

Transgenderism

We pause our study of 2 Corinthians for now; we'll be getting back to it in September. I'll be starting our Summer Sermon Series in a couple of weeks. Next Sunday is Guitar Sunday, so I'll be saying something about music on that day. So today is one of those rare Sundays that I'm between series, so feel free to speak on any topic or text.

I feel obligated to speak on an issue that is permeating our society today. It's in our media, all over the Internet, in public and private discussions, in the news, on the radio, and in some pulpits. It's an issue that divides people into pro and con, for and against. People engage in protests and riots over this; they get violent over this issue. Some people tell us to just let people do whatever they want to do, while others tell us that we need to stand strongly against such behaviors. Some people say that we make too much of it, while others say we need to speak more boldly and publicly about it. Some want to eradicate this lifestyle entirely from our society, while others support it and promote it as a way to solve personal problems.

The issue that I have in mind, and that I'd really rather not talk about at all, is transgenderism. Some of us have probably heard more about this than we want to. If you are like me, you'd rather not hear anything about it at all. But this is a moral issue, and Christians have to take a stand on it. The church has to take a position on it. There should be no confusion about the right response to this modern problem. We must make sure we are on the biblical side of this contemporary dividing line issue.

Those who actually claim to be transgender are a very small minority of the population, although their numbers are growing larger all the time. Young people especially seem to be easily convinced that, if they have a certain kind of confusion or frustration with their lives, the solution to their problems is to transition to the opposite sex. And this has led to all sorts of moral questions.

This is a large topic, and it's important that we begin at the right place. We have to start our evaluation with what God has said. Often, the discussion begins with an account of someone's sad, tragic, distressing life experience. People want to tell us about all the horrible things that they have suffered because of their gender problems. They want us to hear their stories. They want us to have compassion and sympathy for suffering people; they want us to respond emotionally, not rationally. They want us to buy into the story, the narrative. They want us to sympathize with those who suffer in this way so that we support and affirm them. They are appealing to our emotions, not to our minds. They want us to be most concerned about people and their tragic experiences. That's why they promote their stories; stories like this are emotionally moving and compelling. Natural sympathy for those who suffer with this leads to supporting them in their transitions and ignore the facts of the case.

Those alarming accounts of suffering people may be true, but they are the wrong place to begin. We begin our evaluation of this subject by appealing to our Creator. What has God told us regarding these issues? Has he revealed anything to us by which to judge this issue? We don't start with humanity; we always start with God—every time, on every issue. We must begin with God's revelation—the Bible, Scripture, God's sacred word—that is and must be our highest authority. Our first concern is *not* how people feel or what they've experienced; our first concern "What saith the Scriptures?" If we reverse the order on this issue, we'll end up in the wrong place.

This is an exceedingly significant issue with alarming consequences. For example, Washington state recently imposed a law allowing children to legally be taken away from their parents if they do not consent to gender transition procedures on their child.¹ Other states will probably follow this same pattern. The federal government could also impose similar rules or laws. Leaders of our society are forcing us to accept transgenderism through legal means. They are threatening significant consequences to those who oppose gender transition efforts. So this is a major issue that could affect us in serious ways, and we need to look at it from a biblical point of view. We must think and act like Christians on this—and every—moral issue.

¹ Sarah Arnold, "Washington To Allow Children to Be Legally Taken From Parents If They Don't Consent to Gender Transition." 15 April 2023. <https://townhall.com/>

And so, what does the Bible have to say about transgenderism?

I. God made only two sexes—male and female.

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

Ge 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Ge 5:2 Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.

A. Many people today claim that there are more options than merely male and female. They assert that we exist on a spectrum with masculine traits on one side and feminine traits on the other. I've heard numbers anywhere from 68 different gender expressions up to 3,000. Where we fit on that scale, experts tell us, is just a "social construct," i.e., how we've been taught, how we've been raised, how we've been socialized. What's important, they tell us, is how we feel about ourselves, not what our physical body tells us. If we feel a certain way, then we have the right and obligation to live that way. We must live out our "authentic" selves, they tell us.

B. If we feel like the opposite sex, we should make a transition to that sex. Then we'd feel better; we'd be living authentically. Those who make the so-called transition are called "transgender."

Quote: "Transgender," then, is a term describing a fluid sexual identity where a person claims to have been born in the wrong body.²

A transgender *woman* is a male who thinks he is a woman and is trying to live like a woman. E.g., Bruce Jenner.

A transgender *man* is a female who thinks she is a man and is trying to live like a man. E.g., Chastity Bono

A non-binary person is someone who claims to be neither male nor female. He/she is somewhere on the spectrum but not one or the other.

² Jeff Myers and Brandon Showalter, *Exposing the Gender Lie: How to Protect Teens from the Transgender Industry's False Ideology*, 26. Summit Ministries.

- C. The “experts” tell us today that sex and gender are two different things. Sex is the physical side of being male or female, but gender is how you feel about and identify yourself. So a person of one sex may feel that he is a different gender; his feelings about himself don’t line up with his physical traits. Gender is uncoupled from biological sex in today’s way of thinking.
- D. If you feel out of place in your body, the solution to this problem, we are told, is a gender transition. You can take chemicals or have surgeries to conform your body to how you feel about yourself. Making that transition will make you happy. Your body will reflect what you feel about yourself inwardly, and then you can live authentically as who you really think you are.
- E. In previous years, feeling this way about yourself was exceedingly rare, was almost always found in men, and was considered to be a mental illness. In very rare cases, mentally ill men felt like and wanted to be women. It’s far more popular today than it ever has been, and thousands of people today claim to have such feelings.
- F. The solution for this problem is a gender transition. If you transform yourself into the opposite sex, your anxiety will decrease, you’ll be who you really are, and you’ll be happy.
- G. The main goal for many people today is personal happiness. Do whatever is necessary to feel good about yourself. The goal of life is to feel good about yourself because you are living authentically; you are being true to yourself. Do whatever you need to do to feel good, happy, secure, and at peace. And if that requires gender transition, that’s fine.
- H. What is the authority in such cases? The individual. Our society today demands human autonomy (self-rule). Everyone must be free to do whatever he/she wants. The only limitation on behavior today is consent. If an individual consents to any activity, then there is nothing wrong with that activity; that’s what most people believe today. No one should hinder anyone from doing anything they consent to do. Even minors today can give consent to have their bodies transformed chemically and surgically if that’s what they want to do.

- I. Christians assert that God is the ultimate authority, not humans. God is the creator, and he's told us who we are and how to behave ourselves. The word of God holds authority over us, and it's in our best interests to align ourselves with the moral standards we find in God's Word. And those standards of behavior are good, right, and proper. It's best for us when we follow the owner's manual. Following God's commands is always in our own best interests.
- J. Further, God's moral commands are universal; they apply to everyone. God holds all people accountable for their behavior. Even pagans and heathen people have the law of God written on their heart; we all have a conscience; we all know basic standards of right and wrong (Rom 1-2).

Jer 17:10 *I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.*
- K. Humans bear the image of God, and part of that image is being male or female. Bearing God's image is what gives us value and significance. Of course, if we are nothing more than the product of random evolution—if all we are is molecules in motion, nothing more than matter and energy—then it doesn't really matter what we do to our bodies. But if we are made in the image of God, then we must value the image that God stamped in us. Part of that image is either male or female.
 1. I read recently that scientists recognize about 6,500 differences between males and females. In almost every way that science is able to evaluate humans, they find major differences between the sexes. Up until recently, everyone affirmed this—e.g., *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*

2. We know that nature sometimes produces unusual examples of males and females. For a very small group of people, it may be unclear, when a child is born, whether it's a boy or a girl. In very rare cases, even the DNA evidence is unusual. Instead of XX or XY chromosomes, there may be XXY or XYY or some other odd combination. In very rare cases, the physical evidence is somewhat uncertain because of various abnormalities.
3. Odd cases like that are the exceptions that prove the rule. In the vast majority of cases, nature is very explicit in depicting whether someone is male or female. It's only in very rare cases, in abnormal, disordered cases, when the evidence is unclear.
4. In those very rare cases where the sex is not abundantly clear when the child is born, the parents have to be very careful in choosing whether to raise the child as a boy or a girl.
5. Every child should be raised as either male or female, not floating on a fluid spectrum of 3000 choices.
6. We don't base policies or morality on very rare cases. Standards of behavior are based on normal patterns, what is true in most cases, not on rare abnormalities. I.e., we should not change the entire culture to accommodate a tiny minority of the population.

Trans: We must uphold and defend the biblical pattern. There is no spectrum, no continuum, no range of options. Sex is binary. A person may claim to be non-binary, but that is an absurd, untrue, irrational claim. It's a sign of mental illness. We must not affirm such a false and unbiblical assertion. God made only two sexes.

- II. There is no such thing as gender transition.
- A. The Bible does not address, specifically or directly, the attempt to transition from one sex to another. That idea was virtually unheard of in the ancient world. Transgenderism seems to be in the same category as other behaviors that confuse male and female expectations and behaviors.
 - B. What the Bible affirms is that God made humans either male or female. The opposite sexes are supposed to go together. Men and women get married and have children; that's the normal pattern set up at the very beginning of creation, and it's the pattern that still pertains today. God approves of that pattern; it's right for us, which means that all contradictory patterns are wrong.
 - C. The Bible condemns the sins of men acting like women or wearing women's clothing (e.g., Deut 22:5). The Bible condemns the sin of women acting like men. The Bible condemns certain sinful same-sex relationships. Those behaviors were well-known and widely practiced in the ancient world. The Jewish people knew all about these behaviors, and they knew that they were sinful, perverted, and wicked. God warned his people not to engage in such behaviors.
 - D. We have amazing medical technology today. People today can undergo surgeries that can transform their bodies; they can make over their appearances to look much different than normal. But no surgeon and no hormone therapy can convert a man into a woman or a woman into a man. It's impossible as well as irrational. You can dress up as the opposite sex or pretend to be the opposite sex, you can undergo radical surgeries to make you more like the opposite sex, but you can never actually become the opposite sex.
 - E. Being a male or a female is not merely a matter of external appearance. Human sex is genetic; it's in the chromosomes. Males have XY, females have XX. While we admit that in very rare cases, people are born with genetic abnormalities, we still affirm that, in almost every case, people are born either male or female. And no amount of surgery or chemical modification can change that.

- F. Society is telling us that you *can* change that if you want to. If you feel masculine and are attracted to masculine things, then you must be a boy. If you feel feminine and are attracted to feminine things, then you must be a girl. If you feel like neither, you can be neither. If you feel like you are trapped in the wrong body, then you can transition to the other sex. The term for the feeling of being in the wrong body is “gender dysphoria.” And many today tell us that all you need is hormones and surgery to fix that feeling. Once you make the transition, you’ll be your authentic self, and you’ll be happy.
- G. All of that is a lie. It’s one big deception played upon the ignorant, the impressionable, and the immature. Biological sex is immutable; it cannot be changed. Medical or chemical intervention cannot change a person from one sex to the other.
- H. Often the parents of young people experiencing gender confusion consent to gender transition because “experts” tell them that it’s the right thing to do. Doctors threaten concerned parents: “Would you rather have a transgender child or a dead child; would you rather have a living son or a dead daughter?” The threat is that, if parents don’t allow their children to experience gender transition, the child will commit suicide. Most parents capitulate to this pressure. It would be better to allow the child to transition than to have the child kill himself. As it happens, the suicide rate is still very high among those who go through transition. The transition does not solve the mental health issues for many who experience it. Right now, there is a large movement of de-transitioners who tried gender transition and found that it did not solve their inner problems. Such people are often stuck with a mutilated, dysfunctional body.

Trans.: Whether gender transition “works” for some people or not, the truth is that there is no such thing as gender transition. It’s like same-sex marriage—there is no such thing; it’s not real, it’s not legitimate. It’s purely imaginary. Those who go through the transition procedures remain exactly what they were when they were born—either male or female. Nothing can change that. Bruce Jenner is still Bruce Jenner.

III. God upholds biblical gender roles.

- A. One of the main reasons that people feel like they want to transition is that they are uncomfortable with traditional gender roles.
1. A girl, perhaps, feels like she has much in common with boys. She's what we used to call a "tom boy." She likes rough-housing and adventure and taking risks and doing the things boys typically like to do. She does not fit in with the girls, so maybe she's really a boy in a girl's body.
 2. A boy, perhaps, feels that he has more in common with what girls like to do. He is attracted to dolls and indoor activities and dressing up and jewelry. He doesn't like things most other boys like; he'd rather spend time with girls and do what they like to do. He does not fit in with the boys, so maybe he's really a girl in a boy's body.
 3. Society tells us that if a girl or a boy feels more like the opposite sex, then she or he can transition to that sex.
 4. What the "experts" often don't tell parents is that, most of the time, children who are confused about such things eventually grow out of this gender confusion as they mature. This is a problem of maturity; and if we simply let nature take its course, kids will figure out where they belong. In the vast majority of cases, nothing radical needs to be done; time and maturity will sort out these confused feelings for the vast majority of people.
- B. God has given us gender roles to follow, and life is much more satisfying, meaningful, and peaceful if we adopt these roles. There may be some variation within the roles, but traditional, Christian gender roles are best for us.

- C. Historically, men and women knew their roles, and children were raised with a sense of stability. Boys were boys and girls were girls. Some boys were a bit girlish, and some girls were a bit boyish. But that was not that uncommon; society tolerated some variation. On the very fringes of society, people rejected traditional gender roles and lived in perversion and depravity, but society as a whole did not accept that kind of behavior. Society imposed very negative consequences for those who rejected the traditional gender roles. Society reinforced and rewarded those who fulfilled the traditional gender roles. This was true up until quite recently.

Illus.: Video of Mr. Rodgers singing a song about boys being boys and girls being girls. Lyrics: “Boys are boys from the beginning—if you were born a boy, you stay a boy. Girls are girls right from the start. If you were born a girl, you stay a girl.” That’s what the culture believed; that was the norm. Today, PBS would never show such a video. It would be considered hate speech. They would absolutely repudiate those ideas that were so common up until just a few years ago. The entire idea of gender transition has been absurd for all of human history up until very recently.

- D. As we all know, over the last several decades, those on the fringes of society have come into the mainstream. Those in the closet have come out, and they have taken over the culture for the most part. Virtually every part of society today has been captured by an unbiblical view of male and female. Those formerly in the shadows and on the fringes are now in the limelight; they are in charge; they have the authority. Today’s heroes and pop stars are those who were until recently on the extreme margins of society. The counter-culture has become main stream. The perverted minority are now the ones setting the example and determining the agenda. Society is bending over backwards to accommodate and promote such people.

- E. We as Christians have just as much right as anyone else to assert that the biblical way of living is the best way of living. Those who support an unbiblical point of view are claiming that their way of living is the best. I suppose the people of Sodom and Gomorrah thought that their way of living was the best. I suppose those living at the time of Noah thought their way of living was the best, until the flood swept them away.
- F. The truth is that, for nearly 2000 years, western culture has upheld biblical, Christian values as the right way to live. Christians are not the ones who have brought about a moral revolution over the last 75 years in America. Sadly, Christians have in large measure capitulated to the moral revolution, but they did not start it. It's the moral revolutionaries who are upending the moral order and bringing about moral chaos in the world.
- G. Christian moral ideals have been under attack for the last 100 years at least, and it looks like those in western nations are just about ready to kick Christianity to the curb. Nearly all of Europe has already done so, Canada has mostly done so, and America is next. Most of our young people here today will live to see a thoroughly secularized, post-Christian America, unless we have a huge revival.

Trans: Biblical gender roles might not be popular today, but as Christians, we must uphold and defend them.

IV. We must not affirm transgenderism.

A. How would we affirm it?

1. By using the opposite-sex name that the transgender person has taken. E.g., the male swimmer who beat all those women is named William Thomas, not Lia. Call him by his original name. Richard “Rachel” Levine—assistant secretary for health.
2. By using the pronouns that the person demands. Transitioners typically impose on others the pronouns they want to use. But we must not call a man “she” or “her.” We must not call a woman “he” or “him.” Why not? It would be a lie, and it would only show approval for that person’s mental instability. Same for a man’s husband or a woman’s wife—don’t affirm falsehood.
3. Some people claim that we should be courteous and gracious by using the names and pronouns that transitioners choose, but I disagree with that. We don’t accommodate to error/falsehood. We can’t allow others to force us to speak untruths.
4. Even terms like “transgender” and “gender affirming care” are actually misleading and confusing. Transition from one sex to another is impossible. Surgery to transform a human body into something that looks like the opposite sex is not really “gender affirming care.” It’s gender-denying mutilation.

Quote: At root, the gender ideology battle is a battle over the very meaning of words. It is a twisting of language to change how people see the world. ... At present, powerful interests are twisting language to convince the populace of materially false absurdities about the human body that change the very understanding of what it means to be human.³

³ Jeff Myers and Brandon Showalter, *Exposing the Gender Lie: How to Protect Teens from the Transgender Industry’s False Ideology*, 30, 31. Summit Ministries.

5. Language is very important. Those who control the language control the culture. Words like “male” and “female” have a meaning and are important. Those who want to change those meanings do so by changing language. So it’s very important that we don’t knuckle under to those who insist that we use false pronouns or other confused words. We must retain our commitment to truth. We must think the truth and tell the truth.
6. Jesus said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (Jn 8:32). We must be committed to the truth. We must live in harmony with reality. We must expose and repudiate the absurdities of the transgender movement.

B. Denying transgenderism is not violence.

1. The common claim that we often hear is that if we don’t affirm these people in their transition to the opposite sex, we are canceling them or erasing them or even engaging in violence against them. We are guilty of violence against them if we fail to affirm them in their chosen gender.

2. That’s simply false, ridiculous, and absurd. It’s only incredibly immature people who demand to be affirmed in their chosen identities. No one is obligated to affirm a lie or a delusion.

It reminds me of the fable of the emperor who had no clothes—even though most people affirmed that the emperor was wearing a beautiful suit, at least one person pointed out that he was wearing nothing but his birthday suit. We have to be those people who point out that the emperor has no clothes.

3. Transgender people are operating under a delusion—a lie—that they can be the opposite sex. It’s simply not true, and any rational person knows it. To affirm otherwise would be irrational.

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- C. Transgenderism is a mental health condition; it's a false idea in the mind. People who feel like they are in the wrong body have serious mental health issues. Those who feel this way should undergo some kind of psychological therapy. What they really need is the Gospel and salvation. If people would submit to Christ and the Bible, this problem would largely disappear. So this is primarily a spiritual and mental issue, not one that can be solved through chemical or surgical methods.
- D. Transgender people and those who support them need a solid dose of reality.
1. People today think that they can create their own reality. They can do anything, be anything, achieve anything. The mainstream media promotes the idea that you can do your own thing, be your own person, follow your heart, and be your true self. Even if it goes against your family and your traditions and everything you've been taught, you must live out your inner feelings. That's what the media is pumping into modern culture, and millions of people believe it.
 2. But as someone has famously said, facts don't care about your feelings. The fact is, everyone is either male or female, and there is no way to transition from one to the other. You can be more or less masculine or feminine, but you can't be a female if you are a male; you can't be a male if you are a female.

V. Transgenderism and associated ideas are worldview issues.

Colossians 2:8 *Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.*

- A. We are in a culture war today. About half of the population wants to trash the Bible and Christian standards of behavior, and the other half want to retain traditional Christian standards of behavior.
- B. A big question that humans have contemplated since ancient times is, “What is the best way to live? How should we conduct ourselves in a way that leads to the best outcomes for the most people?” For roughly 2000 years, western civilization has answered that question—the best outcomes for the most people will happen if we follow a basically biblical pattern. And following that pattern has worked fairly well for the vast majority of people in western culture. Humanity functions best when we follow biblical guidelines. When we reject these guidelines, chaos and disaster are sure to follow—which is exactly what we see in our world today.
- C. Modern society has a worldview which demands human autonomy—everyone must be free to do whatever he wants to do; human freedom is the highest value. The individual is the highest authority for secular society. We dispute that idea as “empty deceit.” We believe God and the Bible are the highest authorities, not human feelings. Human life functions best when we follow biblical guidelines, especially in the moral realm.
- D. Christians must judge all of these issues by finding out what God has said. It doesn’t matter what we feel about it. Our emotional state has nothing to do with it. All the emotional stories we hear do not set the agenda; God must set the agenda. He has the authority over us, and we know what is right because he tells us. The Bible gives us a foundation, an unmovable anchor, a fixed point of reference that helps us understand and judge issues like this. We must maintain a biblical viewpoint on this issue.

We certainly don't deny that a very small group of people have tragic experiences in which they feel out of place in their own bodies. These are often hurting and troubled people. Such people feel depressed and even suicidal about these issues, and we are sympathetic about that. We should feel compassion for those who struggle in this area.

However, we should also realize that many of these people are driven by an absolute commitment to radical personal autonomy. The highest authority for them is their own feelings and desires. They feel that they must act on their desires; they must live out their "authentic" selves, no matter what the cost or whom it affects. These people have no regard for biblical truth or Christian standards of behavior. People like this often demand that others conform to their feelings. They demand that reality changes for them. Instead of conforming themselves to reality, they want to change reality to fit their feelings about themselves. And they demand that everyone else affirm their delusions.

Quote: The self has now replaced truth. To the cult of self, our bodies are not intertwined with our souls in a purposeful way but are mere blobs of matter with no transcendent meaning except that which serves our desirable, personal ends.⁴

This is fundamentally disordered thinking and living. While we feel sorry for these people and we would want to help them, the truth is that the only thing we have to offer them is the Gospel. If they repent of their sin and trust in Christ, many of their problems can be solved. If they turn from their perversion and conform themselves to biblical patterns, they can find satisfaction, peace, and joy.

Matthew 11:28–30 *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*"

⁴ Jeff Myers and Brandon Showalter, *Exposing the Gender Lie: How to Protect Teens from the Transgender Industry's False Ideology*, 24. Summit Ministries.

Jesus was compassionate and gentle toward even the most depraved sinners. He invited them to turn from their sin and follow him. Prostitutes, tax collectors, and criminals turned to Christ, and he received them gladly. God is slow to anger and of great mercy. If people who have engaged in transgender behavior come to God humbly, repentantly, and with the desire to take up Christ's yoke, they will be welcomed. Christ invites all sinners to come to him for forgiveness and healing, and he'll not cast anyone out. Christ provides the solution to this issue and to all other sin issues.

But if they refuse the easy and light yoke of Christ, there is no eternal hope for them. If they refuse Jesus' command to "go and sin no more," then life is going to be tragic for most of them. Sadly, many of them will commit suicide. However, our feelings of compassion for them should not lead to spiritual compromise on our part. We are not going to change reality for them, so they'll feel more comfortable. We demand that they conform to reality; we are not going to leave reality to conform to their irrational claims.

The trans-gender issue is a huge one in our culture today. We see it all over the media, and many people are talking about it. We must approach this and all other moral issues from the standpoint of the authority of God's word. We can be sensitive and compassionate with people who are taken captive by these problems, but we don't approach the issue through the lens of human experience. We understand the issue through the lens of God's word. We don't approach the issue emotionally; we approach it theologically.

And that commitment helps us understand that there are only two sexes and transition from one to the other is impossible. God's pattern for human life is male and female, and we should follow the God-given roles established for us in Scripture. Conforming ourselves to God's reality is the best way to enjoy a happy, healthy, and productive life.