

A Biblical View of Gender and Sexuality

Series: Elephant in the Room #3

Genesis 1:26-28; Matthew 19:4; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 18-19; Galatians 3:26-28

Introduction: The speed at which things are changing is disturbingly breathtaking. I'm not trying to be cynical. And I'm not trying to be sentimental, nostalgic, or old fashioned. The changes that leave me wide-eyed, perplexed, and troubled have nothing to do with technology, fashions, fads, or styles. Those things are always changing - like it or not. I'm also not longing for the good ol' days.

Things that used to be beyond question are now up for debate. Things that used to be seen as good are now seen as bad, and things that used to be clearly wrong are now celebrated.

When I was a kid, there were a few times, me and my younger brothers would sit on the living room couch with my mom. We would all be wrapped up in a blanket with some snacks to eat and would watch the 1939 classic movie, The Wizard of Oz. You remember, Dorothy gets caught in a tornado that transports her and her dog, Toto, to a mysterious land called Oz. When Dorothy and Toto awaken in Oz, she utters that now famous line, **"Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."**

That phrase, which has become part of American culture and language, means "we have stepped outside of what is considered normal, we have entered a place that is unfamiliar, strange, and uncomfortable."

I have that same thought and feeling every time I look at the news headlines every day. Compared to what I knew growing up; I think "*I'm not in Kansas anymore.*" When I look at the cultural and moral landscape today, compared to what I knew 10 years ago, I think, "*I'm not in Kansas anymore.*"

So, today, as we look at sermon #3 of our series, "The Elephant in the Room" we are going to be looking at A Biblical View of Gender and Sexuality.

This of course leads us to ask several questions like: Is gender fluid? Can a person's gender change throughout their lives? Is gender something that is determined for you? or is gender something that a person should be able to determine for themselves?

And at the end of the day this all comes down to the question of identity. I don't care who you are, every person will ask either consciously or subconsciously at some point in life; **who am I? What makes me, me?**

The purpose of my message **is not** to denigrate people...it's **not** to juxtaposition ourselves as superior or against anybody who may not agree with a biblical definition of sexuality and gender.

Rather my desire is to offer hope, and clarity, in the midst of what is a very confusing season in our culture and in our country.

Specifically, I want to offer hope and clarity to those who are in the transgender community. I want you to know God loves you. I also want to offer some clarity to young people who are struggling with issues of gender identity or with issues of their own sexuality and what role that plays in their life and how to process the feelings that they're having. I want to also encourage parents and educators who are unsure how to deal with this subject.

Let me say at the outset, I'm deeply indebted to Preston Sprinkle and his book, "**Embodied.**" and Pastor John Lindell for his message on this topic. For you parents there is a book called, "**The Talk**" by Luke Gilkerson that has 7 lessons to introduce your child to biblical sexuality. **[Show picture of books]**

It is interesting that according to the American Psychiatric Association in 2012, if a male identified himself as a female or if a female identified herself as a male it was considered a mental disorder. Today, to identify as the opposite sex or to be transgender is heralded as something courageous.

When it comes to gender in our present-day culture, we have moved from the presumption of two genders, male and female, to an acceptance or accommodation at last count of 72 gender combinations.

It used to be that a person's sex and gender were synonymous, but in the last 20 years that has radically changed. As medical news today states: *Gender is different than sex. Although genetic factors typically define a person's sex, gender refers to how they identify inside. Only the person themselves can determine what their identity is.*

Is that true? That's what our society says is why some of you when you go to some social media sites and you're relating to someone, you will increasingly

not only see the person's name but pronouns following the name that give you a sense of what gender they want to be addressed as or known by.

Let's ask and address 3 big questions:

1. What does the bible say about sexual and gender identity?

For starters let's just answer the question what is it that makes a person inherently, biologically male or female? I think we could say that there are three criteria.

1. External sexual anatomy

2. Internal reproductive organs

3. Endocrine systems that produce sex characteristics by way of hormones

Women have higher levels of estrogen that contribute to breast development and other features

Men have higher levels of testosterone that produces facial hair, and muscle mass. It's funny because my dad always said if there was something I didn't want to eat. **"Gerry Jr., eat it, it will put hair on your chest."**

While it's true that our interpretation of sexual characteristics may be culturally constructed or informed; for example, and I'm using this just as an example, it's a typical old school stereotype. Girls like dolls, boys like trucks.

That's a culturally accepted gender role identity. I'm not saying that's true today, but it was true when most of us were growing up.

Sex itself is not the result of social or cultural constructs, it is a matter of physical biology. Now as I said, it used to be accepted that sex and gender were synonymous. If you had male anatomy your gender was male; and if you had female anatomy your gender was female. But today in secular society, the preferred view is that a person's gender identity is based on their own personal sense of self. Someone may be male, female, both or neither.

In fact, as I said, at last count there are 72 defined genders starting with agender, androgynous, bigender, cisgender, and the list goes on.

Which brings us to the whole subject of transgender. Transgender is in many respects is a catch-all for the various ways that people experience conflict between their biological sex and their gender identity, or gender role.

The primary belief of the transgender community is that sex and gender are two totally different things. They would say a person's gender rather than their biological sex is the basis from which a person's identity is built.

In traditional cultures you received your identity from your community or from your family. You didn't have to stress out about where you were going to live, you lived where you lived, and you didn't have to stress out about who you were going to marry, your parents would arrange this for you.

So, in traditional cultures, identity can be enormously smothering, people are always having to live up to the expectations of the community, there doesn't seem to be any freedom, but in Western cultures you get your identity by getting away from the community and becoming your own man or woman. You create your own identity. You make your own way; you climb every mountain until you find your dreams.

The issue of Transgender, or Gender Confusion, or however you want to call it, is **an identity crisis**, it is the case of a person seeking to find an identity that is fulfilling and that will make them happy.

But the amazing message of Christianity is that you don't need to be assigned importance or identity by your family or community, and you don't have to go out and make your own identity in whatever that may be, the beauty of Christianity is that you have been given an identity by the very God who designed you and who loves you.

In today's culture, a person may be biologically female, but if they feel they are male, then they should act like a male and even change their biological anatomy to reflect their inner sense of self.

And this is being promoted in the culture at a huge pace. Children's programming is changing the face of what this next generation is going to look like in a massive way. At last count there are **70** children's programs featuring **259** characters that are not the typical gender but have a variety of gender identities.

Shows that feature this include Disney duck tales, she-ra, dc superhero girls, Clifford the big red dog, and Star Wars resistance to name a few. Toy makers are getting in on it. Hasbro recently converted Mr. potato head to just potato head. And so, **in the media and popular culture there is a promotion of what we might call a transgender agenda.**

In many parts of the country, educators are encouraged to take kids on a **gender exploration journey *without* parental consent**. And politically it's being facilitated with laws such as the one in Scotland that will allow 4-year-olds to identify as the opposite sex and alter their names without parental consent. In the state of Oregon, 15-year-olds can medically transition ***without*** parental consent.

So, the real question for us is, what does the bible say about sex, sexuality, and gender identity?

Genesis 1:26-27, says, "God said, ***“Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.” So, God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God, He created them; male and female he created them.*”** (NLT)

This passage tells us that God made two genders, male and female. It further tells us that human beings are made in the image of God, which means there are aspects of God's image that are reflected in the female gender, and there are aspects of God's image that are reflected in the male gender, and male and female together, reflect God.

For a while it became popular that gender was merely a sociological construct... that male and female are exactly the same, just with a different plumbing system. But almost nobody says that anymore. Biologists have demonstrated that every cell in our body is stamped XX or XY.

Our differences are stamped into our cells. God did not take one generic body, plumb in 2 different sets of pipes, and call them two genders, as if we could change the piping, pump in a few hormones, and change our gender.

Our gender distinctions go down to our core. Genesis 1:26 says that from the beginning, God made us male and female. I read something recently about how boys and girls, from their infancy, approach problems differently.

When it comes to Obstacles: Infant boys. Knock them over. Girl toddlers: go around them or complain.

Girls like complexity; boys do not. When jazz music is played, the heartbeat of

a 6-month-old girl speeds up. There is virtually no effect on the boys' heart.

Feminist Carol Gilligan (not an evangelical) In a Different Voice says: "Men see themselves as maturing as they separate; women see themselves as maturing as they attach."

Men feel they achieve maturity when they become independent; women when they are interdependent. The two genders are a more complete view of the image of God than would one gender by itself.

Jesus affirmed this understanding in Matthew 19:4, "**Haven't you read the scriptures?**" **Jesus replies. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.'**" (NLT)

All of which tells us that our sexuality and gender is not based on how we feel. God has intentionally designed our body, and our identity that we might demonstrate His will for our good and His glory.

What the enemy wants to do is confuse and destroy a human being's identity, so they won't understand who they are, so they won't fulfill God's purpose, and they won't know who God has created them to be.

Genesis 1:28 goes on to say, "**Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it."**" (NLT)

What this is telling us is that in addition to creating human beings in His image as male and female, He has a purpose, and part of that purpose, not the whole, but part of it is to fill the earth, that's **reproduction**, and to govern it, that's **rulership**.

In the first chapter of Romans, the passage specifically deals with issues of gender, sexuality, and sexual behavior. Paul says this in verse 20: "**For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.**" (NIV)

In other words, ever since the creation of the world, his eternal power and divine nature have been understood and seen through male and female, who are the focal point of everything he made.

The verse implies that: From the time of creation until now, gender and sex, manhood and womanhood constantly display truths about God.

And what truth is that? Ephesians chapter 5 connects all the dots and indicates that manhood and womanhood, marriage and sex, all point to the story of the Bridegroom, the Son of God, who loved and gave His life to redeem His Bride, the church. Gender exists to tell the love story of the gospel.

God had the story of Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, and His Bride, the church, in mind before the foundation of the earth, and it's that story that he had in mind—when he set His hand to create male and female, when he said, "Let us make man in our image" and created male and female.

The bodies of male and female reflect this idea of complementary distinction. Man was created to actively and joyfully initiate and give, and the woman was created to actively and joyfully respond, receive and relate. Each is a perfect counterpart to the other.

Men are to reflect the character and strength, love, and self-sacrifice of Christ. Women are to reflect the character, responsiveness, grace, and beauty of the bride He redeemed.

God created manhood, womanhood, marriage, and sex because he wanted us to have symbols and images and language powerful enough to convey the idea of who He is and what a relationship with Him is all about.

Without manhood and womanhood, marriage, and sex, we'd have a tough time understanding concepts like desire and love, commitment, fidelity, infidelity, loyalty, jealousy, unity, intimacy, marriage, oneness, covenant, and family. The visible symbols display and testify of what is unseen, and that is why the symbols are so very important.

Given the powerful symbolism of marriage and gender and sex and family, **is it any wonder that Satan tries to destroy these images?**

Let me just say this and I think it needs to be reiterated in a day where children are viewed either as an inconvenience or as an option, that in God's design, male and female were created for the sake of reproduction. **One of the best things that you can give God is a baby. And one of the best things you can give society is a child who is raised to know God.**

And if you can't have children or you're not in a position where that is possible then there are all kinds of ways you can be involved. You can be the greatest aunt or uncle there ever was. My son Caleb and daughter Natalie are rock stars with their nieces and nephews as well as to some of your children. There are kids everywhere who need love.

Just so you know, when it comes to transgender identity and clothing, the bible forbids men dressing like women. In Deuteronomy 22:5 it says, **“A woman must not put on men’s clothing, and a man must not wear women’s clothing. Anyone who does this is detestable in the sight of the Lord your God.”** (NLT)

You say, but styles have changed and sometimes men's and women's clothing are very similar. But the principle itself is timeless if you're cross-dressing to present yourself as the opposite sex, it is detestable in God's eyes.

This is echoed in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, **“Don’t you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don’t fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people, none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God.”** (NLT)

The word for male prostitutes is **malachos** in the Greek and it has to do with men dressing like women. That's what the word means. Same sex activity goes against God's creative intent in making us distinctly male and female.

Furthermore, it's important to understand that our sexuality is deeply related to our identity. And when people abuse sex or turn from God's design of human sexuality, what happens is it's not only a sinful act, but it strikes a blow to their human identity.

This is what Paul is saying when you go a little further in 1 Cor. 6 to verses 18-19, **“There is a sense in which sexual sins are different from all others. In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for “becoming one” with another. Or didn’t you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit? Don’t you see that you can’t live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for?** (MSG)

We belong to God and the way we steward our bodies and the way we understand sexuality has everything to do with our identity, as well as fulfilling His purpose.

Some will say, well in the New Testament Paul says, there is neither male nor female. And they are quoting Galatians 3:26-28, **“For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on the character of Christ, like putting on new clothes. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male, and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.”** (NLT)

This passage is NOT suggesting that biology and anatomy don't matter. It's not saying the Jewish race doesn't exist any longer. It's not saying in that day there was no more slavery. What it's saying is that our differences in life fade away as we come together in Christ. We are one with Him and we are one with one another. It doesn't erase the differences, it means that in relating to one another in Christ, there are no differences.

What does science say on the transgender issue?

In a February 2020 Wall Street Journal op-ed piece entitled “the Dangerous Denial of Sex,” Penn State evolutionary biologist Colin Wright and University of Manchester developmental biologist, Emma Hilton wrote,

In humans, as in most animals or plants, an organisms biological sex corresponds to one of two distinct types of reproductive anatomy...In humans' reproductive anatomy is unambiguously male or female at birth more than 99.98% of the time. No third type of sex cell exists in humans, and therefore there is not sex 'spectrum' or additional sexes beyond male and female.”

~Wall Street Journal, “The Dangerous Denial of Sex” February 2020, Colin Wright, Evolutionary biologist Penn State & Emma Hilton, Developmental Biologist, University of Manchester.

Sex is binary, it is male and female. So, what does the bible say about sexual and gender identity? If a person is struggling between their internal sense of self and their biological sex which determines who they are? The bible says their biological sex. Science says their biological sex.

That leads us to the question of:

2. What should a person do who is struggling with gender dysphoria?

Gender dysphoria is the distress a person experiences due to a mismatch between their personal sense of their own gender—and their birth sex.

Well to answer that question, I think there are several things to be considered. First is the internal self-struggle because of societal stereotypes? In other words, they are female, and I'm not trying to be flippant, just using what used to be the norm, they are female and like trucks instead of dolls.

You have a girl who wants to be a baseball player instead of a ballet dancer or a boy who wants to be a figure skater instead of a hockey player.

What you have in that is children trying to figure life out and figure identity out and that is a part of growing up. That does not mean they are experiencing gender dysphoria. It does not mean they should investigate the other gender as if that might be somehow preferable for them.

In those cases, I would say to parents, "don't make a big deal about it." Remember the bible says to raise your children up in the way they should go. Part of that is to raise boys to be boys and girls to be girls.

You say well what if the internal struggle is based gender dysphoria? In other words, what if the person truly does not identify with their biological sex? How many people are truly in that category of transgender? According to studies it's 0.5% of the population. Now, by giving that number, I am not in any way suggesting it is not a big deal, especially if you're the person dealing with that.

Just remember that God loves you. You are important to God. You are made in His image. At the same time, it's important for you to understand this – **society is giving you a different message**. You need to understand we can love and accept you as a person without affirming your decisions. We can also affirm your value as a person and still be committed to the teaching of scripture. The bible does not condemn people, but it does prohibit sinful activity, whatever that activity is.

The fact of the matter is that Jesus came to this world to heal our brokenness. And all of us have been broken by sin in one way or another. Having gender dysphoria is not a moral issue. Like I said, Gender dysphoria causes a person

to feel like they are the opposite sex from their birth sex, but that does not mean you are a different sex.

Here is what all of us must understand as moral agents in God's creation, our decisions have moral ramifications. Jesus offers a wholeness that will bring unity between your biological sex and your sense of self.

And that wholeness doesn't come by changing your physiology but by giving attention to what's going on in your mind and in your heart. And that is true with every single sin situation that we as human being encounter.

Jesus gives us the power to deal with our heart and our mind so that we might be whole.

Transitioning from your given sex will move you further away from who you are, not closer to who you are.

Walt Heyer had struggled with gender confusion from an early age. He estimates from age four. At age 42 he underwent gender reassignment surgery. For eight years he lived as a trans female named Laura Jensen. During that time, he was still unhappy and attempted suicide. He has since gone back to his original gender and has given himself to studying the subject of gender transition, and these are the statistics he has compiled from research done by universities.

20% of those who undergo gender reassignment surgery regret it.

41% attempt suicide

50% have depressive symptoms

90% have significant psychopathology, that means there's been abuse, there have been traumas, there have been factors that have led to psychological issues yet unresolved.

3. What if my child is struggling with gender issues?

Do I let them choose their gender? Do I go along with their gender choice? Do I take them to a clinic and allow them to take puberty blockers? This issue for generation Z, which is the current young generation, is massive. A recent Gallop poll found that 5.6% of US adults identify as LGBT, up from 4.5% in 2017. 16% of Gen Z identify themselves as LGBTQIA.

In other words, Gen Z is becoming increasingly sexually amorphous. That means sexually without definition.

Miley Cyrus put it this way, *"I don't relate to being boy or girl, and I don't have to have my partner relate to boy or girl."*

Furthermore, while gender dysphoria is a real condition that affects a small percentage of the population, when it comes to generation Z, something else is happening.

A Brown University professor published a study that has since been suppressed by the LGBT community. In his study he found this, and I quote, "Rapid onset gender dysphoria among teens and young adults may be a social contagion linked with having friends who identify as LGBT, an identity politics peer culture, and an increase in internet use."

Illustration: Preston Sprinkle in his book, EMBODIED tells a story of a girl named Stephanie. She grew up as a stereotypically feminine girl on the autism spectrum. When she was 13 years old, she told her mother she was transgender. Stephanie's declaration seemed to come out of nowhere. There had been no prior history of gender dysphoria, no tomboyish interests or behavior. Her mother did however find out that she had just heard a presentation about being transgender at school. A school where over 5% of the student population identified as transgender or non-binary.

Her mother, Carol, took her to a gender clinic to seek counsel. Here's what the clinician told her, "You must refer to your daughter with masculine pronouns, call her by a masculine name, buy her a binder to flatten her breasts."

He recommended no therapy, and there was no consideration of the social factors that obviously affected her thinking. Carol was directed to put her on puberty blocking drugs. She then adds that she was falsely assured that these drugs were well studied and that they were a perfectly safe way for her to quote, "explore gender" end quote. She was told that if she did not comply, she would be at a higher risk of suicide.

In another story, Helena was 14 when she felt she might be attracted to both boys and girls and began to explore what this might mean for her through online community on Tumblr. It was there that she learned about various

gender identities. She learned on Tumblr that taking testosterone was the next step she had to take as a trans person.

So, she began cross hormone therapy or CHT. She was on CHT for two years. It wasn't long before problems began popping up again. She said it is a common thing for women on testosterone to experience a lot of anger, then there's the weird phenomenon where you get upset and want to cry but you can't. Eventually, these kinds of problems started getting more apparent and she started feeling miserable. She was angry all the time. It really messed with her mental health.

Helena also learned that high doses of testosterone in females often cause their ovaries and uterus to atrophy after about five years. She was miserable, emotionally, physically, mentally. She remembers that at one point she just had to say it was not working. Ultimately, she decided to detransition back to female.

The media promotion of all things trans has created a significant jump in gender dysphoria, especially among young females. The Tavistock Center in London, U.K., which is the main gender clinic in the U.K., treated 17 females for gender dysphoria in 2009. In 2019 they treated 1740. That's a five thousand percent increase in ten years.

Research on rapid onset gender dysphoria among teens reveals the following:

63% had one or more diagnosis of psychiatric disorder or neurodevelopment disorder including a traumatic event, cutting, ADHD, OCD, eating disorders, and bipolar

72% when taken to a gender therapist or physician were never encouraged to explore issues of mental health before proceeding to gender transition.

Again, to quote Colin Wright and Emma Hilton, "The large majority of gender-dysphoric youths eventually outgrow their feelings of dysphoria during puberty. 'Affirmation' therapies, that insist a child's cross sex identity should never be questioned, and puberty blocking drugs, advertised as a way for children to 'buy time' to sort out their identities, ...only solidify feelings of dysphoria, setting them on a pathway to more invasive medical interventions and permanent infertility. This pathologizing of sex-atypical behavior is extremely worrying and regressive."

~Wall Street Journal, "The Dangerous Denial of Sex" February 2020, Colin Wright, Evolutionary biologist Penn State & Emma Hilton, Developmental Biologist, University of Manchester.

Prescribing drugs or stopping puberty is not the way to help a twelve-year-old who is struggling with identity. The choice of transition or surgery is irresponsible, psychologically, educationally, and ethically.

Our sexuality and gender is not based on how we feel. God has intentionally designed our body, our sex, our gender, and our identity that we might demonstrate His will for our good and His glory.

The beauty of Christianity is that it says you were particularly created by God in a certain way to be His child and to live for Him, and if you understand that and if you submit to that He will lead you and give you meaning, and purpose and value and life.

Conclusion: I want to emphasize just three thoughts.

The first thought is this: God has a spectacular design for your manhood or your womanhood. The Genesis of gender indicates that He has a pattern and a plan for who He created you to be, and it's very beautiful. It is very good. It's very profound, and significant.

Number two: God wants you to say "Yes" to his design. He wants you to recognize the ways in which you've messed up your life because you thought you knew what you were doing and were too stubborn to follow His plans. Saying "Yes" to true manhood and to true womanhood isn't about accepting a cookie-cutter pattern for life. It's saying "Yes" to God and His right to be the Lord of my life.

Point number three: God can do an amazing work of restoration. Tragically, the beautiful design of who God created us to be has been marred by sin for every one of us. Turn to Jesus and receive the offer of a new and abundant life He offers us. The key for you to find your identity is not found in your feelings or your friends, it's found in having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me also give you three summary statements for parents.

1. **Be aware.** You need to know what your child is looking at online. As a parent you do not have an obligation to respect your child's internet privacy. You need to know what they are doing when they are on

social media, who they are following, who they are texting, who they are interacting with, who their friends are and what they are like. You need to guide your children wisely and firmly in their selection of friends. My mother had a plaque in our house that read, choose your friends carefully, you will become who they are.

2. **Be actively involved.** You should know where your kids are at, what they are doing, who they are doing it with, what they're learning in school. And yes, you may have to change your schedule, but you've got to be present. We got this idea that love equals relationship. That's not true. Some people love their kids dearly but have no relationship with their kids. Here is the formula: love +time= relationship. You prove your love by the time you give them. And the more time you give them, the more influence you will have with them.

Be aware, be actively involved...

3. **Be in charge.** I'm not talking about you being a bully, always throwing your weight around. When it comes to your child's identity, you're mature and they aren't, and it's ridiculous to think a child can make a gender choice.

Mom and dad, you should be the first person to talk to your child about sex and gender. And that needs to start when they go to school. I'm not saying you lay it all out there in one setting when they are six, but you start talking to them, so that they feel comfortable with you having that ongoing discussion through their developmental years. You're not their friend, you're their parent, and that's what they need.

What can we all do?

1. **Pray.**
2. **Love People.**
3. **Stand up and speak out for the truth.**

I see so many Christians becoming increasingly silent because they're afraid of being labeled a bigot or unsophisticated or not woke enough or uneducated because we believe the bible. As a Christ-follower, my mind is renewed by God's eternal word, I'm fully awake, I'm wonderfully alive in Christ, and I see more clearly with my physical eyes and the eyes of faith

than I've ever seen before. We can trust the Holy Spirit to give us the words to speak when we need to.