for gender in heaven? Why?

## Is Transgenderism a Mental Disorder?

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Denmark became the first country in Europe to allow transgender individuals to change their gender without medical records in 2014.<sup>85</sup> In 2016, Denmark became the first country in the world to announce that it will remove transgenderism from its list of mental diseases, effective January 1, 2017.<sup>86</sup> This despite the fact that the World Health Organization lists gender identity disorder—the term medically used to refer to transgender individuals—as a mental disorder in the World Health Organization’s *International Classification of Diseases*.<sup>87, 88</sup> Likewise, given that transgender individuals perceive themselves differently than the testimony of objective reality, transgenderism is considered to be a mental disorder according to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. The American College of Pediatricians explains:<sup>89</sup>

“

A person’s belief that he or she is something they are not is, at best, a sign of confused thinking. When an otherwise healthy biological boy believes he is a girl, or an otherwise healthy biological girl believes she is a boy, an objective psychological problem exists that lies in the mind not the body, and it should be treated as such. These children suffer from gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria (GD), formerly listed as Gender Identity Disorder (GID), is a recognized mental disorder in the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-V). The

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<sup>85</sup> Lyengar, “Denmark Will Remove Being Transgender from its List of Mental Diseases.”

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Duffy, “Denmark Will No Longer Treat ‘Transgenderism’ as a Mental Illness.”

<sup>88</sup> World Health Organization, *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th Revision*, Chapter V, F64.

<sup>89</sup> American College of Pediatricians, “Gender Ideology Harms Children.”

psychodynamic and social learning theories of GD/GID have never been disproved.  
(emphasis removed)

The classification of transgenderism as a mental disorder may not be politically correct, but with the absence of objective evidence disproving such a classification, the medical community is compelled to treat it as such. Failure to do so would be inconsistent with how psychiatry defines other recognized disorders of assumption. Former psychiatrist-in-chief at Johns Hopkins Hospital and University distinguished professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Dr. Paul McHugh, explains:<sup>90</sup>

“

The transgendered suffer a disorder of “assumption” like those in other disorders familiar to psychiatrists. With the transgendered, the disordered assumption is that the individual differs from what seems given in nature—namely one’s maleness or femaleness. Other kinds of disordered assumptions are held by those who suffer from anorexia and bulimia nervosa, where the assumption that departs from physical reality is the belief by the dangerously thin that they are overweight.

With body dysmorphic disorder, an often socially crippling condition, the individual is consumed by the assumption “I’m ugly.” These disorders occur in subjects who have come to believe that some of their psycho-social conflicts or problems will be resolved if they can change the way that they appear to others. Such ideas work like ruling passions in their subjects’ minds and tend to be accompanied by a solipsistic argument. [This is the theory that only the self exists, or can be proved to exist, or an extreme pre-occupation with one’s feelings and desires.<sup>[1]</sup>

For the transgendered, this argument holds that one’s feeling of “gender” is a conscious, subjective sense that, being in one’s mind, cannot be questioned by others. The individual often seeks not just society’s tolerance of this “personal truth” but affirmation of it.

Despite transgenderism’s similarities with other disorders of assumption, the mental health community has come under severe political pressure to declassify transgenderism as a mental disorder, and recent changes to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* has provided the category of transgenderism with a degree of protective ambiguity. Transgenderism was reclassified from gender identity disorder to gender dysphoria. According to *CNN*, “The new DSM

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<sup>90</sup> Paul McHugh, “Transgender Surgery Isn’t the Solution,” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 12, 2014, Source: “Paul McHugh: Transgender Surgery Isn’t the Solution - WSJ.”

refers to ‘gender dysphoria,’ which focuses the attention on only those who feel distressed by their gender identity.”<sup>91</sup> Additionally, the term mental disorder was redefined. According to the previous edition of the DSM, the DSM-IV, “A mental disorder is a clinically significant behavioral or psychological syndrome or pattern that occurs in an individual and that is associated with present distress or disability or with a significantly increased risk of suffering death, pain, disability, or an important loss of freedom.”<sup>92</sup> However, the DSM-V redefined mental disorder to afford an exception for socially deviant behavior and conflicts that are primarily between the individual and society:<sup>93</sup>

“

A mental disorder is a syndrome characterized by clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotion regulation, or behavior that reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological, or developmental processes underlying mental functioning. Mental disorders are usually associated with significant distress in social, occupational, or other important activities. An expectable or culturally approved response to a common stressor or loss, such as the death of a loved one, is not a mental disorder. Socially deviant behavior (e.g., political, religious, or sexual) and conflicts that are primarily between the individual and society are not mental disorders unless the deviance or conflict results from a dysfunction in the individual, as described above.

The American Psychological Association has endeavored to use these changes in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* to deny that transgenderism is a mental disorder. On their website they answer the question “Is being transgender a mental disorder?” by saying:<sup>94</sup>

“

A psychological state is considered a mental disorder only if it causes significant distress or disability. Many transgender people do not experience their gender as distressing or disabling, which implies that identifying as transgender does not constitute a mental disorder. ... Many other obstacles may lead to distress, including a lack of acceptance within society, direct or indirect experiences with discrimination, or assault. These experiences may lead many transgender people to suffer with anxiety, depression or related disorders at higher rates than nontransgender persons.

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<sup>91</sup> Basu, “Being Transgender No Longer a Mental ‘Disorder’ in Diagnostic Manual.”

<sup>92</sup> Maisel, “The New Definition of a Mental Disorder.”

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> American Psychological Association, “What Does Transgender Mean?”

In other words, because a transgender individual is not troubled by their perception of themselves, but only by the reaction of those around them, they cannot be said to have a mental disorder. However, this reasoning is not consistent with all mental disorders. For example, WebMD describes psychotic disorders as, “distorted awareness and thinking. Two of the most common symptoms of psychotic disorders are hallucinations – the experience of images or sounds that are not real, such as hearing voices – and delusions, which are false fixed beliefs that the ill person accepts as true, despite evidence to the contrary.”<sup>95</sup> Sometimes the individual is not troubled by these hallucinations and false fixed beliefs, but only by the reaction of others to their delusion. The fact that the individual is not troubled by the condition, but only by the reaction of others to the condition, does not disqualify it as a mental disorder.

At the heart of this debate over how to classify transgenderism is the question, “What causes transgenderism?” Is transgenderism a perfectly natural and inborn condition; is it a consequence of social conditioning; is it a psychological disorder, or is it something else? Until recently, many of those who denied that transgenderism is rooted in a psychological disorder or a hormonal imbalance adhered to behaviorist psychological theories which assumed that an infant’s mind is a blank slate whose social conditioning produces all aspects of personality, including gender.<sup>96</sup> However, recent studies, combined with the discrediting of former studies, have given rise to neurological theories of transgenderism.

Despite the fact that the human brain remains so complex that scientists are still trying to understand it, these studies have indicated that the brains of transgendered individuals may be constructed similarly to the gender with which they identify instead of their biological gender. These studies have garnered much media support, but none of these studies have been replicated, and within these studies the authors often discuss the problems with their own research and the fact that their findings cannot prove anything until the findings are replicated.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, a study from the Stockholm Brain Institute concludes that present data does not support the theory that male-to-female (MtF) transgender brains are feminized. Walt Heyer reports, “The scientists compared the sizes of various areas of brains belonging to MtF transsexuals to brains of heterosexual men and women. The findings: 1) *all* the males differed in the same ways from the females (no feminization of the transsexuals) and 2) the MtF transsexuals differed from *both* heterosexual men and women in the area of the brain that processes body perception.”<sup>98</sup>

Additionally, neurological theories of transgenderism ignore the fact that the human brain is continually reorganizing itself according to our daily activities. Dr. Norman Doidge observes, “Now we know the brain is ‘neuroplastic’, and not only can it change, but that it works by changing its structure in response to repeated mental experience.”<sup>99</sup> Any similarities in brain structure between a transgender individual and the gender with which they associate does not preclude the possibility that the transgender individual’s brain was conditionally restructured based upon personal habits.

Even so, brain structure does not determine reality. Carlos Flores writes, “For example, we may suppose that, through habitually behaving as a sixteen-year-old, the brain activity of the seventy-year-

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<sup>95</sup> WebMD, “Types of Mental Illness.”

<sup>96</sup> Conway “What Causes Transsexualism?”

<sup>97</sup> Family Research Council, “The Scientific Objectivity and Universality of Gender Difference.”

<sup>98</sup> Heyer, “Data Shows Male to Female Transgender Brains Are Not Feminized.”

<sup>99</sup> Doidge, “Brain Scans of Porn Addicts: What’s Wrong with This Picture?”

old mentioned above ‘resembles’ that of a sixteen-year-old’s. Does it follow, then, that the seventy-year-old really is sixteen years old? Or that he is really a sixteen-year-old trapped inside a seventy-year-old’s body? Of course not. The most rational conclusion is that such an individual has some sort of cognitive or psychological defect associated with identity and self-perception. The same can be said for the transgender individual.”<sup>100</sup>

Wisdom cautions against placing too much weight at this time upon any scientific study because there simply is an insufficient degree of reliable data. Popular as the neurological theories of transgenderism may be, it could be that they are premised upon a faulty assumption that there is such a thing as a typical male brain thinking pattern and a typical female brain thinking pattern. According to an *NBC News* article titled “Can You Tell Which Brains Are Male? Neither Can These Scientists”:<sup>101</sup>

“

Scientists who tried very hard to find differences between male and female brains said they couldn’t do it – not with brain scans and not even by asking seemingly obvious questions such as whether someone likes boxing or worries about his or her mother.

They couldn’t find any single pattern that distinguishes between a male brain and a female brain, and say only a very small percentage of people fall under clear all-male or all female */sic/* brain patterns.

“Our study demonstrates that although there are sex/gender differences in brain structure, brains do not fall into two classes, one typical of males and the other typical of females, nor are they aligned along a ‘male brain-female brain’ continuum,” Daphna Joel of Tel Aviv University and colleagues wrote. ... “In other words, even when considering highly stereotypical gender behaviors, there are very few individuals who are consistently at the ‘female-end’ or at the ‘male-end’, but there are many individuals who have both ‘female-end’ and ‘male-end’ characteristics,” they wrote.

Similarly, an article in *The Scientist* titled “Sex Differences in the Brain” notes:<sup>102</sup>

“

[W]hile both the popular and scientific presses make reference to “male” and “female” brains, the brain is in reality not a unitary organ like the liver or the kidney. It is a compilation of multiple independent yet interacting groups of cells that are subject to both external and internal factors. This is abundantly true for hormonal modulation, with many

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<sup>100</sup> Flores, “The Absurdity of Transgenderism: A Stern but Necessary Critique.”

<sup>101</sup> Fox, “Can You Tell Which Brains Are Male? Neither Can These Scientists.”

<sup>102</sup> McCarthy, “Sex Differences in the Brain.”

and varied signal transduction pathways invoked. As a result, it is quite literally impossible for the brain to take on a uniform “maleness” or “femaleness.” Instead, the brain is a mix of relative degrees of masculinization in some areas and feminization in others.

At this point we do not have enough objective data to conclusively determine a cause for transgenderism. This is the conclusion of Dr. Jack Drescher, a psychiatrist who was part of the American Psychiatric Association’s work group on gender identity. Dr. Drescher admits, “The truth is we actually don’t know what it is. Is it a mental disorder or does the cause of gender dysphoria lie somewhere else? We don’t know what causes it...”<sup>103</sup> Theories abound, but we should continually keep in mind that these are merely theories. In the meantime, we are compelled to rely upon the only objective data that we have. As Jazz Shaw comments, “Falling back on the unfathomable intricacies of something as unbelievably complicated as the human brain isn’t going to make some scientific case that you were born in the wrong type of body. The fact is, we still only have a few obvious things to go on when determining your gender: an examination of your private parts and a chromosome analysis.”<sup>104</sup>

Although the cause of transgenderism may be in doubt, as Christians we understand that the Bible defines transgender behavior as sinful behavior regardless of its cause. A person’s biology and mental health cannot be our basis for determining the morality of any behavior. Scientists have discovered possible biological predispositions to such things as adultery, rape, pedophilia, violence, and many other sinful behaviors.<sup>105, 106</sup> Just because something is natural does not make it acceptable behavior. Instead, our morality is determined by our Creator.

Those behaviors and actions which are immoral or sinful are so because they fail to align themselves with the character and behavior of God. Our standard for all behavior is determined by our Creator. In [Leviticus 11:44](#), God commanded His people, Israel, *“For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy.”* Also, in [verse 45](#) He said, *“For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.”* Still again, in [Leviticus 19:2](#), God commanded His people, *“Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”* These commands are then repeated to God’s people, the Church, in [1 Peter 1:14-16](#), *“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”*

God originally created mankind as holy creatures. Adam and Eve were without sin until they chose to rebel against God and place their will above God’s will. At that point, their nature was broken. No longer did their nature tend towards God. Now it was bent away from God, and this sinful nature was passed along to their offspring. This is the teaching of [Romans 5:12](#), which says, *“[S]in came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men.”*

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<sup>103</sup> Jayson, “What ‘Transgender’ Means, and How Society Views It.”

<sup>104</sup> Shaw, “Don’t Expect a Brain Scan to Tell You if You’re ‘Transgender’ or Not.”

<sup>105</sup> Brown, *A Queer Thing Happened to America*, 211-214.

<sup>106</sup> Rosenfeld, “Are Some Men Born Pedophiles? New Science Says Yes, But Sexologists Say Not So Fast.”

Nevertheless, despite the fact that mankind was now born with a pre-disposition to sin, God continued to demand holiness. Never does God condone sinful behavior on the basis of biology. Instead, He calls mankind to overcome their temptations and to align their behavior with God's will. God's standard has never changed. When mankind possessed a sinless nature, God's standard was holiness, and when mankind rebelled and received a sinful nature, God's standard remained holiness.

With such a lofty standard, no person can succeed on his own. [James 2:10](#) teaches, “[W]hoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.” There is no room for error. A single sin permanently prevents a person from being holy through his own deeds, and [Romans 3:23](#) teaches that every person has sinned, “[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Moreover, failure to be holy results in death. [Romans 6:23](#) says, “For the wages of sin is death.” Not only will we die physically, but we will die spiritually. [Revelation 20:12-15](#) describes this death as a second death in which a person is eternally separated from having a right relationship with God and from fulfilling their purpose for existing:

“

*And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Fortunately, [Romans 6:23](#) doesn't conclude with the statement, “For the wages of sin is death.” If it did, we could have no hope but only despair because every one of us has sinned. But there is hope. [Romans 6:23](#) says, “For the wages of sin is death, **but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**” (emphasis added) This free gift is forgiveness from our sins, and it is made possible through the ministry of Jesus Christ who, having lived a sinless life, paid the penalty of our sin with His own life. [John 3:16-18](#) says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

Jesus is God's means of fixing our broken relationship with Him and forgiving our sin. Because Jesus lived a sinless life, He did not have to die. Yet, His love for man was so great that He chose to die a horrific death on a cross for any who would accept His sacrifice. However, being God, death could not hold Him, and He rose from the dead three days later. As such, He stands before God as an advocate for any who are willing to repent—which is a turning away from sinful behavior—and accept God's charge to live holy lives. Of course, until God redeems His creation and removes the curse

of sin, we will struggle with our sinful natures, but God promises to give us the strength to overcome any and every temptation, and He promises to continue to forgive our failures if we seek His forgiveness.

Understanding this, [Romans 10:9-13](#) teaches us how to accept this free gift of God, *“[I]f you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”* Anyone who believes that Jesus is God, that He died as a substitute for our sins, and that He rose again from the dead can ask God for forgiveness and commit to living a life which aligns itself with God’s holy character and behavior. And anyone who does this will receive God’s forgiveness and salvation from sin. As [Romans 3:23-25](#) says, *“[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”*

Having received the free gift of God, the Christian is empowered by the Holy Spirit to overcome all temptations—regardless of whether or not he may have a genetic pre-disposition toward it. [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) says, *“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”* This is God’s promise to every Christian. Whether it be gender confusion, homosexual inclinations, heterosexual temptations, anger, pride, gossip, bitterness, worry, or any other temptation, we are promised enough strength to overcome it if we so choose, and if we will stand strong. As [James 4:7](#) says, *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”*

From the very beginning, mankind has sought to absolve itself of responsibility for its actions, but the brutal truth is that we alone are responsible for our behavior. Regardless whether gender dysphoria is something that a person is born with, gender dysphoric behavior is sin. Every person is responsible to submit their passions and natural inclinations to the will of God. Therefore, we would do well to follow the Apostle Paul’s exhortation in [1 Timothy. 6:11-15](#):

“

*But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time.*

# Discussion Questions

*These questions are intended to stimulate thought and discussion. They are particularly designed for use in Sunday school and small group settings.*

1. Denmark has chosen to remove gender dysphoria from its list of mental disorders despite the consensus of the medical community, and despite the absence of objective evidence supporting such a decision. Why is this significant?
  - A. Can a vote among politicians change the reality of a mental disorder?
  - B. If this decision is not based upon medical evidence, then what is likely motivating this decision? What are the implications of this?
2. If an individual perceives themselves differently than the testimony of objective reality, does that person have a mental disorder? Why?
  - A. What are other mental disorders of assumption?
  - B. Fundamentally, how is the belief of an anorexic that they are too fat different from the belief of a transgender that they are a different gender from their biological sex?
3. The DSM-V re-classified gender identity disorder as gender dysphoria which focuses the attention on only those who feel distressed by their gender identity. Is this mental disorder limited to the feeling of distress, not the confusion of gender? What would the implications of this be?
4. What reliable authority can we turn to for answering the question of what causes transgenderism?
  - A. Do we have enough to reliable data to scientifically and conclusively prove the cause of transgenderism? What are the implications of this?
5. What objective means of determining gender exist?
  - A. Are personal feelings objective? As such, are they a reliable standard for determining truth? Why?
6. Do we need to know what causes transgenderism to know whether or not it is sinful behavior? Why?
7. Should an individual's biology and mental health be the basis for determining the morality of any behavior? Why?

- A. What determines morality?
  - B. What makes something sinful?
8. Does God provide exemptions of sinful behavior for those who are born with a predisposition to sin? Why?
- A. If it is discovered that transgenderism is something that a person is born with, would it cease to be sinful behavior in God's sight? Why?
  - B. Is anyone born without a predisposition to sin? Why?
  - C. How can God expect us to live holy lives if we are born with a predisposition to sin?
9. How can an individual overcome temptation?
- A. Is any temptation or tendency too strong for the Christian to overcome? Why?
10. Does God hold the individual struggling with transgender feelings to a different standard from anyone else, such as a person struggling with feelings of rage, bitterness, hatred, or lust?
- A. Is transgenderism a greater sin than any other?
  - B. Does God judge transgenderism differently from other sins? Why?
11. How can a Christian flee from the sin of transgenderism in today's culture?
12. How can a Christian pursue righteousness in an environment where they are expected to celebrate transgender behavior?

## Are Our Physical Bodies Sacred?

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“Pregnancy and childbirth were very male experiences for me,’ said a 29-year-old respondent in a study reported Friday in *Obstetrics and Gynecology*. ‘When I birthed my children, I was born into fatherhood.’”<sup>107</sup> This introduction to the *NPR* article “Transgender Men Who Become Pregnant Face Social, Health Challenges” reveals the complexities inherent in the 21st Century normalization of sex-reassignment procedures. According to the article, “He is one of 41 participants in a study of how it feels to be male and pregnant, a study the authors think may be the first of its kind. ... The study came about because a medical student working with Kerns, Alexis Light, found herself fielding questions from transgender male friends about whether they’d be able to conceive and what pregnancy would be like.”<sup>108</sup>

Our traditional view of biology and its limitations are undergoing a radical transformation. Science is discovering the key to transforming some of nature’s most fundamental truths. According to a *Humanity+* article titled “Total Gender Change within a Decade,” medical technology may “be able to change the gender of anyone to the opposite gender, with full reproductive abilities of the new gender” by the end of the decade.<sup>109</sup> Realistically, this may be optimistic; nevertheless, huge strides are being made in realizing this vision.

For some time now, surgeons have been capable of transforming both male and female external sex organs into their counterparts. These are functional, “Among FTM [female-to-male] individuals who have undergone sex reassignment, orgasm is possible and, in fact, ability to reach orgasm often increases. In addition, satisfaction with the surgery tends to be very high (>80%), and frequency of sexual activity usually increases as well.”<sup>110</sup> Suffice it to say that these procedures are far more advanced and effective than most people might imagine. These are not merely cosmetic adjustments,

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<sup>107</sup> Henig, “Transgender Men Who Become Pregnant Face Social, Health Challenges.”

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Ice, “Best of H+: Total Gender Change Within a Decade.”

<sup>110</sup> Lehmillier, “Sex Question Friday: How Does Female-to-Male Sex Reassignment Surgery Work?”

and some other surprising medical advances have given some hope that an individual's internal sex organs may also be reassigned in the near future.

In 2013, scientists used skin cells to create eggs which were then fertilized and used to develop baby mice. *The Scientific American* wrote that this study “suggested that men’s skin cells could be used to create eggs, and that sperm could be generated from women’s cells.”<sup>111</sup> This was soon demonstrated to be true when scientists used human skin cells to create primitive sperm cells that were successfully injected into the testes of mice.<sup>112</sup> Additionally, *Live Science* reports that “Scientists have tricked male fish cells that were destined to become sperm into switching sex and becoming eggs instead.”<sup>113</sup> Perhaps most importantly, Grant Jacobs reports:<sup>114</sup>

“

In a stunning paper Henriette Uhlenhaut and 14 others show that if adult mice lose a *Foxl2* gene, ovaries become testes. ... These researchers raised mice in which they could delete the *Foxl2* gene by treatment of tamoxifen, a compound that competes to block the estrogen receptor. ... The surprising and unexpected result was that when *adult* mice were induced to lose their *Foxl2* gene, their ovaries changed into testes! ... [T]his research shows that the ovary has to maintain constant suppression of the key testis development gene *Sox9* by *Foxl2*; if not ovarian granulosa and theca cells change to become testicular Sertoli and Leydig cells, respectively.

Uhlenhaut and colleagues observe that the full set of genes associated with testis development becomes active and these XX (genetically female) mice produce similar amounts of the male sex hormone testosterone as XY (genetically male) mice.

Moreover, stem cell research has afforded the possibility that sex organs might be grown from an individual's genetic tissue. This could be as simple as using stem cells mixed with a patient's body fat to grow breasts or to increase mass.<sup>115</sup> More significantly, custom-designed sex organs can be grown in a laboratory and then transplanted into the body. Already this has been successfully accomplished, according to a *New York Daily News* article titled “Woman with Lab-Grown Vagina Talks About Life-Changing Procedure.” The article reports, “A woman who participated in a ground-breaking study where doctors used cells to grow vaginas in a lab said she now leads a normal life thanks to the surgery. The unidentified patient was one of four Mexican women with Mayer-Rokitansky-Küster-Hauser (MRKH) syndrome, a rare genetic condition that causes the vagina to be absent or underdeveloped ...”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Cyranoski, “Lab-Made Egg and Sperm Precursors Raise Prospect for Infertility Treatment.”

<sup>112</sup> Hewitt, “Scientists Turn Skin Cells into Sperm Cells, but Raise Provocative New Questions.”

<sup>113</sup> Than, “Sperm Cells Turned into Eggs.”

<sup>114</sup> Jacobs, “Deleting a Gene Can Turn an Ovary into a Testis in Adult Mammals.”

<sup>115</sup> Begley, “All Natural: Why Breasts Are the Key to the Future of Regenerative Medicine.”

<sup>116</sup> Taylor, “Woman with Lab-Grown Vagina Talks About Life-Changing Procedure.”

In February 2016, Cleveland Clinic became the first U.S. medical center to perform a uterus transplant into a woman of reproductive age.<sup>117</sup> The possibility of uterus transplants combined with the ability to grow genetically customized sex organs in a laboratory, and the possibility of manipulating an individual's genetic makeup to transform ovaries and testes offers promise to those who hope for the possibility of undergoing a complete gender change. Alternatively, the transhumanist community envisions a day when the function of internal sex organs will be replaced with technology, thus allowing transsexuals to focus entirely upon appearance and sexual experience. Here too, scientific advances have made this a realistic future scenario. Science blog *io9* reports, "As



time passes, we're inching closer and closer to the day when it will finally become possible to grow a baby entirely outside the human body."<sup>118</sup> Cornell University's Hung-Ching Liu has worked toward achieving a tissue-based inner lining of an artificial uterus, and a primitive attempt at developing an artificial placenta has resulted in goats being "kept alive for up to 237 hours in amniotic tanks through a process called extracorporeal membrane oxygenation" (emphasis removed).<sup>119</sup>

*Picture from io9: Dvorsky, "How to Build an Artificial Womb."*

"Transhumanism and Transgenderism enjoy a close relationship due to mutual interest in enhancement technology."<sup>120</sup> Transhumanists George Dvorsky and Dr. James Hughes co-authored a paper titled "Postgenderism: Beyond the Gender Binary." According to this paper's abstract:<sup>121</sup>

“

Postgenderism is an extrapolation of ways that technology is eroding the biological, psychological and social role of gender, and an argument for why the erosion of binary gender will be liberatory. Postgenderists argue that gender is an arbitrary and unnecessary limitation on human potential, and foresee the elimination of involuntary biological and psychological gendering in the human species through the application of neurotechnology, biotechnology and reproductive technologies. Postgenderists contend that dyadic gender roles and sexual dimorphisms are generally to the detriment of individuals and society. Assisted reproduction will make it possible for individuals of any sex to reproduce in any combinations they choose, with or without "mothers" and "fathers," and artificial wombs will make biological wombs unnecessary for reproduction. Greater biological fluidity and psychological androgyny will allow future persons to explore both masculine and feminine aspects of personality. Postgenderists do not call for the end of all gender traits, or universal androgyny, but rather that those traits become

<sup>117</sup> Cleveland Clinic, "Nation's 1st Uterus Transplant."

<sup>118</sup> Dvorsky, "How to Build an Artificial Womb."

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Pellissier, "Transgender and Transhuman - the Alliance, the Complaints and the Future."

<sup>121</sup> Dvorsky, *et al.* "Postgenderism: Beyond the Gender Binary."

a matter of choice. Bodies and personalities in our postgender future will no longer be constrained and circumscribed by gendered traits, but enriched by their use in the palette of diverse self-expression.

Clearly, the questions associated with gender fluidity, sex-reassignment, and sex roles in reproduction span far more territory than how individuals perceive themselves, an individual's mental health, and social tolerance. The 21st Century's obsession with sex-reassignment procedures are fundamentally redefining the concept of humanity. As bioethicist Dr. Leon Kass, who formerly served as Chairman of the President's Council on Bioethics, warns in his book, "Human nature itself lies on the operating table, ready for alteration, for eugenic and neuropsychic 'enhancement,' for wholesale redesign. In leading laboratories, academic and industrial, new creators are confidently amassing their powers and quietly honing their skills, while on the street their evangelists are zealously prophesying a posthuman future. For anyone who cares about preserving our humanity, the time has come to pay attention."<sup>122</sup> He also warns, "All of the boundaries are up for grabs. All of the boundaries that have defined us as human beings ..."<sup>123</sup>

At the heart of these transformative issues is the question, "Is the human body sacred?" In other words, how far are humans permitted to travel along the path of biological alteration and enhancement? It is futile to focus our attention on the question of whether contemporary sex-reassignment procedures mutilate healthy tissue or increase health risks because science is advancing such that we may soon be able to safely reprogram the body on a genetic level and transform our sex organs with a minimal degree of invasive and reconstructive surgery. Instead, we must appeal to a higher and unchanging standard for determining our moral authority. As Christians, we can appeal to no higher authority than the Bible. What then does the Bible say about our physical bodies and our authority to design our sexuality?

Simply put in relation to this study: Our theology determines our sexuality. According to the Bible, we as human beings are unique from the animals in that we have been created in the image of God. Precisely what is involved in serving as imagers of God has been greatly debated by theologians throughout the centuries, but one thing that has not been debated is the fact that mankind is created in God's image. This is the clear teaching of [Genesis 1:26-28](#):

“

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he*

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<sup>122</sup> Kass, *Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity*.

<sup>123</sup> Wesley Smith, "A Conversation with Leon Kass: Science Doesn't Trump All," San Francisco Chronicle, October 20, 2002, Source: Smith, "Stupider and Worse?"

*created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

The Hebrew word translated as “man” is *adam* and means “human being” or “the human race.”<sup>124</sup> Thus, [Genesis 1:27](#) reveals that God made mankind in His own image, and mankind was created as consisting of male and female genders. Somehow, our sexuality—the fact that we are gender-based creatures—is an integral part of our being created in God’s image.

Clearly our sexuality is not the only aspect of being imagers of God because most animals are also created as sexual creatures, being male and female, but they are not created in the image of God. It is precisely because of the similarities between human and animal that so many theories exist regarding the image of God. Some have argued that just as God consists of three distinct Persons, so also we are comprised of three—being body, soul, and spirit—and yet we are one. There are several other theories, but all of these theories are based upon deductive reasoning. The one and only aspect of being created in God’s image that can be derived from the Genesis creation account is the fact that mankind has been created as sexual beings. In other words, God’s only explanation of what being created in His image constitutes is that He created mankind as male and female. Interestingly enough, because God Himself is neither male nor female, and because male and female are quite different from one another both physically and emotionally, the image of God must be most complete in the combination of the two. In this sense, the image of God is greatest when male and female complement one another in unity. This unity is described in [Genesis 2:23–24](#), “*Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*” This union is known as “marriage.” Regardless of whether we fully understand how this can all be true, we are compelled to accept that our being created in God’s image includes our sexuality because it is the clear teaching of God’s Word.

The implications of this are significant. If the sexual design of our bodies is created by God as at least a partial reflection of Himself, then our sexuality is sacred. This too is evidenced within the text in [Genesis 2:21–22](#), “*So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.*” The sacred design of man in this text is obscured by the translation. The Hebrew word translated as “rib” is *tsele* which, in the 41 other occurrences of this word in the Old Testament, always refers to the side of something. In nearly every instance, it refers to the side of sacral architecture, such as the Ark of the Covenant, or the temple.<sup>125</sup> Thus, [Genesis 2:21–22](#) references Adam’s body as sacral architecture in its account of how gender was established.

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<sup>124</sup> Baker, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, H#120, 15.

<sup>125</sup> The Hebrew word *tsele* (Strong’s H#6763), occurs 41 times in 33 verses: Gen. 2:21–22; Ex. 25:12, 14; Ex. 26:20, 26–27, 35; Ex. 27:7; Ex. 30:4; Ex. 36:25, 31–32; Ex. 37:3, 5, 27; Ex. 38:7; 2 Sam. 16:13; 1 Kings 6:5, 8, 15–16, 34; 1 Kings 7:3; Job 18:12; Jer. 20:10; Eze. 41:5–9, 11, 26.

There are many things about our bodies, our design, and our relationship to God's image that we do not understand. Rather than succumb to the allure of exploring these grey areas, we as Christians should hold fast to what God has revealed. As [Deuteronomy 29:29](#) says, *“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”* Our bodies are sacred, and God has designed our bodies to best accomplish our specific purpose and role. Sometimes our bodies are corrupted by the influence of sin, and they are in need of restoration, but this is a far cry from reinventing our biological design. When this line is crossed, we find ourselves in the precarious position of having defaced God's sacred architecture.

# Discussion Questions

*These questions are intended to stimulate thought and discussion. They are particularly designed for use in Sunday school and small group settings.*

1. How would you react if a pregnant trans man walked into your local church?
  - A. How would you treat your neighbor differently if they were a pregnant trans man?
2. If scientific and medical advances make a total gender change possible, would this change the way you think of sex-reassignment surgery? Why?
  - A. Do you think a total gender change will ever be possible? Why?
3. Scientists have discovered how to create sperm and eggs using skin cells, how to convert an ovary into a testis, and how to grow sex organs in a laboratory. Do you think they have crossed a moral or ethical line? Why?
4. One of today's chief arguments against sex-reassignment surgery is that such a procedure mutilates healthy tissue. If customized sex organs can be grown in a laboratory and successfully transplanted, then the healthy tissue is not being mutilated (only removed). Given such, would sex-reassignment surgeries become appropriate? Why?
  - A. If sex-reassignment surgeries are not appropriate even if healthy tissue is not being mutilated, then why do Christians focus so much attention on the argument that healthy tissue is being mutilated?
5. One of today's chief arguments against sex-reassignment surgery is that such a procedure is not natural. If doctors can use genetic therapy to convert ovaries into testes, or *vice versa*, and if they can grow custom sex organs using the individual's DNA, then does such a procedure become appropriate? Why?
  - A. If sex-reassignment surgeries are not appropriate even if they primarily utilize natural processes, then why do Christians focus so much attention on the argument that sex-reassignment is not natural?
6. Scientists are endeavoring to create artificial wombs. If a baby can develop entirely outside of the womb, then does the male/female gender binary really matter? Why?
  - A. If an individual's sex organs are not used to reproduce, but only for cosmetic and pleasure purposes, then do they really matter? Why?
7. Would a post-gender society be liberating? Why?

8. How is the 21st Century's obsession fundamentally redefining the concept of humanity?
9. As Christians, we can appeal to no higher authority than the Bible. Why?
10. How does our theology determine our sexuality?
  - A. How are human beings unique from animals?
  - B. According to the Bible, how many genders did God create?
  - C. What does the nature of the Trinity teach us about the nature of genders?
11. If the sexual design of our bodies is at least a partial reflection of Himself, then our sexuality is sacred. Why?
  - A. Why is it significant that in the Bible's account of how gender was established, God refers to Adam's body as sacral architecture?
  - B. If our bodies are sacred, then are we never permitted to change anything about our bodies? Why?
12. Does Deuteronomy 29:29 teach that we should not question and explore the things that we don't understand? Why?
  - A. What does Deuteronomy 29:29 mean when it says that the secret things belong to our God?
13. What are some of the ways in which our bodies are designed to accomplish our specific purpose and role?

## Is Gender Identity Sufficient to Determine One’s Sex?

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From the earliest of ages, some individuals are convinced that their gender and their body are misaligned. *CBS News* reports, “An 8-year-old second-grader in Los Angeles is a typical patient. Born a girl, the child announced at 18 months, ‘I a boy’ and has stuck with that belief.”<sup>126</sup> Such testimonies are becoming increasingly common, and they are giving rise to ethical and legal dilemmas. Children in the United States as young as four have received sex change therapy, beginning with psychological counseling, followed by hormone blockers when puberty begins, and the option of sex-reassignment surgery when they come of age.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, in the state of Oregon, 15 year-old children can now receive a sex change operation without parental consent or notice, and the State will pay for it through its Medicaid program, the Oregon Health Plan.<sup>128</sup>

In the most extreme cases of gender dysphoria, individuals are not content to merely present as the gender of their choice. Instead, they choose to undergo sex-reassignment surgery. This may involve top surgery, bottom surgery, or both. Psychiatrist Dr. Jack Drescher comments, “[Gender dysphoria is] different from other mental disorders. Usually with a mental disorder, we try and change the person’s mind. This is the only mental disorder where the treatment is changing the body. In a typical mental disorder, we try to make those symptoms go away. Here the treatment has emerged to align the person’s body to match their gender identity.”<sup>129</sup> According to *The Encyclopedia of Surgery*, “The number of gender reassignment procedures conducted in the United States each year is estimated at between 100 and 500. The number worldwide is estimated to be two to five times larger.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> “Sex-Change Treatment for Kids on the Rise.”

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Springer, “Oregon Allowing 15-Year-Olds to Get State-Subsidized Sex-Change Operations.”

<sup>129</sup> Jayson, “What ‘Transgender’ Means, and How Society Views It.”

<sup>130</sup> *Encyclopedia of Surgery*, The, “Sex Reassignment Surgery.”

Where such exist, pre-requisites for sex-reassignment surgery do not require objective evidence that the individual is trapped within the wrong body. Instead, the recommendation of mental health specialists and a history of hormonal therapy qualify as sufficient evidence.<sup>131</sup> This is because there is no objective standard for determining whether an individual's gender identity is misaligned with their physical body. In answer to the question, "How do I know if I'm transgender?" LPC and gender therapist Dara Hoffman-Fox suggests, "Does it feel like your physical body matches the gender that you can tell you are in your brain?"<sup>132</sup> Somehow personal and subjective feelings have become the standard for determining the medical necessity of sex-reassignment surgery. This is because the assumption is that the way an individual feels about themselves is the highest standard for determining reality. Moreover, nobody has the right to question anyone's personal feelings about themselves ... at least when it comes to the subject of gender identity.

With such a malleable standard, it is not surprising to find that people self-identify as far more than the opposite sex. There are numerous growing subcultures of individuals who believe themselves to be trans labeled. Former National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)



chapter president Rachel Dolezal created a national controversy in 2015 when it was discovered that she had no African-American ancestry. Her parents are primarily of Czech, German, and Swedish origins; nevertheless, Dolezal considered herself to be transracial and informed Matt Lauer at *Today*, "I identify as black."<sup>133, 134</sup> She explained that as early as the age of five, "I was drawing self-portraits with the brown crayon instead of the peach crayon, and black curly hair."<sup>135</sup>

*Picture from Uptown magazine: Harris, "Mother Says Local NAACP Isn't Black."*

Similarly, transabled individuals identify with the physically handicapped. Also known as Body Integrity Identity Disorder, Alexandre Baril explains, "We define transability as the desire or the need for a person identified as able-bodied by other people to transform his or her body to obtain a physical impairment ... The person could want to become deaf, blind, amputee, paraplegic. It's a really, really strong desire."<sup>136</sup> Amber Shuping made international headlines when she allowed a sympathetic psychologist to pour drain cleaner into both of her eyes. From the time she was a little girl, Amber had dreamed of being blind, and she felt compelled to bring her body into conformity with her identity.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Philadelphia Center for Transgender Surgery, "Prerequisites."

<sup>132</sup> Hoffman-Fox, "Ask a Gender Therapist: How Do I know If I'm Transgender?"

<sup>133</sup> "Rachel Dolezal."

<sup>134</sup> Kim, "Rachel Dolezal Breaks Her Silence on TODAY: 'I Identify as Black'."

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Boesveld, "Becoming Disabled by Choice, Not Chance: 'Transabled' People Feel Like Impostors in Their Fully Working Bodies."

<sup>137</sup> "A Dr. Phil Daytime Exclusive: The Woman Who Put Drain Cleaner in Her Eyes to Fulfill Her Dream of Being Blind."

When identity is divorced from objective reality, anything becomes possible. Fictives are people who believe “their true identity is a fictional character, often from a series of fantasy novels or a Japanese role-playing game.”<sup>138</sup> Similarly, according to the book *Otherkin Timeline*, “People who call themselves otherkin (meaning ‘kin to the other’) look human, but identify as supernatural entities ordinarily thought of as legendary or mythological, most commonly elves, Fae, and dragons, but many other kinds of creatures are represented as well.”<sup>139</sup> These individuals believe they have been born into the wrong body.<sup>140</sup> Richard Hernandez believes he is truly a female dragon named Eva Tiamat Medusa. *The Daily Mail* reports:<sup>141</sup>



Picture from *Daily Mail*: Blott, “Transgender Former Banker.”

“

A transgender former banker claims to be the first and only person to have both ears cosmetically removed as part of her ongoing quest to become a “dragon”. ... the 55-year-old has undergone a number of painful procedures over the past few years including nose modification, tooth extraction and eye colouring. She also has a forked tongue and a full-face tattoo as part of her transformation into a “mythical beast”. ... She has also had horns implanted onto her forehead, and tattoos and scarification on her face and chest that resemble reptilian scales. ... On her website, Tiamat explains: “I am the Dragon Lady, A pre-op M2F (male to female) transgender in the process of morphing into a human dragon, becoming a reptoid as I shed my human skin and my physical appearance and my life as a whole leaving my humanness behind.” She adds that she wants to embrace her “most natural self awareness as a mythical beast.”

Likewise, there is a growing community of individuals who believe they suffer from species dysphoria.<sup>142</sup> According to *Otherkin Timeline*, “People who call themselves therianthropes (meaning ‘animal people’) look human, but identify as animals, most commonly wolves or felines,

<sup>138</sup> Read, “From Otherkin to Transethnicity: Your Field Guide to the Weird World of Tumblr Identity Politics.”

<sup>139</sup> Scribner, “Otherkin Timeline: The Recent History of Elfin, Fae, and Animal People, v. 2.0.”

<sup>140</sup> Read, “From Otherkin to Transethnicity: Your Field Guide to the Weird World of Tumblr Identity Politics.”

<sup>141</sup> Blott, “Transgender Former Banker, 55, Has Her Ears and Nose REMOVED to Transform Into a ‘Dragon Lady’ with Scales, a Forked Tongue and a Horned Skull.”

<sup>142</sup> Mralcahuete, “People Who Think They Are Animals Trapped In Human Bodies.”



*Picture of human puppies. Some Human pups identify as dogs while others use it as a form of escapism or a sexual fetish originating in BDSM. Photography Richard Ansett/Channel 4 (Harris, "The Men Who Live as Dogs.")*

but many other kinds of animals are represented as well.”<sup>143</sup> At the age of sixteen, a woman in Norway “discovered” that she is truly a cat who was born into a human body. *The Telegraph* reports, “[S]he has a superior sense of hearing and sight which allows her to hunt mice in the dark. ... The young woman shows off her cat characteristics by wearing fake ears and an artificial tail. She communicates by meowing. ... The cat woman wears a pair of pink fluffy paws with which to groom herself, and feels especially like doing so when she is in contact with water. When asked if she was born as the wrong species, she said: ‘Yes, born in the wrong species.’”<sup>144</sup>

As with those who suffer from gender dysphoria, Daniel Greenfield reports, “Transpecies Americans create special pronouns for themselves and insist that refusing to pretend that they’re cats or wolves is a hate crime.”<sup>145</sup> Fundamentally, what is different between a transspecies individual who seeks affirmation of their animal identity because they wear tails, ears, and paws in public and a transgender individual who seeks affirmation of their gender identity because they wear clothes and paraphernalia of that gender in public? Fundamentally, what is different from a transable individual who feels compelled to damage parts of their body in order to bring it into conformity with their handicap identity and a transgender individual who feels compelled to undergo hormone injections and surgery to bring their body into conformity with their gender identity? Fundamentally, what is different between a transracial individual who knows they are African-American because they drew pictures of themselves with brown skin and curly hair when they were five and a transgender

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<sup>143</sup> Scribner, “Otherkin Timeline: The Recent History of Elfin, Fae, and Animal People, v. 2.0.”

<sup>144</sup> Horton, “Woman Says She Is a Cat Trapped in the Wrong Body – She Hisses at Dogs, Hates Water and Claims She Can Even See Better at Night.”

<sup>145</sup> Greenfield, “Forget Transgender, Get Ready for Transpecies.”

individual who knows they are the other gender because they preferred to dress and play with the toys of that gender since they were very young?

When reality is divorced from objective truth, anything becomes possible. In seeking to answer the question, “Is it possible to be born in the wrong body?” *Transgender Trend* writes:<sup>146</sup>

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The idea that the brain and body are split, and that it is possible to have the brain of one sex and the body of the opposite, is a very recent idea which is unsupported by any credible scientific evidence.

Body and brain are interconnected; there is no separate innate “gender” area of the brain which is fixed at birth. Children’s brains are very plastic; they develop through interaction with people and the environment and they are constantly absorbing information and influences which shape them.

Research in neuroscience consistently confirms that there is no “male” or “female” brain and that all children are born with the potential to develop their own unique characteristics of behaviour, interests, talents and personality, regardless of their biological sex.

Our experiences and habits restructure our brains, thereby establishing and influencing our personality, mannerisms, preferences, and ways of thinking. The brain and the body work in tandem, each influencing the other. The idea that the true essence of our selves can be reduced to neural synapsis firing in our brains, unaffected by and distinct from the remainder of our physical bodies, harkens back to the ancient teaching of Gnosticism. Theologian R.C. Sproul writes, “The Greeks viewed man as a creature locked in a conflict between two opposing and irreconcilable substances, the body and the soul. To the Greek the soul is eternal and good, the body is temporal and intrinsically imperfect. For Plato the nonmaterial *ideal*/realm is the realm of the good. The physical is at best an imperfect receptacle or copy of the ideal. Hence the view emerged in Greek philosophy that the body is the prison house of the soul. Redemption means the release of the soul from the body.”<sup>147</sup> Put another way, Jesse Johnson writes, “Gnostics were a first-century cult that taught that matter didn’t matter. More precisely, they held that our physical bodies were vulgar and thus lacked value, while our inner spiritual state represented true reality.”<sup>148</sup> Recognizing the parallels between Gnosticism and transgenderism, Russell Moore warns against falling prey to this cultural narrative of transgenderism, “This narrative is rooted in the ancient heresy of Gnosticism, with the idea that the “real” self is separate from who one is as an embodied, material being. Body parts and chromosomal patterns are dispensable since the self is radically disconnected from the body, the

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<sup>146</sup> “Born in the Wrong Body?”

<sup>147</sup> Sproul, R.C. “The Origin of the Soul.”

<sup>148</sup> Johnson, “Transgendered Gnosticism.”

psychic from the material. The old Gnostic heresy is joined with contemporary expressive individualism—the idea that I must be true to whomever I perceive my ‘real me’ to be on the inside in order to be ‘authentic.’”<sup>149</sup>

In reality, our true selves are not merely a neural network of electrical impulses firing inside our brains. In fact, the near-death experience of Pam Reynolds indicates that human consciousness may be housed somewhere outside the brain. In his book *The Supernatural Worldview*, Christian apologist Chris Putnam recounts, “Reynolds endured an exotic surgical procedure called “Operation Standstill” to remove a life-threatening aneurysm on her brain stem. The procedure entails stopping the heart, and the blood is drained from the brain to allow the aneurysm to be removed. Even more, the body temperature is lowered to 60 degrees while fully anesthetized with sound-emitting earplugs to verify flat brainwave activity on an EEG.”<sup>150</sup> Despite the fact that Reynold’s heart was stopped, her brain was drained of blood, and her brainwave activity was flat-lined, Reynolds was later able to describe conversations that the doctors had during her operation and the surgical tools they used which hadn’t been revealed before her operation. Chris Putnam writes, “Neuroscientist Mario Beauregard argues that her case suggests that ‘mind, consciousness and self can continue when the brain is no longer functional and the clinical criteria of death have been reached.’ In other words, this seriously challenges the materialist paradigm, which entails that the mind is simply a product of electrochemical brain processes.”<sup>151</sup>

We are more than the product of our brains. The Bible teaches in [1 Thessalonians 5:23](#) that we are a combination of body, soul, and spirit, “*Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Where each of these begins and ends may be beyond our ability to discern. [Hebrews 4:12](#) teaches, “[T]he word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Regardless, we know that we are more than a physical body, and likewise, we are more than a spiritual being. According to the Bible, we are the combination of that which is spiritual, and that which is physical. As R.C. Sproul writes, “The Christian doctrine of substantial dichotomy is not dualistic. Man is not a *dualism* but a *duality*. That is, we have a real body (material substance) and a real soul (immaterial substance).”<sup>152</sup> This is why we as Christians anticipate the resurrection of the dead. We know that although our spirit can exist apart from the body, we are not complete apart from our bodies. R.C. Sproul writes, “For the Christian, redemption is *of* the body, not *from* the body.”<sup>153</sup>

When God created mankind, He first formed a body from the dust of the Earth. However, it was not until He breathed the breath of life into that body that the man became a living creature. [Genesis 2:7](#) says, “[T]hen the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” Our spirits are not pre-existing entities in search of physical bodies. Rather, God creates both our spirit and our body. As such, they are not misaligned. We cannot accidentally find ourselves in the wrong body.

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<sup>149</sup> Moore, Russell. “What Should the Church Say to Bruce Jenner?”

<sup>150</sup> Putnam, *The Supernatural Worldview*, 158.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, 159.

<sup>152</sup> Sproul, R.C. “The Origin of the Soul.”

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*.

Realizing this, personal feelings cannot determine our biological sex. The presence of a Y chromosome establishes an individual as male, and the absence of a Y chromosome establishes an individual as female. This is a biological certainty regardless of chromosome mutations and sex organ anomalies. Biology expert Regina Bailey explains:<sup>154</sup>

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In sex chromosomes, nondisjunction results in a number of abnormalities. Klinefelter syndrome is a disorder in which males have an extra X chromosome. The genotype for males with this disorder is XXY. People with Klinefelter syndrome may also have more than one extra chromosome resulting in genotypes which include XXYY, XXXY, and XXXXY. Other mutations result in males that have an extra Y chromosome and a genotype of XYY. ... Turner syndrome is a condition that affects females. Individuals with this syndrome, also called monosomy X, have a genotype of only one X chromosome (XO). Trisomy X females have an additional X chromosome and are also referred to as metafemales (XXX).

There is no third gender. As Jesus says in [Mark 10:6](#), “[F]rom the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’” Being in perfect agreement with one another, an individual’s sex is established by the objective standards of both biology and the Bible.

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<sup>154</sup> Bailey, “Sex Chromosome Abnormalities.”

# Discussion Questions

*These questions are intended to stimulate thought and discussion. They are particularly designed for use in Sunday school and small group settings.*

1. If a young child wants to dress as or play with toys associated with the other gender, does it necessarily mean that they identify with that gender? Why?
2. Do you think that it is appropriate that children in the United States as young as four have received sex change therapy? Why?
3. Generally speaking, are 15 year-old children emotionally and mentally mature enough to make a decision regarding sex change apart from parental consent or even notification? Why?
  - A. What are some of the things you were certain you wanted when you were a teenager that today you are grateful you never received?
  - B. How should the knowledge that as many as 98% of gender confused boys and 88% of gender confused girls eventually accept their biological sex after naturally passing through puberty influence the way we handle gender confusion among pre-pubescent children? (See Appendix A)
  - C. How should the knowledge that hormone therapy could cause sterilization and permanent psychological changes influence our decision to treat gender confused teenagers with hormone therapy? (See Appendix A)
4. How would sex-reassignment operations change if objective evidence that the individual is trapped in the wrong body were required?
  - A. Is providing objective evidence that the individual is trapped in the wrong body a reasonable requirement? Why?
  - B. What objective standard could be used for determining if an individual's gender identity is misaligned with their physical body?
5. In answer to the question, "How do I know if I'm transgender?" gender therapist Dara Hoffman-Fox suggests, "Does it feel like your physical body matches the gender that you can tell you are in your brain?" Are personal feelings a reliable standard for determining truth? Why?
  - A. What are examples of when you absolutely knew something to be true based upon the way you felt only to later discover that you were wrong?

- B. How should the teaching in Jeremiah 17:9 that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick influence how a person determines whether they are transgender?
6. The statement was made, “When reality is divorced from the truth, anything becomes possible.” Do you agree with this? Why?
- A. If it is possible for a gender to receive the wrong body, then is it also possible for a member of a species to receive the wrong body? Why?
- B. Fundamentally, what is different between a transspecies individual who seeks affirmation of their animal identity because they wear tails, ears, and paws in public and a transgender individual who seeks affirmation of their gender identity because they wear clothes and paraphernalia of that gender in public?
- C. Fundamentally, what is different from a transable individual who feels compelled to damage parts of their body in order to bring it into conformity with their handicap identity and a transgender individual who feels compelled to undergo hormone injections and surgery to bring their body into conformity with their gender identity?
- D. Fundamentally, what is different between a transracial individual who knows they are African-American because they drew pictures of themselves with brown skin and curly hair when they were five and a transgender individual who knows they are the other gender because they preferred to dress and play with the toys of that gender since they were very young?
7. How should the knowledge that our experiences and habits restructure our brains—thereby establishing and influencing our personality, mannerisms, preferences, and ways of thinking—influence the way we think about transgenderism?
8. What objective truth establishes an individual as a male or a female?
- A. Does the number of X chromosomes attached to the Y chromosome change whether an individual is a biological male? Why?
- B. Biblically, how can we be certain there is no third gender?
9. Do our physical bodies matter in the long run? Why?
- A. How is it significant that we are more than the product of our brains—that we consist of body, soul, and spirit according to 1 Thessalonians 5:23?
- B. What does R.C. Sproul mean when he says, “Man is not a *dualism* but a *duality*”?
- C. What is the significance of R.C. Sproul’s statement, “For the Christian, redemption is *of* the body, not *from* the body”?
- D. Why is it significant that God creates both our spirits and our bodies?

## Why are Gender-Specific Bathrooms Important?

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Within a month's time, 1,327,000 petitioners pledged to boycott Target, America's second largest retailer, over its revised bathroom policy.<sup>155, 156</sup> In a company statement issued April 19, 2016, Target announced, "We believe that everyone—every team member, every guest, and every community—deserves to be protected from discrimination, and treated equally. Consistent with this belief, Target supports the federal Equality Act, which provides protections to LGBT individuals, and opposes action that enables discrimination. ... we welcome transgender team members and guests to use the restroom or fitting room facility that corresponds with their gender identity."<sup>157</sup>

Target's revisions come amid a legislative battle over who should and should not be permitted to use gender-specific bathrooms and changing facilities. Numerous states in America have either introduced, or are considering introducing legislation designed to settle this issue. These states include Alabama, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.<sup>158, 159</sup> Certainly the most prominent among these has been North Carolina's House Bill 2, the Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act which was signed into law on March 23, 2016. The bill requires that individuals using public bathrooms and changing rooms use the facilities which match the gender on their birth certificate.<sup>160</sup> In response to this law, businesses cancelled expansion plans in North Carolina, popular musicians cancelled performances, the National Basketball Association threatened to move the 2017 All-Star Game from Charlotte, film companies have relocated their productions out of North Carolina, the federal government has

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<sup>155</sup> American Family Association, "Sign the Boycott Target Pledge!"

<sup>156</sup> Starnes, "One Million Americans Vow to Boycott Target Over Transgender Bathrooms."

<sup>157</sup> Target, "Continuing to Stand for Inclusivity."

<sup>158</sup> Libresco, "Seven Other States Are Considering Restricting Bathrooms for Transgender People."

<sup>159</sup> Tousley, "The War On Bathrooms: A Transgender Right for Equality."

<sup>160</sup> Kopan, *et. al.*, "North Carolina Governor Signs Controversial Transgender Bill."

threatened to withhold federal funding for the state, and the federal government has sued North Carolina for violations of the Equal Rights Amendment to the Civil Rights Act.<sup>161, 162, 163</sup>

Why are individuals, businesses, and governments making such a big deal about who can and cannot use gender-specific bathrooms and changing facilities? According to a *Rolling Stone* article titled “What It’s Like to Use a Public Bathroom While Trans,” “For most people, going to a public restroom is no big deal. ... For trans people, however, using a public bathroom is complicated, and often dangerous. A 2013 survey from UCLA’s Williams Institute found that nearly 70 percent of trans people had experienced negative interactions in public facilities – from dirty looks to snide comments to physical violence.”<sup>164</sup> Essentially, public bathrooms and changing facilities are not “safe spaces” and are considered to be dangerous within the transgender community. It is common to hear expressions of concern that transgender individuals may be assaulted in the bathroom. This was probably a significantly greater risk in past decades when fewer people were aware of the transgender community, but there is virtually no data to corroborate the belief that public bathrooms remain a place of physical danger for transgender individuals. Undoubtedly, there must be some instances of assault just as there are cases of assault against others in public bathrooms, but there is little data which leads one to believe that this is a common, or even likely, occurrence. Rather, the most consistent threat to transgender individuals using public bathrooms and changing facilities is one of humiliation—whether evident to all or simply perceived by the individual. This fear of humiliation is so strong within the transgender community that the majority prefer to avoid using public facilities altogether.

Brynn Tannehill explains to *Rolling Stone* why she remains fearful of using a public bathroom, “There’s always in the back of my mind that anything I do, especially if I’m in someplace where people know I’m trans, if I even blink wrong, if I look the wrong way, if I spend too much time in the bathroom, [or] if I do anything besides get in and get out, that somebody is going to accuse me of something. My bathroom visits are surgical strikes... you do one thing without collateral damage.”<sup>165</sup> She says the worst part is the dirty looks she receives and double takes people make when she walks into the bathroom.<sup>166</sup> Similarly, Lara Americo shares:<sup>167</sup>

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“You stand outside the bathroom for maybe a minute or two to make sure no one is coming out or no one is coming in. Then you go inside and if you hear someone, you just look down and hope they don’t look at your face.... You run into the stall and you lock the door as fast as you can, and then you do what you have to do. If you hear someone walk in, or you hear someone else in there, you have to wait until they leave. Once you hear that they are gone, you can run out. Washing your hands is a difficult

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<sup>161</sup> Berman, “North Carolina, Justice Dept. Filing Dueling Lawsuits Over Transgender Rights.”

<sup>162</sup> Sterling, “North Carolina, U.S., Square Off Over Transgender Rights.”

<sup>163</sup> Dalesio, “LGBT Law Fallout: North Carolina Feeling the Heat from Business.”

<sup>164</sup> Lang, “What It’s Like to Use a Public Bathroom While Trans.”

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

situation because it takes time, so hopefully you brought disinfectant.”

Also, Alok Vaid-Menon explains, “I did not use a single public restroom at all until the age of 18 or 19. Like a lot of trans people — this is anecdotal — I have a urinary tract infection or condition from having to hold because so many of us were too afraid to even use the restroom that we just did not. That’s where I start: Even before this flurry of bills, there’s been a long history of many of us not using restrooms because we were too afraid of what would happen in them....”<sup>168</sup>

There is a deep-rooted fear of the bathroom within the transgender community. This is not because of the prevalence of violence, but rather the fear of possible humiliation. Transgender individuals are afraid they will not be accepted, will be challenged, or will be reminded of the differences between themselves and those with whom they identify. In short, public bathrooms and changing facilities are a constant reminder of the truth that merely identifying with a particular gender is not sufficient to change the reality of biology.

Recently, politicians have endeavored to fix the problem by defining an individual’s sex apart from their biology, choosing instead to focus entirely upon the individual’s personal feelings. *CBS New York* reports, “New York City has enacted a regulation that ensures people visiting city facilities can use restrooms or locker rooms aligned with their gender identity. Mayor Bill de Blasio signed an executive order on Monday that guarantees people access to single-sex facilities consistent with their gender identity at city facilities, including offices, pools and recreation centers, without the need to show identification or any other proof of gender. The move comes amid a continuing national debate over anti-discrimination laws.”<sup>169</sup> Similarly, President Obama’s administration has issued a “dear colleague” letter directing all public schools to permit students to use the bathroom and locker room that matches their gender identity.<sup>170</sup>

Such directives are based upon the Obama administration’s unique interpretation of the Equal Rights Amendment to the Civil Right Act which was designed to prevent discrimination against women. This view interprets the word “sex” in the document as referring to an individual’s gender identity, not merely their biological sex. This is how the dear colleague letter to schools can declare, “[T]o ensure nondiscrimination on the basis of sex requires schools to provide transgender students equal access to educational programs and activities even in circumstances in which other students, parents, or community members raise objections or concerns.”<sup>171</sup>

This interpretation of the law makes the issue of bathroom access far greater than privacy and safety concerns. At stake is whether transgender individuals should be considered a specially protected class of people. This is important because there are no religious exemptions from providing a protected class with services and opportunities when doing so would result in a serious conflict of interest between the lifestyle of the transgender individual and the religious and moral convictions

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> “De Blasio Signs Bill Allowing Use of Bathrooms, Locker Rooms Based on Gender Identity.”

<sup>170</sup> Grinberg, “Feds Issue Guidance on Transgender Access to School Bathrooms.”

<sup>171</sup> Hirschfeld, *et al.*, “U.S. Directs Public Schools to Allow Transgender Access to Restrooms.”

of the other.<sup>172, 173</sup> In this case, it would also refuse exemptions for those who recognize and wish to act upon the reality inherent in biological differences.

Presently there is an ongoing controversy over whether transgendered athletes should be permitted to compete according to their gender identity rather than their biological identity. Does a trans woman have an advantage in body-building, boxing, or basketball because she remains a biological male? Regardless of hormone therapy and sex-reassignment surgery, male-to-female individuals will likely possess greater stature and increased bone density.<sup>174</sup> Is this a sufficient advantage to necessitate segregating trans female athletes from biologically female athletes? These questions have not been universally settled, but *The Huffington Post* reports:<sup>175</sup>

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The International Olympic Committee (IOC) settled the issue of transgender athletes in 2004, when they released the rules for them to compete. The IOC rules boil down to three basic points:

- They must have had gender reassignment surgery.
- They must have legal recognition of their assigned gender.
- They must have at least two years of hormone therapy.

... The NCAA instituted somewhat less stringent guidelines in 2011. They do not require surgery, and they require only one year on testosterone suppression for male-to-female transgender athletes.

However, if transgender individuals acquire the legal status of “protected class,” then the IOC will no longer be permitted to restrict participation in female athletic competitions to those who have

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<sup>172</sup> If there is any question whether sexual liberties may eventually trump religious liberties, consider the statement of Georgetown Law Professor Chai Feldblum who was appointed by President Barack Obama to serve on the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, “When we pass a law that says you may not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, we are burdening those who have an alternative moral assessment of gay men and lesbians. ... I’m having a hard time coming up with any case in which religious liberty should win. ... Sexual liberty should win in most cases. There can be a conflict between religious liberty and sexual liberty, but in almost all cases the sexual liberty should win because that’s the only way that the dignity of gay people can be affirmed in any realistic manner.” (Gallagher, “On Chai Feldblum’s Claim That I Misquoted Her.”)

<sup>173</sup> If there is any question whether sexual liberties may eventually trump religious liberties, consider the example of California Senate Bill 1146. Todd Starnes comments, “If California Democrats have their way, Christian colleges and universities will no longer be allowed to require students attend chapel services or require them to profess a relationship with Jesus Christ. Senate Bill 1146 would close a loophole that lawmakers say allows Christian universities to discriminate against students based on their gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. ... The legislation has already passed the Senate and is expected to clear hurdles in the Assembly. ... ‘No university should have a license to discriminate,’ [Senator Ricardo Lara] said in a statement.” (Starnes, “Democrats, LGBT Activists’ Sinister Plan to Crack Down on Christian Schools.”)

<sup>174</sup> Menza, “How Does Transitioning Affect a Transgender Athlete’s Sports Performance?”

<sup>175</sup> Tannehill, “Do Transgender Athletes Have an Unfair Advantage?”

undergone sex-reassignment surgery. Neither will the IOC or the NCAA be permitted to restrict participation to those who are receiving hormone therapy. If based solely on an individual's personal feelings, they cannot be restrained from using a bathroom, a changing facility, or from sharing a hotel room on school field trips with the gender with which they identify, then athletic organizations will not be permitted to restrict participants from competing for any reason other than how they feel.

The bathroom is merely the frontline of the transgender community's culture war. The implications of these policies and laws stretch far beyond the bathroom. Who may or may not use a gender-specific bathroom may not be a monumental issue in-and-of-itself, but when the reasoning behind such policies and laws are applied to other areas of social life, it could result in fundamental transformation. Most importantly, this is not restricted to peripheral issues, such as athletic competitions. Psychiatrist Dr. Keith Ablow explains in a *Fox and Friends* interview:<sup>176</sup>

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The reason that the bathroom bill is center stage in the presidential campaign, and now in a national boycott of Target that's up to about 500,000 people is because it represents more than bathrooms. We're not just talking about who's going to use which restroom. We're talking about whether closely held opinion of an individual will be allowed to overcome scientific data and history. Right? So if you believe you are of one gender, but your DNA, and your physical appearance, and your physical anatomy are evidence you are of another gender, and there's that conflict, then if we allow people culturally to dictate terms in our culture, then we also by extension may be in a position where we allow people to say that they're sixty-five when they're forty-five and get Medicare, allow people to get tattooed head to foot and say, "I'm a black person." Now would that be offensive to black people if that person got affirmative action preferences at school? I think it might. Why? Because there's history, there's culture, there's reality. This is the leading edge, some would argue—I might—of an unraveling of our culture, and perhaps our ability to plan for the future as a species. ... And so if we have a draft, God forbid, and we're trying to save our nation, are we really prepared for eighteen-year-olds and twenty-year-olds to assert that they're really more like twelve-year-olds? They feel it; they're immature; their whole families have said, "Look, much too immature to be drafted." That's where we're headed. Do we want to head there?

Dr. Ablow's analysis may seem extreme at first glance, but already there are some who are identifying by a self-perceived age. *The Daily Mail* reports, "A Canadian man who was married, with seven kids, has left his family in order to fulfill his true identity - as a six-year-old girl. ... Now, Stefonknee lives with friends who she [calls] her 'adoptive mommy and daddy' as a six-year-old girl, dressing in

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<sup>176</sup> "Target: Use the Restroom that Matches Your 'Gender Identity,'" Video Embedded in the Source: Starnes, "One Million Americans Vow to Boycott Target Over Transgender Bathrooms."

children's clothing and spending her time playing and coloring with her adoptive parents' grandchildren."<sup>177</sup>

Picture from Daily Mail: James, "I've Gone Back to Being a Child'."



Dr. Ablow's analysis may seem extreme at first glance, but already there are some who are identifying by a self-perceived age. *The Daily Mail* reports, "A Canadian man who was married, with seven kids, has left his family in order to fulfill his true identity - as a six-year-old girl. ... Now, Stefanknee lives with friends who she [calls] her 'adoptive mommy and daddy' as a six-year-old girl, dressing in children's clothing and spending her time playing and coloring with her adoptive parents' grandchildren."<sup>178</sup>

When personal perception becomes the standard for determining reality, anything becomes possible. Reality and objective truth are being sacrificed atop the altar of political correctness and tolerance. However, the nature of reality is such that it does not change regardless of how much we may wish it away and deny its existence. The reality is that we as human beings are more than a feeling; we are biological creatures. Every cell in our bodies is hardcoded to a specific gender.<sup>179</sup> Regardless of how we may feel about it, we are born into this identity.

Just as each of us is born with a physical identity, the Bible teaches that we are also born with a spiritual identity. Every one of us is born a child of the Devil. [First John 3:10](#) teaches, "*By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*" In [Romans 3:10 and 23](#) we are told, "*None is righteous, no, not one; ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" This is reality regardless of how much we may deny it. Just as changing one's attire, voice, and possibly one's genitalia does not change the reality that, at our core, our cells are hardcoded with a specific gender identity, so also merely changing one's vocabulary, attending church, and praying occasionally is not sufficient to change the reality that, at our core, we are sinful people who identify with the Devil's rebellion against God. However, our spiritual identity is unique from our biological identity in that it can be reborn.

In a conversation with the Jewish Pharisee Nicodemus, Jesus announced in [John 3:3](#), "*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" As might be expected, Nicodemus was confused, and he responded by asking, "*How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?*" The obvious answer to this

<sup>177</sup> James, "I've Gone Back to Being a Child': Husband and Father-of-Seven, 52, Leaves His Wife and Kids to Live as a Transgender SIX-YEAR-OLD Girl Named Stefanknee."

<sup>178</sup> James, "I've Gone Back to Being a Child': Husband and Father-of-Seven, 52, Leaves His Wife and Kids to Live as a Transgender SIX-YEAR-OLD Girl Named Stefanknee."

<sup>179</sup> tube46, "Camille Paglia: 'Transgender Mania Is a Symptom of West's Cultural Collapse.'"

question is, “Of course not!” Nevertheless, Jesus answered in [John 3:5-6](#), “*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*” Jesus taught that the spirit can be reborn, and He then proceeded to explain how this spiritual rebirth is accomplished. [John 3:16](#) says:

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*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.*

An individual can be spiritually reborn through a belief in the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ on the cross, and by aligning their practice with God’s commandments. When this happens, they receive a new identity as “child of God” ([Rom. 8:15-17](#); [Gal. 4:6-7](#)).

The transgender community fears the bathroom in part because it sheds light upon their rebellion against God and His purpose for their lives. The bathroom is a place where biological reality comes into direct conflict with gender identity. According to Jesus, mankind’s natural tendency is to avoid anything that might expose its rebellion. Today it is the bathroom. If society concedes the bathroom to the transgender community, the conflict will not end; it will merely be relocated to the next area of social life which threatens to shed light upon the transgender community’s rebellion against God’s created order.

# Discussion Questions

*These questions are intended to stimulate thought and discussion. They are particularly designed for use in Sunday school and small group settings.*

1. Is limiting access to public bathrooms and changing facilities to those who are biologically male or female discriminatory? Why?
  - A. Does limiting access to public bathrooms and changing facilities to those who are biologically male or female exclude any human beings? Why?
  - B. If every person is held to the identical standard for which bathroom and changing facility they are permitted to access, then is anyone being treated unequally?
2. A 2013 survey from UCLA's Williams Institute found that nearly 70% of trans people had experienced negative interactions in public facilities—from dirty looks to snide comments to physical violence. Why is the scope of this study too broad to be meaningful?
  - A. How many non-transgender individuals do you imagine have experienced negative interactions in public facilities—from dirty looks, to snide comments, to physical violence?
  - B. Does the 2013 Williams Institute study prove that bathrooms are a dangerous place for transgender individuals? Why?
  - C. Why do you think transgender individuals believe the bathroom might be a dangerous place for them?
  - D. What is the most consistent threat to transgender individuals using public bathrooms and changing facilities?
3. How is defining an individual's sex apart from their biology, choosing instead to focus entirely upon the individual's feelings, a destabilizing influence upon society?
4. Why do you think the transgender community has chosen to make public bathrooms the frontline of their culture war?
  - A. How do bathrooms shed light upon the transgender community's rebellion against God and His purpose for their lives?
  - B. As Christians, should we involve ourselves in this and similar political battles? Why?

- C. How can we as Christians oppose removing gender restrictions from bathrooms and changing facilities without being hurtful to the transgender community?
5. Is discrimination or segregation always bad? Why?
  6. What do you think will be the result if Christian schools cannot speak against or prohibit transgender behavior, ministries cannot refuse to hire transgender individuals based upon their lifestyle, and pastors cannot refuse to marry transgender couples?
    - A. Should men who have not undergone hormone therapy or sex-reassignment surgery be permitted to play on an all-women's sports team because they believe themselves to be female? Why? Wouldn't anything less than this be discriminatory against transgender individuals?
  7. If a closely held opinion of an individual is allowed to overcome scientific data and history, then how can any form of segregation be enforced?
    - A. Fundamentally, how is an individual being certain they are truly a woman trapped in a man's body because of how they feel any different from a Caucasian being certain they are African-American because of how they feel?
    - B. Fundamentally, how is an individual being certain they are truly a woman trapped in a man's body because of how they feel any different from an adult being certain that they are truly a small child because of how they feel?
    - C. If a 52 year-old man can be considered a genuine woman based solely on how he feels, then why can he not be considered a genuine six-year-old based solely on how he feels?
  8. If every cell in our bodies is hardcoded to a specific gender, then what is required for a gender-confused individual to truly bring their body into alignment with their gender identity?
    - A. Does reality ever change because it is wished away, or its reality is denied? Why?
    - B. If a little boy believes he is a fireman and dresses like a fireman, then is he truly a fireman in reality? How is this any different from someone who believes they are the opposite gender and change their dress and bodies to look like the opposite gender?
  9. What is everyone's spiritual identity when they are born?
    - A. How is our spiritual identity unique from our physical identity?
    - B. How is it possible to be spiritually reborn?
    - C. What does it mean to be identified as a child of God?

## Is the Church Ready to Minister to Transgenders?

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Suicide rates among the transgender community are more than 25 times the rate of the general population. Statistics from a 2010 survey of more than 7,000 transgender individuals conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force reveal that “A staggering 41% of respondents reported attempting suicide compared to 1.6% of the general population ...” (emphasis removed).<sup>180</sup> Also revealed in the study is that “Over a quarter of the respondents misused drugs or alcohol specifically to cope with the discrimination they faced due to their gender identity or expression;” and, “Respondents reported over four times the national average of HIV infection, 2.64% in our sample compared to .6% in the general population, with rates for transgender women at 3.76%, and with those who are unemployed (4.67%) or who have engaged in sex work (15.32%) even higher; (emphasis removed).”<sup>181</sup>

The popular consensus is that these statistics are driven by increased mental stress resulting from the social and economic burdens of being visually non-conforming. As such, it is generally believed that the best solution for transgender individuals who have chosen to whole-heartedly embrace their gender identity is to undergo hormonal therapy and, often, sex-reassignment surgery. However popular this consensus may be, it is not firmly established in reliable scientific data. *The Guardian* reports:<sup>182</sup>

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There is no conclusive evidence that sex change operations improve the lives of transsexuals, with many people remaining severely distressed and even suicidal after the

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<sup>180</sup> Grant, *et al.*, “National Transgender Discrimination Survey Report on Health and Health Care.”

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> Batty, “Sex Changes Are Not Effective, Say Researchers.”

operation, according to a medical review conducted exclusively for Guardian Weekend tomorrow.

The review of more than 100 international medical studies of post-operative transsexuals by the University of Birmingham’s aggressive research intelligence facility (Arif) found no robust scientific evidence that gender reassignment surgery is clinically effective.

Follow-up studies indicate that while sex-reassignment patients are overwhelmingly satisfied with the cosmetic effects of the surgery, the surgery results in little change to their mental health and living conditions. In a *Wall Street Journal* article titled “Transgender Surgery Isn’t the Solution,” Dr. Paul McHugh, a psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins Hospital recalls:<sup>183</sup>

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We at Johns Hopkins University—which in the 1960s was the first American medical center to venture into “sex-reassignment surgery”—launched a study in the 1970s comparing the outcomes of transgendered people who had the surgery with the outcomes of those who did not. Most of the surgically treated patients described themselves as “satisfied” by the results, but their subsequent psycho-social adjustments were no better than those who didn’t have the surgery. And so at Hopkins we stopped doing sex-reassignment surgery, since producing a “satisfied” but still troubled patient seemed an inadequate reason for surgically amputating normal organs.

In a *First Things* article titled “Surgical Sex,” Dr. McHugh expounds:<sup>184</sup>

“

They had much the same problems with relationships, work, and emotions as before. The hope that they would emerge now from their emotional difficulties to flourish psychologically had not been fulfilled.

We saw the results as demonstrating that just as these men enjoyed cross-dressing as women before the operation so they enjoyed cross-living after it. But they were no better in their psychological integration or any easier to live with. With these facts in hand I concluded that Hopkins was fundamentally cooperating with a mental illness. We

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<sup>183</sup> “Paul McHugh: Transgender Surgery Isn’t the Solution – WSJ.”

<sup>184</sup> Paul McHugh, “Surgical Sex,” *First Things*, November 2004, Source: Brown, *Can You Be Gay and Christian?*, 22.

psychiatrists, I thought, would do better to concentrate on trying to fix their minds and not their genitalia.

Dr. McHugh's findings are further corroborated by a Swedish long-term study of 324 sex-reassignment patients which concludes, "Persons with transsexualism, after sex reassignment, have considerably higher risks for mortality, suicidal behaviour, and psychiatric morbidity than the general population. Our findings suggest that sex reassignment, although alleviating gender dysphoria, may not suffice as treatment for transsexualism, and should inspire improved psychiatric and somatic care after sex reassignment for this patient group."<sup>185</sup>

*The Guardian* reports, "Arif [Aggressive Research Intelligence Facility], which advises the NHS in the West Midlands about the evidence base of healthcare treatments, found that most of the medical research on gender reassignment was poorly designed, which skewed the results to suggest that sex change operations are beneficial. ... For example, in a five-year study of 727 post-operative transsexuals published last year, 495 people dropped out for unknown reasons. Dr Hyde said the high drop out rate could reflect high levels of dissatisfaction or even suicide among post-operative transsexuals."<sup>186</sup> Given the available data, the director of the University of Birmingham's Aggressive Research Intelligence Facility Dr. Chris Hyde, has concluded, "There is a huge uncertainty over whether changing someone's sex is a good or a bad thing. While no doubt great care is taken to ensure that appropriate patients undergo gender reassignment, there's still a large number of people who have the surgery but remain traumatized [sic] - often to the point of committing suicide. ... The bottom line is that although it's clear that some people do well with gender reassignment surgery, the available research does little to reassure about how many patients do badly and, if so, how badly."<sup>187</sup>

Perhaps greater heed should have been paid to Dr. Ihlenfeld's caution in 1979 that 80% of patients who want to change their sex shouldn't do it.<sup>188</sup> Warning that the transgender patient is "the only patient who diagnoses himself and prescribes his own treatment", Dr. Ihlenfeld comments, "There is too much unhappiness among people who have had the surgery. Too many of them end as suicides."<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, research from the U.S. and Holland reveals that as many as 20% of patients may regret changing their sex.<sup>190</sup>

Some experience regret before enduring surgery, such as Brad/Ria Cooper who made headlines as Britain's youngest sex change patient. After suffering "huge mental anguish" as a trans woman and massive hormone-induced mood swings, Ria Cooper decided to de-transition, choosing to return to her male identity as Brad Cooper.<sup>191</sup> Others, such as Walt Heyer, suffer sex change regret after

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<sup>185</sup> Dehjne, *et al.*, "Long-Term Follow-Up of Transsexual Persons Undergoing Sex Reassignment Surgery: Cohort Study in Sweden."

<sup>186</sup> Batty, "Sex Changes Are Not Effective, Say Researchers."

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> Garrett Oppenheim, "Ihlenfeld Cautions on Hormones: Stresses Psychological Dangers," *Transition*, no. 8 (January/February 1979), Source: Oppenheim, "Ihlenfeld Cautions on Hormones: Stresses Psychological Dangers."

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Batty, "Sex Changes Are Not Effective, Say Researchers."

<sup>191</sup> Winter, "I Was Born a Boy, Became a Girl, and Now I Want to Be a Boy Again': Britain's Youngest Sex Swap Patient to Reverse Her Sex Change Treatment."

experiencing reconstructive surgery. Walt Heyer was 42 years old, married, and a father of 2 when he chose to undergo sex-reassignment surgery and become Laura Jensen. Eight years later, he realized that his desire to change sexes was based upon deep-rooted childhood trauma rather than a genetic disorder. With no safe reversal procedures at the time, Walt Heyer chose to once again live as a man, despite having some permanent feminine physical features.<sup>192</sup> Today Walt Heyer manages the website *Sex Change Regret* and is the author of several books, including *Paper Genders*.

In a *Federalist* article titled “Transgender Characters May Win Emmys, but Transgender People Hurt Themselves,” Walt Heyer testifies that the process of disconnecting from one’s former identity while building a new identity is a “marvelous distraction for a while, but it isn’t a permanent solution when the underlying issues remain unaddressed.”<sup>193</sup> Eventually, reality catches up, and the individual is often left with broken relationships, a mutilated body, and the same mental stress as they suffered before changing their sex. Walt Heyer writes, “Gender change is at its heart a self-destructive act. Transgenders not only annihilate their birth identity, they destroy everyone and everything in their wake: family, wife, children, brothers or sisters, and career.”<sup>194</sup> Unfortunately, there often remains no hope at this point. No longer can the individual convince themselves that being true to their “real” self or that changing their wardrobe, voice, or body will allow their problems to go away. Having sacrificed and done “everything,” the sorrow and self-hatred ultimately remains.

Someone who has reached this place is often at their breaking point, desperate for a solution. Unfortunately, far too many transgender individuals find that solution in suicide. However, their story need not end in tragedy if we as Christians would extend to them the hope of the gospel. Rather than affirm their lifestyle choices in an effort to prevent them from feeling sorrow, anger, and regret, we as Christians should continually hold out the gospel in love. Until someone is disillusioned about their choices, they are unable to make a change. This requires that we share the truth, even when it hurts. Walt Heyer is an example of someone who reached rock bottom and found Jesus. He shares, “Perhaps life’s wisdom is only found by looking back over one’s shoulder at the clear view of the carnage that results from the madness of self-destruction. Regret, once acknowledged, opened my eyes to see what I had thought was reality. “I should be a woman” was only an illusion. The moment the word “regret” tumbled from my lips, I was open to truth and wisdom. I started to consider the possibility of leaving my surgically-altered life as a transgender woman and resume living as the male gender given me at birth.”<sup>195</sup> He finds strength to live according to his biological gender through his personal relationship with God, declaring, “My victory has come by allowing the Lord in my heart, [and] becoming God-focused instead of self-centered ...”<sup>196</sup>

In the Bible, the Apostle Paul was no stranger to regret. Having been personally enslaved by sins that haunted him throughout his life, the Apostle Paul was intimately familiar with the guilt and despair that can come from one’s past. Yet he was also intimately familiar with the forgiveness and hope that can come from Jesus Christ, and he devoted his life to sharing this truth with others. It is precisely because the Apostle Paul had himself sinned beyond measure that he spoke so boldly

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<sup>192</sup> Akbar, “The Man Who’s had TWO Sex Changes: Incredible Story of Walt, Who Became Laura, then REVERSED the Operation Because He Believes Surgeons in US and Europe Are Too Quick to Operate.”

<sup>193</sup> Heyer, “Tansgender Character May Win Emmys, but Transgender People Hurt Themselves.”

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> *Sex Change Regret*, “Examples.”

about the sins of others—not to condemn them, but to point the way to forgiveness. In [1 Timothy 3:12-17](#), the Apostle Paul writes:

“

*I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

The Bible is filled with examples of God not only forgiving people, but of God transforming lives. The Apostle Paul is quite possibly the best example of this. God took Paul—a blasphemer and one of the most ardent persecutors of the Christian Church—and transformed him into one of history’s greatest Christian missionaries who could instruct the church at Corinth in [1 Corinthians 11:1](#), “*Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*” Moreover, God used the Apostle Paul to pen 13 books of the Bible. Similarly, God took Jacob—a liar and a cheat who deceived his father into giving him his brother’s birthright—and transformed him into a man of faith who fathered the twelve tribes of Israel. Throughout Scripture, God refers to Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Another example is David who not only committed adultery, but engineered the death of the woman’s husband in order to hide his sin, and yet God promised David that his lineage would reign eternally in the Millennial Kingdom, and that Jesus the Messiah would come from his line. We could continue and look at Moses—a murderer whom God used to free His people from slavery and to lead them to the Promised Land; Gideon—a coward whom God used to defeat an oppressive army as numerous as the sand on the sea shore; Peter, a man who denied Jesus, and yet Jesus gave him the keys to the Kingdom; or any number of other examples in Scripture.

God is in the business of transforming lives. The Church is filled with ex-sinners. There are ex-liars, ex-cheats, ex-addicts, ex-adulterers, ex-gays, ex-transsexuals, ex-you-fill-in-the-blank. Given that man is naturally bent toward doing evil, it is probably true that none of these would have overcome their temptation in their own strength. It is only through the transformative power of the Holy Spirit that anyone is capable of overcoming his greatest temptations. It is only when a person relinquishes his sinful identity and turns to Jesus Christ in humble repentance that the power of sin is truly broken in an individual’s life. No longer must he be identified by his sin. Instead, he is identified as a child of God. This is the good news of Jesus Christ! [Galatians 4:4-7](#) says, “*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.*”

Regardless of our sin, regardless of how much damage we have caused to ourselves or to those around us, God offers every one of us forgiveness. [Romans 10:9-10](#) teaches, *“[I]f you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”* However, [Romans chapter 10](#) does not conclude with [verse 10](#). It goes on to say, *“For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ ... For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’”* As Christians, we have been commissioned to take this message of hope and salvation to those who need it. And who is in greater need than the individual who struggles with self-hatred and desperation?

Recent news, media, and legislative events have made it evident that there is an entire community of people who know that something isn’t right and are desperately seeking a solution. Unfortunately, they are focused upon transforming their bodies when they should be focused on transforming their spirits. However, the natural guide in this process is conspicuously absent. “Transgender” may have been the word of the year in 2015, but it does not seem to have entered the Church’s vocabulary.<sup>197</sup> The silence of the Church on the matter of gender dysphoria is deafening. How can transgender individuals receive the transformative power of Jesus Christ if the Christian refuses to share with them the truth of God’s Word?

Presently there are precious few books available that specifically address the subject of transgenderism from a Biblical perspective. Moreover, the vast majority of these books claim that the Bible supports transgenderism. Similarly, it is difficult to find sermons on the matter. Where then is someone who is struggling with sexual confusion supposed to turn for answers? The Church is silent, and the only alternatives to the Church are mostly eager to affirm and encourage transgender feelings.

So, what are we to do as Christians? The subject of transgenderism is complicated and controversial. There simply is not enough data to speak with authority on the science of the matter. Neither is there enough data to speak with authority on the social implications of transgenderism. Speculation is presented as fact, and social experimentation is presented as a proven solution. As Christians, we would do well to avoid becoming ensnared in such a quagmire of ideological arguments. Instead, we must learn what the Bible says about the key questions undergirding transgenderism. Questions such as: Is the body sacred? Does gender matter? Is gender distinct from biological sex? Does God make mistakes? etc., etc. However, we cannot merely store the answers to these questions in our brains. As Christians, we must communicate these truths with others—especially with those who do not agree—but it is crucial that this be done gently and in love ([1 Cor. 16:13-14](#); [Gal. 6:1](#)).

If we alienate the transgender community in our effort to stand upon the truth of God’s Word, then we forfeit our opportunity to share the gospel when they become disillusioned. Why would they turn for answers to those they believe harbor animosity toward them? Similarly, if we affirm the transgender lifestyle in an effort to show our love and tolerance, then we can offer them no hope of change when they realize the path they are treading leads only to destruction and hopelessness. Why

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<sup>197</sup> Taylor, “Why 2015 Was the Year of Trans Visibility.”

would they look for hope from someone who says they and the transgender individual are already so similar that we need not discuss the differences? Instead, when we as Christians stand apart from the transgender ideology in an honest yet loving manner, we protect the hope of the gospel.

We are not responsible for convicting others of their sin. This is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His disciples in [John 16:8](#), “[W]hen [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:” We are merely messengers responsible for telling others the truth of God’s Word. We stand as candles in the dark—sometimes shedding light upon the lies people believe, other times drawing people to the light. However, if we place our light under a bowl, then we can do nobody any good ([Matt. 5:14–16](#)). Therefore, we proclaim the truth of God’s Word to those who will listen, and we treat everyone with love and gentleness. In so doing, we encourage the convicting work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of others.

# Discussion Questions

*These questions are intended to stimulate thought and discussion. They are particularly designed for use in Sunday school and small group settings.*

1. Does the realization that suicide rates among the transgender community are more than 25 times the rate of the general population trouble you? Why?
  - A. Regardless of the cause, do we really want to encourage people in a lifestyle that is known to have substantial risk of suicide, HIV infection, and substance abuse? Is affirming someone in a lifestyle with such high risk truly loving? Why?
  - B. If these suicide rates are primarily driven by the economic and social pressure of being visually non-conforming, then why do suicide rates remain so high after satisfactory sex-reassignment procedures? What does this tell us about the root cause behind the high suicide rates among the transgender community?
  - C. Is it fair to blame the Church and anyone who does not celebrate the transgender lifestyle for the high suicide rates among the transgender community? Why?
  - D. Is it wise to provide people with such a high risk of suicidal behavior hormone therapy given the massive mood swings which can be involved? Why?
2. How should the knowledge that there is no robust scientific evidence that sex change operations improve the lives of transsexuals influence the way we attempt to help transgender individuals?
  - A. Is producing a satisfied but still troubled patient sufficient reason for surgically amputating normal organs? Why?
  - B. Do you agree with Dr. McHugh that if there is no robust scientific evidence that sex change operations improve the lives of transsexuals, then providing sex change operations is fundamentally cooperating with a mental illness? Why?
3. Why is it significant that, as Dr. Ihlenfeld says, the transgender patient is the only patient who diagnoses himself and prescribes his own treatment?
4. Do you agree with Walt Heyer's assessment that gender change is at its heart a self-destructive act? Why?
5. Where is a transgender individual who has tried "everything" and feels as though they've reached the end of the road in despair and desperation expected to turn for help?

- A. Is the Church a safe place for despairing and desperate transgender individuals to turn? Why?
  - B. In all honesty, do you want transgender individuals to turn to you or to your local church for help? Why?
  - C. Are sorry, anger, and regret always bad emotions? Why?
6. What effort are you making to reach transgender people with the gospel message? How?
- A. How can the Church effectively reach transgender people with the gospel message?
7. Is there hope for the transgender individual?
- A. How should a local church respond to a repentant transsexual who wishes to join the church?
  - B. Do you think the average Christian is ready to accept a repentant transsexual? Why?
  - C. What can the Church do to prepare Christians to accept repentant transsexuals?
8. Can God transform the life of a transgender individual?
- A. If God transforms the life of a transgender individual, will their gender dysphoria necessarily vanish? Why?
  - B. Can someone who identifies as another gender identify as a child of God? Why?
9. How do we protect the hope of the gospel when we as Christians stand apart from the transgender ideology in an honest yet loving manner?
- A. Why is it crucial that Christians speak the truth about transgenderism in love and with gentleness?
  - B. Why would transgender individuals turn for answers to those they believe harbor animosity toward them?
  - C. Why would transgender individuals look for hope from those who say they and the transgender are already so similar that we need not discuss the differences?
10. If the Holy Spirit is responsible for convicting others of their sin, then why is it important for us to speak the truth to the transgender community?

## Appendix A: Hormone Therapy

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Increasingly, hormone blockers are prescribed to delay the onset of puberty in children who are believed to suffer from gender dysphoria. By preventing the development of such things as facial bone structure, vocal chords, facial hair, and breasts, the individual is better prepared to make the physical transition from one gender to another, and future surgeries may be minimized. Dr. Annelou de Vries, a child and adolescent psychiatrist at the Center of Expertise on Gender Dysphoria explains that by delaying the onset of puberty, those children who eventually pursue gender reassignment “have the lifelong advantage of a body that matches their gender identities without the irreversible body changes of a low voice or beard growth or breasts ...”.<sup>198</sup> Furthermore, “Since puberty suppression is a fully reversible medical intervention, it provides adolescents and their families with time to explore their gender dysphoric feelings, and [to] make a more definite decision regarding the first steps of actual gender reassignment treatment at a later age.”<sup>199</sup>

In reality, however, it is unknown whether the effects of hormone blockers is “fully reversible.” The use of hormone blockers is considered an “off label” use of medication, meaning that it is has not been approved by the Food and Drug Administration.<sup>200</sup> The estrogen and testosterone hormones that are blocked by this medication assist in a child’s neurological development and in bone growth. It is unknown what the long-term neurological effects of using hormone blockers may be. Similarly, hormone blockers cause a decrease in bone density, and it is unknown if the patient may be at higher risk for osteoporosis in the future.<sup>201</sup>

Despite its widespread acceptance, the American College of Pediatricians has published the warning, “Puberty is not a disease and puberty-blocking hormones can be dangerous. Reversible or not,

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<sup>198</sup> Mozes, “Transgender Teens Become Happy, Healthy Young Adults.”

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> Boghani, “When Transgender Kids Transition, Medical Risks are Both Known and Unknown.”

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

puberty-blocking hormones induce a state of disease – the absence of puberty – and inhibit growth and fertility in a previously biologically healthy child. ... According to the DSM-V [*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition*], as many as 98% of gender confused boys and 88% of gender confused girls eventually accept their biological sex after naturally passing through puberty (emphasis removed).<sup>202</sup> Similarly, the Endocrine Society’s clinical guidelines reports, “In most children with GID [gender identity disorder], the GID does not persist into adolescence. The percentages differ between studies, probably dependent upon which version of the DSM was used in childhood, ages of children, and perhaps culture factors. However, the large majority (75–80%) of prepubertal children with a diagnosis of GID in childhood do not turn out to be transsexual in adolescence ... Clinical experience suggests that GID can be reliably assessed only after the first signs of puberty.”<sup>203</sup>

For those who do not outgrow their sense of gender dysphoria, the next step in gender reassignment is to begin taking the hormones of the desired gender. *PBS: Frontline* reports, “While the Endocrine Society’s guidelines suggest 16, more and more children are starting hormones at 13 or 14 once their doctors, therapists and families have agreed that they are mentally and emotionally prepared. The shift is because of the concerns over the impact that delaying puberty for too long can have on development, physically, emotionally and socially.”<sup>204</sup> As is to be expected, such treatment comes with a variety of side-effects, such as mood swings. However, it should be troubling that treatment which includes serious mood swings is being administered to children who are known to be 25 times more likely to commit suicide than the national average of the general population.<sup>205</sup> As an example, consider the testimony of 17-year-old Brad Cooper when he was in the process of transitioning to Ria Cooper. Cooper told the *Sunday Mirror*, “The hormones have made me feel up and down. One minute I feel moody and the next minute I feel really happy. The night I tried to slash my wrists I’d downed a bottle of Jack Daniel’s and just thought about how alone I am, and how my decision has alienated my family and how I will have to become a boy again to resolve it.”<sup>206</sup>

Another serious side effect of hormone therapy is reduced fertility—possibly leading to sterility.<sup>207</sup> Despite the fact that teenagers may not yet comprehend how meaningful the ability to have biological children may one day be to them, children as young as fifteen are now able to receive state-funded sex change therapy without parental consent, or even notification.<sup>208</sup> Dr. Jack Drescher, a member of the American Psychiatric Association who worked on the Sexual and Gender Identity Disorders Work Group, told *Fox News*, “Children age 15 may not fully understand all the consequences of the procedures they are undergoing.”<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> American College of Pediatricians, “Gender Ideology Harms Children.”

<sup>203</sup> “Endocrine Treatment of Transsexual Persons: An Endocrine Society Clinical Practice Guideline Endocrine Society,” *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism* 94, no. 9:3131–3154 (September 2009), Source: Endocrine Society, “Endocrine Treatment of Transsexual Persons: An Endocrine Society Clinical Practice Guideline.”

<sup>204</sup> Boghani, “When Transgender Kids Transition, Medical Risks Are Both Known and Unknown.”

<sup>205</sup> Grant, *et al.*, “National Transgender Discrimination Survey Report on Health and Health Care.”

<sup>206</sup> Winter, “‘I Was Born a Boy, Became a Girl, and Now I Want to Be a Boy Again’: Britain’s Youngest Sex Swap Patient to Reverse Her Sex Change Treatment.”

<sup>207</sup> Boghani, “When Transgender Kids Transition, Medical Risks are Both Known and Unknown.”

<sup>208</sup> Huston, “Oregon Medicaid Now Paying for Sex Changes for 15-yr-olds Without Parent’s Consent.”

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

The use of hormone therapy is a serious medical matter. Nobody truly knows the long-term effects of hormone therapy. Doctors do not know what the effect of taking cross hormones for 50 or 70 years may be.<sup>210</sup> Similarly, although many of the effects of hormone therapy may be reversible, there could be long-term physical consequences for those who use hormone blockers or for those who stop receiving cross-sex hormones. Furthermore, there may be permanent psychological effects involved with hormone therapy.<sup>211</sup> At present, there simply are more questions than answers.

One thing, however, is certain. The use of hormone therapy as a treatment for gender dysphoria is an intentional manipulation of the physical body to conform to the individual's self-perception. This is a rebellion against God and His created design and order. According to the Bible, this is a form of sorcery. [Galatians 5:19-21](#) says, "*Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God*" (emphasis added).

The word translated "sorcery" in [Galatians 5:20](#) is *pharmakeia* which could mean "a medical drug" or "witchcraft."<sup>212</sup> Both definitions are applicable. God declares rebellion to be equivalent to witchcraft in [1 Samuel 15:23](#), "*For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry*" (KJV). The use of medical drugs to transform the body into something God never intended is *pharmakeia*, or "sorcery." As such, God warns that such practices lead only to death and destruction. Those who place their sexual identity above God's Word and the identity of "child of God" that He offers through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ will not inherit the kingdom of God. Only a child of God can inherit God's kingdom.

The debate over hormone therapy is far more significant than the potential psychological and physical effects. At the heart of the matter is whether an individual is willing to submit to God and to His commandments. In what does an individual find their true identity—in their sexuality, or in their relationship to God?

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<sup>210</sup> Boghani, "When Transgender Kids Transition, Medical Risks are Both Known and Unknown."

<sup>211</sup> Garrett Oppenheim, "Ihlenfeld Cautions on Hormones: Stresses Psychological Dangers," *Transition*, no. 8 (January/February 1979), Source: Oppenheim, "Ihlenfeld Cautions on Hormones: Stresses Psychological Dangers."

<sup>212</sup> Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, G#5331, 1438.

## Appendix B: Bathroom Safety

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“**T**rans women are killed for using the men’s restroom, and they’re jailed for using the women’s restroom. In the end, what choice do we have?” This comment by Tyler Beebe, a 27 year-old trans woman, is indicative of the kind of rhetoric that surrounds the debate over who can and cannot use gender-specific bathrooms.<sup>213</sup> Reality, however, is far more mundane than this sensational claim. Aside from the fake news story claiming that a transgender woman was shot and killed in the bathroom of a Colorado department store in 2016, one is hard-pressed to find instances of transgender individuals being killed in bathrooms.<sup>214</sup> Instead, advocates for removing gender restrictions on public bathrooms often cite a study by the Williams Institute titled “Gendered Restrooms and Minority Stress: The Public Regulation of Gender and its Impact on Transgender People’s Lives.” The study concludes, “Seventy percent of survey respondents reported being denied access, verbally harassed, or physically assaulted in public restrooms.”<sup>215</sup>

The spectrum for this study is colossal. For the purposes of this study, verbal harassment was “defined very broadly,” including, but not limited to, “having been told they were in the wrong facility,” “told to leave the facility,” “questioned about their gender,” “ridiculed or made fun of,” “verbally threatened,” and “stared at or given strange looks.”<sup>216</sup> Given this criteria, it can be argued that nearly everybody has experienced “harassment” at some point in public bathrooms regardless of their gender. Moreover, this study lumped together being given strange looks with being physically assaulted in a public bathroom. The subjective nature of the data for this study combined with its

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<sup>213</sup> Dastagir, “The Imaginary Predator in America’s Transgender Bathroom War.”

<sup>214</sup> LaCapria, “Shots Liared.”

<sup>215</sup> Herman, “Gendered Restrooms and Minority Stress: The Public Regulation of Gender and its Impact on Transgender People’s Lives.”

<sup>216</sup> Herman, “Gendered Restrooms and Minority Stress: The Public Regulation of Gender and its Impact on Transgender People’s Lives.”

enormous scope renders it virtually useless in any serious discussion about the safety of transgender individuals in public bathrooms.

Despite the absence of data proving that transgender individuals are at risk when using the public bathroom that corresponds with their biological sex, many legislators, and even the President of the United States of America, have taken it upon themselves to open bathrooms and changing facilities to anyone who identifies with the gender of those facilities. This is said to be a matter of civil rights, and anyone who disagrees with such policies are commonly called transphobic and discriminatory.

It is important to note that transgender identity is different from transsexualism. A transsexual is someone who has undergone sex-reassignment surgery. As such, they no longer possess the sex organs associated with their biological sex. Transgender identity, on the other hand, includes transsexuals as well as anyone who feels as if they have more in common with another gender, regardless of whether they are receiving hormone therapy, have undergone sex-reassignment surgery, or even dress like the other gender.<sup>217</sup>

An unintended consequence of this subjective and unenforceable standard of personal feelings as the new criteria for determining who can and cannot use gender-specific bathrooms and changing facilities is the removal of basic safety restrictions for such facilities. Opponents of removing gender-restrictions on public bathrooms and changing facilities question whether such policies will attract sexual predators, granting them easy access to their victims. History is replete with examples of men who have sought access to women's bathrooms and changing facilities for sexual gratification. A few examples include Mark Lazarus, Jason Pomares, Northwood Burns, Richard Rodriguez, and Taylor Beuhler.<sup>218, 219, 220, 221, 222</sup> In the past this usually required that they disguise themselves as women, but according to these new policies, today they only need to *identify* as female. This is exemplified in a 2016 *King 5 News* report, "A man undressed in a women's locker room, citing a new state rule that allows people to choose a bathroom based on gender identity. ... No one was arrested in this case and police weren't called, even though the man returned a second time while young girls were changing for swim practice. ... Right now, there's no specific protocol for how someone should demonstrate their gender in order to access a bathroom. Employees just rely on verbal identification or physical appearance, and this man offered neither."<sup>223</sup>

Already there are reported abuses of these inclusive policies. *The Huffington Post Canada* reports, "The University of Toronto (U of T) is temporarily changing its policy on gender-neutral bathrooms after two reports of voyeurism in a student residence. Two women showering in Whitney Hall, a residence at U of T's University College, reported they saw a cellphone reach over the shower-stall dividers in an attempt to record them, in two different incidents, police Const. Victor Kwong told *The Toronto Star*."<sup>224</sup> In Chicago, a man walked into a bathroom and choked an eight-year-old girl

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<sup>217</sup> National Center for Transgender Equality, "Transgender Terminology."

<sup>218</sup> McQueeney, "Cross Dressing Sex Attacker Who Attempted to Rape a Pensioner of 71 in Public Toilet Was Obsessed by Skirts."

<sup>219</sup> Klemack, et al., "Man Disguised as Woman Recorded 'Hours' of Mall Restroom Videos: Investigators."

<sup>220</sup> Hartstein, "Cross-Dressing Man Arrested for Exposure at Walmart."

<sup>221</sup> "Man Dressed as Woman Arrested for Spying into Mall Bathroom Stall, Police Say."

<sup>222</sup> "Police: Man in Bra and Wig Found in Women's Bathroom."

<sup>223</sup> Morrow, "Man in Women's Locker Room Cites Gender Rule."

<sup>224</sup> Chin, "University of Toronto Gender-Neutral Bathrooms Reduced After Voyeurism Reports."

unconscious. It is not known whether this man identified as a woman, or why he choked the girl, but such an incident bolsters the position of those who believe that women and children in bathrooms are easy targets for predators.<sup>225</sup> Also, Bethany Blankley reports, “A biological man, Christopher Hambrook, claimed to be ‘transgender’ in order to prey on women at two Toronto shelters. He was recently jailed ‘indefinitely’ after a judge declared him to be a ‘dangerous offender.’ The *Toronto Sun* reports that Hambrook, a man, who called himself ‘Jessica,’ entered women’s shelters and sexually assaulted several women in 2012” (emphasis removed).<sup>226</sup>

The issue of transgender individuals in public bathrooms and locker rooms is further complicated by the fact that many who present themselves as a particular gender do not adopt the sexual preferences of that gender. As *Time* magazine reports in its article “The Transgender Tipping Point,” “There is no concrete correlation between a person’s gender identity and sexual interests; a heterosexual woman, for instance, might start living as a man and still be attracted to men. One oft-cited explanation is that sexual orientation determines who you want to go to bed with and gender identity determines what you want to go to bed as.”<sup>227</sup> Consequently, someone who identifies as a woman may retain male sex organs and remain sexually attracted to women. In 2012 Paula Witherspoon, a trans woman, was ticketed for using the women’s bathroom at a hospital in Dallas, Texas. Paula Witherspoon is a registered sex offender, having been convicted “for sexual assault of a child and indecency with a child involving sexual contact. Both victims were teenage girls.”<sup>228</sup> Since 2012, bathroom policies have changed, granting Paula Witherspoon free access to women’s bathrooms in many places across the nation.

The reality that trans women using public bathrooms and changing facilities may remain biologically male and possess a sexual preference for women is particularly disconcerting to rape victims. According to the Williams Institute report “How Many People Are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender,” information from four national and two state-level population-based surveys suggest that the total transgender population in the United States in 2011 could be around 700,000 people.<sup>229</sup> In comparison, the estimated number of rape victims in the United States in 1998 was 17.7 million people, with an average of 288,820 new victims every year.<sup>230, 231</sup> Statistically, someone in the United States is raped every two minutes.<sup>232</sup> Although generally silent about their experience, the rape victim community is large and widespread. Kaeley Triller writes in “A Rape Victim Speaks Out Against Transgender Bathrooms”:<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Baca, “8-Year-Old Girl in Choked Unconscious in South Loop Bathroom While Mom in Next Stall, Police Say.”

<sup>226</sup> Blankley, “Man Jailed After Claiming to Be ‘Transgender’ to Assault Women in Shelter.”

<sup>227</sup> Steinmetz, “The Transgender Tipping Point: America’s Next Civil Rights Frontier,” 40.

<sup>228</sup> Villeda, “Transgender Woman: Convictions Irrelevant to Citation.”

<sup>229</sup> Gates, “How Many People Are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender?”

<sup>230</sup> National Institute of Justice & Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women Survey, 1998, Source: Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, “Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics.”

<sup>231</sup> Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2010-2014 (2015), Source: Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, “Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics.”

<sup>232</sup> Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2010-2014 (2015), Source: Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, “Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics.”

<sup>233</sup> Triller, “A Rape Survivor Speaks Out About Transgender Bathrooms.”

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While I feel a deep sense of empathy for what must be a very difficult situation for transgender people, at the beginning and end of the day, it is nothing short of negligent to instate policies that elevate the emotional comfort of a relative few over the physical safety of a large group of vulnerable people.

Don't they know anything about predators? Don't they know the numbers? That out of every 100 rapes, only two rapists will spend so much as single day in jail while the other 98 walk free and hang out in our midst? Don't they know that predators are known to intentionally seek out places where many of their preferred targets gather in groups? That perpetrators are addicts so committed to their fantasies they'll stop at nothing to achieve them?

Do they know that more than 99 percent of single-victim incidents are committed by males? That they are experts in rationalization who minimize their number of victims? Don't they know that insurance companies highlight locker rooms as a high-risk area for abuse that should be carefully monitored and protected?

Don't they know that one out of every four little girls will be sexually abused during childhood, and that's without giving predators free access to them while they shower? Don't they know that, for women who have experienced sexual trauma, finding the courage to use a locker room at all is a freaking badge of honor? That many of these women view life through a kaleidoscope of shame and suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, dissociation, poor body image, eating disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, difficulty with intimacy, and worse?

Why would people knowingly invite further exploitation by creating policies with no safeguards in place to protect them from injury? With zero screening options to ensure that biological males who enter locker rooms actually identify as female, how could a woman be sure the person staring at her wasn't exploiting her? Why is it okay to make her wonder? ... There's no way to make everyone happy in the situation of transgender locker room use. So the priority ought to be finding a way to keep everyone safe. I'd much rather risk hurting a smaller number of people's feelings by asking transgender people to use a single-occupancy restroom that still offers safety than risk jeopardizing the safety of thousands of women and kids with a policy that gives would-be predators a free pass.

The issues surrounding the bathroom debate are numerous and complicated. There are serious questions concerning public safety and the feelings of other trauma victims, not to mention religious questions. Ron Grossman writes for *The Chicago Tribune*, “Islam has firm rules about modesty. So

does Orthodox Judaism. Both faiths separate the sexes for prayer. Do they now have to abandon their religious principles in a high-school locker room?”<sup>234</sup>

Those who disagree with opening bathrooms and changing facilities to anyone who identifies with the gender of those facilities have reasonable concerns. Unfortunately, these concerns are often presented in polarizing language with a tendency toward over-generalization. Even so, these are not sufficient reasons for the common charge against them of transphobia—particularly when both parties rely upon the same tactics. It is not transphobic to question whether non-transgender sexual predators might take advantage of the relaxing standards surrounding the use of public bathrooms and changing facilities. Sexual predators are already targeting women in bathrooms. The concern is that this might increase because of the changes in policy—not because transgender individuals will seize upon an opportunity to exploit the occupants of these facilities. Likewise, it is not transphobic to be mindful of the feelings of more than a single community of people. How is it transphobic to recognize that women who are rape victims may not feel safe showering or changing their clothes next to a trans woman who has male sex organs and possibly a sexual preference for women?

Transphobia is a serious charge. Flippantly accusing anyone of being transphobic who disagrees with one’s position constitutes a form of hate speech. Until the rhetoric calms down and both parties are willing to have an open and honest conversation, a meaningful solution for all parties is likely to remain elusive. Moreover, presidential edicts and Supreme Court rulings will likely only expand the division.

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<sup>234</sup> Grossman, “Commentary: Can’t We Talk About Transgender Bathrooms?”

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