

Christian Ethics

Transgenderism

I. Introduction:

In 1976 Bruce Jenner won the Olympic Decathlon. The media christened Jenner as the “World’s Greatest Athlete” and he parlayed his Olympic fame into a successful television, film, and endorsement career. During the next four decades of his life, Jenner went through three marriages, fathered six children, and became a reality television star with *Keeping up with the Kardashians*.

During an April 2015 interview with host Diane Sawyer Jenner captivated the nation when he came out as transgender. In his own words “for all intents and purposes, I’m a woman.” This was to be the last public appearance as a “man.”

Then in July 2015 the cover of Vanity Fair featured Jenner as a “woman” with the line “Call me Caitlyn.” Later that year Jenner would be known as one of its 25 Glamour Women of the Year. In addition, Jenner was given the “Arthur Ashe Courage Award” at the 2015 ESPY awards.

A. How could someone argue that Jenner is a woman? What assumptions must be made?

B. How is transgenderism different from homosexuality?

C. In what ways does transgenderism overlap with homosexuality?

Now Bruce Jenner is not your typical cross dressing gender bender. He is conservative Republican and claims to be a Christian. In fact, he said to Diane Sawyer, “I would sit in church and always wonder, ‘In God’s eyes, how does he see me.’”

And that is the question of the hour. How does God view transgender people?

To answer this question we need to answer four others:

- I. What is transgenderism?
- II. Why talk about transgenderism?
- III. What does the Bible say about transgenderism?
- IV. How do we minister to a transgendered person?

II. What is transgenderism?

A transgender is a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that differs from the one which corresponds to the person's sex at birth.¹

- Why must they distinguish between sex and gender?

To engage in the transgender debate, it is important to understand the terms. At the root of the ideology is the belief that gender is not binary but fluid. Consider the following definitions from the Human Rights Campaign.

- A. **Sex:** refers to the designation of a person at birth as either "male" or "female" based on their anatomy (e.g. reproductive organs) and/or their biology (e.g. hormones).
- B. **Gender:** refers to the traditional or stereotypical roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

With these two definitions in place we can evaluate the following terms.

- C. **Gender Dysphoria:** refers to experiences of gender identity in which a person's *psychological* and *emotional* sense of themselves as female, for instance, does not match or align with their *birth sex* as male, or vice versa.

In children it shows itself in:

- Consistently saying they are really a girl even though they have the physical traits of a boy or really a boy if they have the physical traits of a girl
- Strongly preferring friends of the sex with which they identify
- Rejecting the clothes, toys, and games typical for boys or girls
- Refusing to urinate in the way -- standing or sitting -- that other boys or girls typically do
- Saying they want to get rid of their genitals and have the genitals of their true sex
- Believing that even though they have the physical traits of a girl they will grow up to be a man; or believing if they have the physical traits of a boy they will still be a woman when they grow up
- Having extreme distress about the body changes that happen during puberty

In teens it shows itself in:

- Certainty that their true gender is not aligned with their body.
- Disgust with their genitals. They may avoid showering, changing clothes, or having sex in order to avoid seeing or touching their genitals.
- Strong desire to be rid of their genitals and other sex traits.²

¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transgender>

² <http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/gender-dysphoria?page=2>

- D. **Transitioning:** the process some transgender people go through to begin living as the gender with which they identify, rather than the sex assigned to them at birth. This may or may not include hormone therapy, sex reassignment surgery and other medical procedures. You have two abbreviations MTF (male to female) and FTM (female to male):³
- E. Why is it important for transgender advocates to sever gender from sex?
- F. What is more changeable “sex” or “gender”?
- G. How does the answer to the above question impact how to help people with “gender dysphoria”?

III. Why talk about transgenderism?

As of 2016 transgendered individuals comprise approximately 0.2 to 0.3% of the population. Recent estimates state that 700,000 individuals in the U.S. identify as transgender⁴ though some speculate there is more. In fact, the percentage of Americans who self-identify as LGBT has risen from 3.9% in 2016 to 5.6% in 2020. Almost a 70% increase! During that same span self-identified transgender individuals has climbed to 0.6% of all adults. With 1.8% of generation Z (born 1997-2002) and 1.2% of Millennials (born 1981-1996) claiming a transgender identity.

In spite of their small size, advocates for this minority make big demands from society at large.

On May 13th, 2016 the Department of Justice and Education issued “guidance to schools” about their interpretation of Title IX. For a school to continue to take federal funding they must treat all students with the same gender (including transgender) indiscriminately. Therefore, when it comes to restrooms and locker rooms the guidance reads:

*A school may provide separate facilities on the basis of sex, but must allow transgender students access to such facilities consistent with their gender identity. 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. A school may, however, make individual-user options available to all students who voluntarily seek additional privacy.*⁵

³ <http://www.hrc.org/resources/transgender-faq>

⁴ <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-things-you-should-know-about-transgenderism>

⁵ <http://www.snopes.com/obama-transgender-bathrooms/>

- A. According to the “guidance to school” interpretation of Title IX who decides their gender?
- B. What is the potential societal impact of transgenderism?
- C. For these policies to hold, how must society view transgenderism?
- D. How could the advocates move society towards broad acceptance? Hint: How did AID’s impact the public perception of Homosexuality?

In addition, on June 15, 2020 the Supreme Court made a significant ruling on Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (*Bostock v. Clayton County*). The text of title VII prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The Supreme Court expanded “sex” to include sexual orientation and transgender identity. In the words of Justice Neil Gorsuch:

An employer who fired an individual for being homosexual or transgender fires that person for traits or actions it would not have questioned in members of a different sex. Sex plays a necessary and undisguisable role in the decision; exactly what Title VII forbids. Those who adopted the Civil Rights Act might not have anticipated their work would lead to this particular result. But the limits of the drafters' imagination supply no reason to ignore the law's demands. Only the written word is the law, and all persons are entitled to its benefit.⁶

- E. How does this ruling accord with the Title VII’s authors’ original understanding of sex?
- F. How will this ruling advance the transgender cause?

The following is an example of how Transgender activists seek to cultivate public sympathy.

“Leelah” Alcorn was born Joshua Ryan Alcorn. Raised in a conservative Christian household in Ohio, he came out as transgender to his parents at the age of fourteen. Naturally, Alcorn’s parents refused to accept his gender identity and two years later they denied his request to undergo transition treatment. Rather, they sent him to a counselor who would seek to convince

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bostock_v._Clayton_County#Gorsuch_and_textualism

him to accept the gender he was assigned at birth. In despair, Alcorn committed suicide by walking into oncoming traffic on Interstate 71. In his suicide note – Alcorn writes:

I have decided I've had enough. I'm never going to transition successfully, even when I move out. I'm never going to be happy with the way I look or sound. I'm never going to have enough friends to satisfy me. I'm never going to have enough love to satisfy me. I'm never going to find a man who loves me. I'm never going to be happy. Either I live the rest of my life as a lonely man who wishes he were a woman or I live my life as a lonelier woman who hates herself. There's no winning. There's no way out. I'm sad enough already, I don't need my life to get any worse. People say "it gets better" but that isn't true in my case. It gets worse. Each day I get worse. That's the gist of it, that's why I feel like killing myself. Sorry if that's not a good enough reason for you, it's good enough for me.⁷

The transgender community saw Alcorn's death as a rallying cry and sought to pass "Leelah's Law" which would ban conversion therapy in the United States.

G. In their minds what would have prevented Alcorn's suicide?

H. How does Alcorn's story further their cause?

Sadly, Alcorn is not alone. It is estimated that 40% of transgendered people have tried to commit suicide. But certain studies have shown that transgenders with strong support are 82% less likely to attempt suicide although incidents of suicidal thoughts are still high.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has addressed the issue of suicide in LGBT populations, and reached the same conclusions on the actual causes of suicide in the transgender community. They declare:

*"Suicidal behaviors in LGBT populations appear to be related to "minority stress", which stems from the cultural and social prejudice attached to minority sexual orientation and gender identity. This stress includes individual experiences of prejudice or discrimination, such as family rejection, harassment, bullying, violence, and victimization. Increasingly recognized as an aspect of minority stress is "institutional discrimination" resulting from laws and public policies that create inequities or omit LGBT people from benefits and protections afforded others. Individual and institutional discrimination have been found to be associated with social isolation, low self-esteem, negative sexual/gender identity, and depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders. **These negative outcomes, rather than minority sexual orientation or gender identity per se, appear to be the key risk factors for LGBT suicidal ideation and behavior.**"⁸*

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Leelah_Alcorn

⁸ http://new.www.huffingtonpost.com/brynn-tannehill/the-truth-about-transgend_b_8564834.html

In the minds of advocates if we want to end the scourge of suicide, it's time we stop trying to fix transgender people. It's time to fix society.

These fixes raise the following issues:

1. *Do we allow transgendered people to use the locker room or bathroom of their choice?* At Evergreen State College members of the girls High School Swim team who use the facility say “Colleen” Francis exposed male genitalia through the glass window of the sauna. According to the police report the girls ranged from six to eighteen years old.⁹ When the matter was brought to the university, the leadership decided not to bar a biological male from the premises. And the County Prosecutor said that it will not prosecute Francis for indecent exposure.
 2. *Do we allow a transgendered teen to play girls volleyball?* In New Mexico Alex Trujillo who was born male transitioned to female. Alex wanted to participate in girls volleyball, but the state of New Mexico declined.¹⁰
 3. *How do we educate children about transgenderism? Should doctors prescribe puberty blocking hormones to gender dysphoric youth?* For biological boys experiencing gender dysphoria this is a pressing issue since their voices will drop during puberty. Once it does, they lose the ability to sound like a “woman.” On the other hand, studies show that eighty percent of children who struggle with gender dysphoria switch back to their biological sex.¹¹
 4. *Should we mandate that insurance companies pay for gender transition surgery? Further, is the removal of perfectly functioning organs medically ethical?*
- Why is it important that Christians have an informed conviction regarding the issue of transgenderism?

IV. What does the Bible Say about Transgenderism:

⁹ <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/transgender-man-may-continue-using-locker-room-with-six-year-old-girls>

¹⁰ <http://usatodayhss.com/2015/transgender-new-mexico-teen-fighting-for-right-to-play-on-schools-volleyball-team-after-caitlyn-jenners-speech>

¹¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/drug-treatments-for-transgender-kids-pose-difficult-choices-for-parents-doctors/2012/05/19/gIQAxgakbU_story.html

As society wrestles with these problems, we should expect the debate to seep into the church. In the summer of 2013 Pat Robertson sat down for the advice portion of his 700 Club. When asked a question about how to relate to transgender coworkers Robertson answered with:

"I think there are men who are in a woman's body. It's very rare. But it's true -- or women that are in men's bodies -- and that they want a sex change. That is a very permanent thing, believe me, when you have certain body parts amputated and when you have shot up with various kinds of hormones. It's a radical procedure. I don't think there's any sin associated with that. I don't condemn somebody for doing that."¹²

Such a statement demonstrates that the transgender issue is a little more complicated than we thought.

- How can someone oppose homosexuality, as Robertson does, but condone sex changes?

In order to engage with this issue, we need to resist the impulse to read modern understandings of sexuality back into the text of Scripture. Rather, we must accurately understand Biblical teaching by extrapolating its original meaning and then address this modern-day issue.

A. *Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

1. What does it mean to be made in the image of God?
2. Why is it important to note that both males and females are made in the image of God?
3. Consider the following passages:

Psalms 32:3 or when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

Proverbs 17:22 A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

1 John 4:2–3 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

- a. What do the above passages teach about the relationship between the body and soul?

¹² http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/29/pat-robertson-transgender_n_3672244.html

- b. How does the integration of body and soul help frame the biblical assessment of transgenderism? Can we sever biological sex from gender?

B. *Genesis 1:28 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.”*

- What role do both genders play in the fulfillment of this mandate?

Note: Each person is made in the image of God, and as image bearers we have been created body and soul. Further, God designed our physical bodies to fulfill a purpose. The presence or absence of a Y chromosome determines our destinies. Should you get married, your body determines whether you will be a husband or wife. If you have children your body determines whether or not you will be a mother or father. This understanding helps us to frame the rest of the biblical teaching about gender.

C. *Deuteronomy 22:5: “A woman shall not wear a man’s garment, nor shall a man put on a woman’s cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.*

1. What does this passage prohibit?
2. Is this passage a slam dunk against transgender expression? Why or why not?

The basis of this command is not clear from the context. This may have to do with idolatrous worship, sexual activity, or simply rejecting the distinction between male and female (*Gen. 1:27*). As we will see in other texts God values the distinction between the genders especially with regards to the fulfillment of the creation mandate.

Now some will rightly object that *Deuteronomy 22:5* should not factor into this ethical discussion since it is part of the Old Covenant. They have a point. While we may not be bound to this command, we should note that it does teach us gender distinctions matter to God.

D. *1 Corinthians 11:1–12.*

This is admittedly complex and controversial passage. But it does provide some valuable insight about androgyny and the embrace of God given gender roles. In the context Paul seeks to put a church riddled by factions and disunity back together by appealing to all to accept their place.

¹ Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. ² Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. ³ But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

- What three relationships does Paul present in *verse 3*?

⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, ⁵ but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. ⁶ For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. ⁷ For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.

Note: The head covering is likely a shawl with which women covered their heads. The covering served as some means of indicating that the woman was under authority. The fact that one cannot nail down the exact nuance shows that the modern application of this practice can only be followed dogmatically in principle. This is significant as lady's clothing and expressions of feminine dress have changed over time.

1. If a woman took off her head covering, who would she look like (*vs. 5-6*) *Hint 1:* With what does Paul link the removal of the covering in *vs. 6b*? *Hint 2:* Why do some lesbians shave their heads?
2. Similarly, if a man wore a head covering, who would he look like (*vs. 4* cf. *vs. 5-6*)?
3. What do *verses 6* and *7* teach us about Paul's regard for androgyny?

⁸ For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹ Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. ¹⁰ That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹ Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; ¹² for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.

4. What rationale does Paul provide for the different commands (*vv. 8-12*)?
5. Does this passage accept the notion that gender is fluid and not binary? Why or why not?
6. Based off of this passage, why does God want the differences expressed?

E. *Eph. 5:22-25 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* ²³ *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.* ²⁴ *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.* ²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . .*

1. What roles are assigned to husbands and which ones are assigned to wives?
2. Does Paul seem to allow for individuals to choose which commands they heed? Why is this significant to the transgender discussion?

F. *1 Corinthians 6:9 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*

Note: the effeminate and homosexuals represent the passive and active participants in same sex activity. Both the one who acts like the female and the one who treats the male as a female are at fault.

- How does God's condemnation of the active and passive participants in homosexual acts help us understand God's sentiment towards transgenderism?

While this speaks of same sex activity and not cross dressing, it helps us to understand God moral objection to homosexuality. By refusing to embrace the complementary roles of husband and wife, they have rejected the created order. This is part of the reason why transgenderism is a sister sin to homosexuality. Both reject the created order. Homosexuality rejects the complementary nature of the husband and wife relationship. And transgenderism disavows God's prerogative in making humans male and female.

G. *Leviticus 12:1-3 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,* ² *“Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean.* ³ *And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.*

1. Is it possible for a male who identifies as a female to obey the commands of *verse 2*? Why or why not?

2. Is it possible for a female who identifies as male to obey the command of *verse 3* (bear in mind adult males such as Abraham were circumcised as well)? Why or why not?
3. Does God separate sex and gender? Why is this significant to a discussion on transgenderism?

H. ***Matthew 19:4 He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,***

1. Who made males men and females women?
2. How do these passages answer the objection "God made a mistake by putting a man in a female body"?
3. What does gender bending suggest about the goodness of God's creation?

I. ***Psalm 139:13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.***

1. According to this passage who determines your sex?
2. Now some people will raise the following objection. Sex is not as apparent as you may think. For instance, some people are born "intersex." They have both male and female genitalia. Now this is a rare condition, and normally it is obvious which set of genitalia is functional and which one isn't.
 - a. Why do we have intersex individuals? For that matter why do we have conjoined twins? Hint: Genesis 3.
 - b. Why is it problematic for transgenders to appeal to the biological reality of intersex individuals?

- c. When you have someone whose chromosomes say male, and genitalia say male, but his “brain” says female, what would be the biological conclusion?

J. A Theological Argument:

- a. Humans are made in the Image of God.

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

- b. The Image of God includes body and soul.
- c.
- d.

Putting it all together we see that the Bible does not recognize a distinction between gender and sex. It’s emphasis on gender roles and gender specific commands reveals that people do not pick and choose which set of laws to obey. Further, some of the commands are anatomically specific. Therefore, we see that God does not recognize a distinction between sex and gender. And our sovereign God is the one who assigns our sex. The expression of our sex in our wardrobe as well as our obedience to the gender specific commands affirms God’s design for male and female.

Further, such expression is true. When one claims to be a male when they are not biologically male they tell a lie. It would be akin to a white woman darkening her skin, dying and curling her hair, and claiming to be black. She may be well intentioned. She may want to be black. She may not feel like she’s white. But that does not change the reality. In the same way, a man may want to be a woman. But he will never be able to carry a child. He will never experience the pain of menstruation. And he will never be able to conceive with a male. God calls us to tell the truth and embrace the truth. A construct which denies truth as truth is not from God.

So given the sinfulness of transgenderism, how to we minister to those caught in its snare.

V. How do we minister to transgenders:

- A. How does the world minister to transgenders? In their minds, should we change their bodies or change their minds?

- B. Consider the following quotes.

“I knew a genderqueer couple that required you to use rotating pronouns for them, (xe, she, he xis, his, her) I just said ‘they’ or didn’t talk to them . . . Most trans people just want to live . . . and not turn everything into a battle.”

“I’ve been crying all morning: A friend posted a candid picture of me and all I see is the horrible man I can’t escape . . . This is never ever going away even after years and years of hormones. I want to die . . . why can’t I just disappear?”¹³

“I feel absolutely like I am a woman stuck in a man’s body, and I spend a lot of time thinking and reading about transitioning. I occasionally have these insidious doubts . . . I’ve had anxiety since childhood and struggled with depression through my teen years . . . What if these thoughts of being trans are just me trying to escape from these problems . . . Maybe I just want a fresh start, and this is the most extreme way of getting that?”

“I want to look like a girl. I never could. My body’s an inverted triangle shape . . . My feet are size 12 . . . People say ‘suicide is never the answer,’ but I need to know WHY it’s not the answer. Because as far as I can see, it is. That, or I get some bolt of inspiration from God . . . I pray every night. I don’t even know who to or what for. Because I need something to change.”¹⁴

C. How can these quotes help to set the tone for our conversation? (**Rom. 12:15**)

D. Should we use their preferred pronouns? Why or why not?

E. Should we use their preferred name? Andrea instead of Amanda for instance?

F. How should the church minister to transgenders? Should we change their bodies or change their minds?

G. How can the following passages help with their “identity” crisis?

Romans 6:6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

Colossians 3:1–3 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

¹³ Marvin Olasky “Mascots and Manipulators” in World Magazine, June 11, 2016 pp. 5-6.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

1 John 3:1–2 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

VI. Some Common Objections:

As we minister to individuals struggling with their transgender desire we need to affirm the goodness of God’s creation and His Word. We also need to be prepared to pierce the cultural lies. This is why we need to consider some of the following objections.

A. *If we force transgender individuals to live contrary to their gender, won’t that lead to self-harm and even suicide?*

Dr. Cecilia Dhejne and colleagues at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden have done one of the largest follow-up studies of transsexuals, published in PLOS One in 2011. They compared a group of 324 Swedish transsexuals for an average of more than 10 years after gender reassignment with controls and found that transsexuals had 19 times the rate of suicide and about three times the mortality rate compared with controls. When the researchers controlled for baseline rates of depression and suicide, which are known to be higher in transsexuals, they still found elevated rates of depression and suicide after sex reassignment.¹⁵

B. *People who are transgender would never choose to live that way.*

Here we recognize the reality of the fall. Many of us did not choose to be tempted by pride, anger, lust, homosexual feelings, or even wanting to have a different body. But being born with those feelings does not make it right.

Secondly, when dealing with gender dysphoria we have a choice: we can change our feelings or change our bodies. And, contrary to claims of many transgender advocates, the feelings are not immutable.

¹⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/23/opinion/sunday/richard-a-friedman-how-changeable-is-gender.html>

*Several studies have tracked the persistence of gender dysphoria in children as they grow. For example, Dr. Richard Green's study of young boys with gender dysphoria in the 1980s found that only one of the 44 boys was gender dysphoric by adolescence or adulthood. And a 2008 study by Madeleine S. C. Wallein, at the VU University Medical Center in the Netherlands, reported that in a group of 77 young people, ages 5 to 12, who all had gender dysphoria at the start of the study, 70 percent of the boys and 36 percent of the girls were no longer gender dysphoric after an average of 10 years' follow-up.*¹⁶

Thirdly, the solution to gender dysphoria is not to identify as the opposite sex, but to identify with Christ (see verses above). Mutilating the body and injecting hormones will never change your chromosomes. But faith in Jesus Christ will change your heart. This does not mean that one will never be tempted in that area, but through the power of the Holy Spirit and the hope of eternity we can endure as spiritual pilgrims until God calls us home and transforms us body and soul.

- C. “You’re missing a key point: the brains of, say, men who ‘identify’ as women have been shown to resemble those of women. This shows that there is a biological basis to their identifying as such.”

The following is a response by Carlos D. Flores:

In response, we might begin by asking for empirical evidence that this dubious claim really is true. But even if this were the case, this doesn't show that men whose brains “resemble that of a woman's” (whatever that means) are truly women after all. If we are to say that the person simply is the brain, as the one who espouses this objection seems to suggest, then, because presumably even males who identify as women have brains with male DNA, it follows that they are men after all.

But we don't even need to grant that the presence of such-and-such brain states is relevant at all. For example, we may suppose that, through habitually behaving as a sixteen-year-old, the brain activity of the seventy-year-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.

Indeed, it should not come as a surprise to find out that our daily activities shape our brain-states or alter the way our brains behave. After all, it is more or less common knowledge that, say, the process of learning to play an instrument has the effect of

¹⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/23/opinion/sunday/richard-a-friedman-how-changeable-is-gender.html>

establishing new neural pathways, thus causing a change in brain-states. Thus Dr. Norman Doidge comments: “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.”

On the topic of sexuality more specifically, consider the fact that habitual porn use seems to result in (or correlate with) decreased gray matter in the brain, and that habitual porn use changes the sexual tastes of men. If habitually watching pornography can change a man’s brain so significantly, then it should hardly be surprising that through intentionally and habitually behaving like a woman a man’s brain would too change to some extent. But again, this does not thereby show that such a man is a woman after all; all it shows is that through habituated action of some sort, the man’s brain behavior has changed.¹⁷

D. Don’t *Galatians 3:28* and *Matthew 22:30* teach androgyny?

Galatians 3:28 reads: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Should not be read apart from *verses 26-27:*

²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Gender has no bearing on our standing in Christ. The gender-specific commands of Paul make it clear that gender still matters.

Further, in *Matthew 22:30* we read: *For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.*

This passage does not suggest that people lose their gender in heaven. Rather, the purpose of marriage is complete. Even if this does say that we are genderless in heaven, that will take place AFTER the resurrection. For now, the gender specific Scriptural commands matter.

E. If a transgender individual gets saved, should the church require them to have restorative sex change operations so that they can be restored to the original gender?

Al Mohler answers this with:

Eventually, every church in the United States and Western Europe will face a question like this. The first thing we must remember is that the gospel is for everyone – regardless of gender identity. The gospel is for the transgender and the transsexual just as much as it is for the one who identifies with his birth gender.

¹⁷ <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/02/14305/>

The gospel promises wholeness in Christ and call us to holiness. Thus, in response to the gospel, all true Christians seek to live in obedience to the God who created us male and female. Obedience to Christ means that we seek in every way to progressively move toward embracing our birth gender rather than lingering in rebellion of confusion.

This is not to suggest that the progress of sanctification is easy or instantaneous. As Eugene Peterson said, the Christian life is “A long obedience in the same direction.” In other words, obedience can be slow progress.

What is the individual had undergone medical procedures and sex change operations before coming to Christ? Would surgery now be pastorally required or advisable in order to obey Christ? This situation requires the loving council of a local church to help this particular Christian understand what “long obedience” in this circumstance would involve. Pastors and congregations should consider age, context, and even physical and physiological factors when determining a course of action. But even without surgery, Christians in this situation should publically and privately identify themselves according to their birth gender. Surgery is a secondary question to be handled with pastoral wisdom and sound medical advice.¹⁸

VII. Conclusion:

Does the Scripture affirm and allow for someone who was born unambiguously one gender to identify by a different gender? The answer is no. The gender assigned at our birth has been assigned by God. With this said, we need to recognize the pain of gender dysphoria and show genuine compassion. Belittling their plight will do nothing but drive them away from the truth they need to hear. Sin and the fall have disordered much of reality, including their feelings. The solution is not changing their bodies and demanding that society understand. Rather, they need to submit to the sovereign God who chose their gender. This sovereign God has sent His Son to die on the cross for their sins and break sin’s deceptive power. Further, God raised Him from the dead so that all those who repent and believe can have the hope that they will participate in the total restoration of all things. Those who believe in Christ are offered a new name, a new identify, and a new life. Therefore, instead of seeking to change genders, those with gender dysphoria should ask God to change their hearts.

¹⁸ Al Mohler, *We Cannot Be Silent* (Nashville, Thomas Nelson) 2015, pp. 172-3.

A three-day circus

Nothing was well at a Trans Wellness Conference in Philadelphia

Andrée Seu Peterson

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Nothing is what it seems at the Trans Wellness Conference down at Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Convention Center.

Someone brushing past in the hall sports a beard on an angular chin, but also a handbag and heels. A lecturer refers to himself as “they” throughout his (or was it her?) talk on chest “binding.” The brochure says “Wellness,” but no one looks well here. All around are misshapen and untuned bodies; faces marked with dissipation; studied dress that is a couturial assault on the eyes. Scarcely one in the 700 looks appealing.

“Conference” is a misnomer too, if to “confer” is to exchange opinions. There is one allowed opinion in this place, as I would test on Day Two, and receive incontrovertible proof of on Day Three. No workshop discusses the ethics of turning males into females and females into males; that cow's long out of the barn. The Enlightenment is presumed, and the devil has moved to the details—legal strategies; insurance end runs; school infiltration; post-surgical therapies.

The legal and medical professions are heavily represented. (“Where there is carrion there the vultures will gather.”) A curriculum sampling:

“State and Local Advocacy for TGNC [Trans/Gender Non-Conforming] Youth in Schools”; “Parents of Trans Youth Ages 12 and Under”; “Facial Feminization”; “Tips to Work with Your Health Insurance Company”; “Intersections Between Fashion, Mental and Sexual Health”; “Top and Bottom Surgery”; “Combating Dysphoria Through Fitness”; “Care of the Aging Transgender Person”; “TGNC Youth and Homelessness”; “Self-

Massage Techniques for Chronic Pain”; “Packers, STPs, Masturbators, and Sex Toys”; “Becoming an Activist for Trans Rights in School”; “Self-Care Strategies for Trauma and Anxiety in Trans and Non-Binary Bodies”; “Cross Hormone Therapy”; “Hormones and Handcuffs”; “Trans Porn.”

Sex play paraphernalia to make ancient Pompeii blush is openly displayed on some of the scores of tables in the vast lobby. Around the corner is the children’s room, where someone blowing soap bubbles into the air reminds me of the Pied Piper, who lured the town of Hamelin’s children from their parents. A flamboyant drag queen reads *Red: A Crayon’s Story* to enthralled children donning knit rainbow caps and sitting in a circle with their beaming mothers.

You, like I, might have thought that gender “transitioning” was a once-and-done thing. Not so. What an outsider is most surprised to learn is the extent of lifelong negative health impacts and medical complications on the other side of transgender surgeries. One session I attend is devoted solely to post-op pelvic issues. As a “body worker” presenter admits, “everything’s connected to everything else.”

So when bits of the forearm are mined for the construction of a penis, nature is not flouted with impunity. Girls “binding” their breasts to minimize them, girls undergoing breast removal, end up with chronic neck pain, scoliosis, loss of range of arm motion, and secondary muscles struggling to perform functions they were never designed for. The “neo-vagina” must be continually kept open or it will reclose. I cannot scratch the surface of issues here.

During the presentation by a New York librarian, kindergarten teacher, and author of children’s illustrated trans books, I raise my hand at the back of the room: “Aren’t you concerned that you are not so much *responding* to 5-year-olds’ felt needs as *creating* them by planting suggestions? Now that ‘trans’ is becoming cool, don’t you worry about a bandwagon effect?” The room is

collectively appalled. His smile fades and he says, “No. Next question,” and moves on.

Two questioners later, evidently still piqued, he comes out with the most revealing statement of the three-day circus: “As for the concern that a child might decide to become a trans in imitation of another child, ... SO WHAT?”

On Day Three I mosey over to a table where I might find common ground: United Methodist Church. A middle-aged man and woman smile and offer me literature. I smile back and ask if they have heard of John Wesley. This begins a conversation whose ensuing half hour must be condensed for purposes of this column, but in short I find myself being pursued down the crowded hallway by two security agents, accused of homophobia, transphobia, and racism, and escorted to the exit.

I stop outside and breathe fresh air.¹⁹

¹⁹ https://world.wng.org/2019/08/a_three_day_circus