

Timely topics; timeless truths

Gender identity

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Introduction

1. Identify what each letter stands for in the following, ever-growing list of acronyms.

LGB=

LGBT=

LGBTQ=

LGBTQIA=

LGBTQIAPK=

2. Each one of the issues represented is somewhat independent and unrelated. What message is sent by continuing to group more and more of these sex and gender issues together?

How does the medical community define the issue?

Match the following terms with their commonly accepted definitions within the medical community.

1. _____ Sex
 2. _____ Gender identity
 3. _____ Transgender
 4. _____ Cisgender
 5. _____ Transsexual
 6. _____ Cross-dresser
 7. _____ Intersex
- a. Someone who occasionally wears the clothing of the opposite sex but does not wish to permanently change his or her sex.
 - b. Someone whose sex and gender identity match.
 - c. An individual whose sex at birth is unclear, possessing anatomical traits of both sexes.
 - d. The biological classification of male or female, determined primarily by chromosomes and reproductive organs.
 - e. Someone whose sex and gender identity do not match.
 - f. A transgender person who seeks to make his or her sex and gender identity match through medical intervention, such as hormonal treatment and surgery.
 - g. One's identification as male or female (or something else), determined by personal perception and cultural expectations.
8. In 2013, the 5th edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) reclassified gender identity *disorder* as gender *dysphoria*. *Dysphoria* is defined as "an emotional state marked by anxiety, depression, and restlessness." In other words, the problem, as the medical community defines it, is not an individual's identification with the gender opposite their sex *per se*. The problem is the emotional and functional challenges that accompany this identification. What implications does this change in designation have?

What does the Bible say about the issue?

Genesis 1:26-28

God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that crawls on the earth.”

²⁷ God created the man in his own image.

In the image of God he created him.

Male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

1. Those supportive of the transgender movement talk about a person’s assigned gender (the designation of a gender of male or female at birth). According to Scripture, God is the one who assigns us our gender. He made them male and female. With what characteristics does Scripture identify a person’s gender?

Just as in a perfect world people would always have physical attractions to the opposite gender, so also in a perfect world people’s gender identity would always match their sex. However, just as in a fallen world people have physical attractions to the same gender, so also in a fallen world people of a particular sex identify with the opposite gender.

Just as in the discussion about sexual orientation, the origins and causes of such attractions can be debated (nature vs. nurture, “I was born this way” vs. “This is a choice”), so also in the discussion about gender identity the same can be done. However, rather than dismissing or minimizing this challenging issue with which a person is struggling, we will seek to help him or her deal with it in a God-pleasing way.

Psalm 139:14

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Your works are wonderful,
and my soul knows that very well.

2. Put in your own words what we can say about our bodies, even after the fall.

1 Corinthians 6:19,20

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,²⁰ for you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body.

3. As a result of the Father's creation, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's sanctification, what does Paul encourage us to do with our bodies?

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is more deceitful than anything.
It is beyond cure.
Who can understand it?

4. Our bodies certainly bear the marks of the fall. However, as it pertains to our gender, the evidence offered by our bodies (chromosomes, hormones, reproductive organs) is, in most cases, clear. In contrast, describe what we know about the thoughts and desires of our inner being since the fall.

Romans 6:12-14

Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires. ¹³ Do not offer the members of your body to sin as tools of unrighteousness. Instead, offer yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead, and offer the members of your body to God as tools of righteousness. ¹⁴ Indeed, sin will not continue to control you, because you are not under law but under grace.

5. When our inner being desires what is contrary to God's will, summarize Paul's instructions to us regarding what we are to do with our bodies.

Philippians 3:7-11

But, whatever things were a profit for me, these things I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. ⁸ But even more than that, I consider everything to be a loss because of what is worth far more: knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake, I have lost all things and consider them rubbish, so that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, which comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God by faith. ¹⁰ I do this so that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, ¹¹ in the hope that in some way I may arrive at the resurrection from the dead.

6. In contrast to the world, which tells us to be true to our desires, live how we want to live, and strive to eliminate all pain from our lives, God urges us to take up our crosses, whatever they may be. Name some blessings he promises as we do so.
7. Instead of hoping to attain the complete absence of any discomfort or unease of mind and spirit during this life, what is the ultimate goal a Christian hopes to attain? List ways this will impact someone who struggles with gender identity.

Further discussion points

1. In response to people who identify with the gender opposite their sex, Christians will sometimes say, "God doesn't make mistakes." Evaluate this response.
2. Imagine your eight-year-old son tells you that he wants to be a girl. How would you respond?
3. Imagine a 25-year-old friend tells you that he wants to transition to a woman. How would you respond?
4. Aside from biological traits, what defines maleness or femaleness? Are there traits or behaviors traditionally associated with one gender that we could acknowledge would be fine for the other gender to have or take part in? What traits or behaviors, if any, would be off-limits?
5. Studies show that far more males are identifying with and transitioning to females (*although the statistics of girls having "top surgery" and receiving hormonal treatments is growing*). Can you offer any explanations for why this might be the case?

Resources

About These Resources

Please Note: The resources provided below are intended to be helpful for use with this Bible study and provide a sampling of what is written in the wider world about this topic. Their inclusion here in no way indicates a full endorsement of their content.

Terms and Definitions

Note: The following source is fully supportive of the transgender movement. The goal is to understand the various terms as advocates of the movement define them.

- <https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>

Understanding the Issue

- “What makes a woman?” by Elinor Burkett.
www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/opinion/sunday/what-makes-a-woman.amp.html
Note: This article comes from a perspective that ultimately supports the transgender movement. However, it is very helpful in that it points out the inconsistencies in defining gender found within the movement.
- “Transgender surgery isn’t the solution” by Paul McHugh.
<https://www.wsj.com/articles/paul-mchugh-transgender-surgery-isnt-the-solution-1402615120>
- “Sex changes are not effective, researchers say” by David Batty.
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2004/jul/30/health.mentalhealth>
- “Irreversible damage” by Abigail Shrier, 2020. *This book is not from a Christian perspective, but it offers a very insightful perspective on what is happening to many girls in our society today.*
- “The end of gender: debunking the myths about sex and gender in our society” by Debra Soh, 2021. *This book is not from a Christian perspective, but Dr. Soh scientifically explores the nurture vs. nature debate on transgenderism and what it means to be male or female in society.*

Christian Perspectives on Gender Identity Issues

- “The soul of Caitlyn Jenner” by Pastor James Hein (WELS), 2015.
<https://pastorjameshein.wordpress.com/2015/06/04/the-soul-of-caitlyn-jenner/>
- “A pastoral statement on the transgender movement” by Professor Paul Wendland (WLS), 2019.
<http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/4507/WendlandTransgender.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>