

Thinking Biblically about Transgenderism [Slide 1]

It was almost inevitable that when social progressives and the LGBT coalition won the right to homosexual marriage that they would turn their attention to the issue of securing rights for transgender individuals. They have primarily focused on the legal battle to gain the right for transgender individuals to use the bathroom of their choice, but of course the larger issue, as it was with homosexuals, is to gain broad moral acceptance for transgender individuals. The issue is framed as one of human rights with anyone opposed caricatured as a transphobe or a hateful, intolerant person. We've seen this script before.

As of March 2016, nineteen states had gender identity and orientation protection laws on the books, many of which refer to discrimination based on gender identity ("Bruce Springsteen Cancels Concert in North Carolina Due to New Law," Fox News.com April 8, 2016)

The percentage of adults identifying as transgendered is around 0.3 % (Gary J. Gates, "How Many People are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender?" Williams Institute, University of California School of Law, April, 2011)

Until 2012 the American Psychiatric Association identified transgender feelings as "gender identity disorder," a designation that implied transgender feelings are abnormal and not desirable. But the Association changed the terminology to define transgender feelings as gender dysphoria, a condition that produces distress over transgender feelings, but does not imply they are a disorder. Years earlier the same group redefined homosexual feelings as no longer being a disorder that needed to be cured.

As we begin, let's recognize that those who believe they are the opposite gender from their anatomy usually are under a lot of distress and emotional pain. That realization should cause us to relate to these individuals with sympathy and compassion, even if we totally disagree with their reasoning or their desires.

[Slide 2] What are the relevant Biblical truths we need to consider as we seek to evaluate transgenderism? First, we need to affirm that God designed the two genders, male and female, and that he is the one who assigns to each of us our sex and gender. To transgender is to reject God's design.

In Genesis 1:27-28 God says, "Read." The two sexes are male and female. These two sexes complement each other. In Genesis 2:18 God describes the female as corresponding to the male. This means the female is not identical to the male but has things which the male does not have but needs and the male has things the female does not have and needs. In the area of procreation both male and female are necessary to produce a child, but the differences are not limited to procreation. Males and females have different abilities and assets the other needs so that in marriage those needs are met as a man and a woman become one flesh.

God did not set this all up and then let it run like a clock. No, the Bible teaches that God fashions and forms each one of us individually in the womb. King David declares this truth in Psalm 139:13-14. Read. God fearfully and wonderfully makes each one of us. He chooses our sex and makes us a male or female. It used to be that sex and gender were used as synonyms. You were either a male by sex and gender or a female.

However, with the presence of individuals who feel they are the opposite gender than their body, modern people began to suggest that sex and gender are not synonyms, but that your sex and your gender could be opposites.

Let me define the two terms, sex and gender, as they are currently used in this discussion. Sex is your biological wiring that makes you either male or female. It begins with your chromosomes. If you have an XY chromosome set you are male and if you have an XX chromosome set you are female. Thus every cell in your body that contains a nucleus, which is most of them, proclaims you as male or female. Your sexual organs also proclaim your maleness or femaleness. Your brain also will be wired differently whether you are male or female. Female brains have more neural connections enabling females to master language and multitasking much better than males. The fewer neural connections enable males to be more focused on single tasks. There are other differences between males and females in terms of the number of rods and cones in your eyes, the amount of muscle mass and lung capacity, which I won't take time to enumerate. Biologically your sex is an objective reality that cannot be altered. Even if you were to cut away your sex organs and take artificial sex hormones of the opposite sex, you can never change your genetic code which declares your maleness or femaleness.

Gender, according to the LGBT community and others, is not a biological reality but is a social construct decided by the individual. According to them, if an individual feels they are a different gender than their sex, then their feelings should take precedence over the objective biological reality. Anatomically and genetically they may be a male but if they feel like they are a woman inside, then their feelings should outweigh everything else and they should be treated by others as the gender they choose to present to the world. That is the basic argument for transgenderism.

Your birth sex is what God designed you to be. That is both your sex and your gender. To desire the opposite gender is to reject God's design for you. It is an act of rebellion against God's will. I doubt seriously that anyone desiring the opposite gender thinks in those terms. I don't believe they consciously think they want to disobey God and how can they do it. "I'm going to disobey God. Oh, I know. I'll choose to be a different gender than what I am." That's not how they arrive at their decision, but it is what they are doing. They are rejecting God's design for them.

I've read some of the stories of why people want to be the opposite gender. In one case a young boy was dressed as a girl by his grandmother who gave him all sorts of positive affirmation dressed as a girl, but not as a boy. Not surprisingly he started to feel like he really was a woman inside. Some had a same-gender attraction and in order to "justify" their feelings they wanted to become the opposite gender. World Magazine in their April 15 issue of this year published the stories of transgender individuals who now regret their decision to transgender. If you read their stories you will find they were all broken individuals, in pain, trying to alleviate that pain through transitioning to the opposite gender. At the time they did not see their decision as an attempt to rebel against God but rather as an attempt to deal with the pain and suffering in their life. In summary the decision to transition was an attempt by the flesh to solve an internal problem that only God can solve.

In Deuteronomy 22:5 God says, "Read." In Biblical times there was no hormone therapy, no sex reassignment surgery so the only way to transition was to dress in the clothing of the opposite gender. Cross dressing was an abomination to God because it confused the two genders he created.

[Slide 3] The second Biblical truth that comes into play is idolatry of feelings that drives this issue. People have elevated feelings to the high position of determining what is true and what is right. Feelings have replaced God and his word. That is what I mean by the idolatry of feelings.

The Bible teaches us that sin has tainted and corrupted every part of us including our thinking, our will, and our feelings. In regard to our feelings, thinking and will, Jeremiah 17:9 diagnoses man as capable of great self-deception. Jeremiah 17:9-10 says, “Read.”

If our heart is so deceitful, then how ludicrous it is to define reality by our feelings. When my feelings do not match reality or do not match the word of God, the problem is with my feelings. They are corrupt and inaccurate. When a boy feels like a girl, those feelings are wrong. They are messed up. In fact, they are seriously distorted, because they do not match reality at all. It used to be that we as a society understood that emotions are fickle things that should not be trusted, but we have evidently thrown common sense out the window.

Just to illustrate how fickle feelings are the American College of Pediatricians says that as many as 98 percent of gender confused boys and 88 percent of gender confused girls eventually accept their biological sex after naturally passing through puberty (Michelle Cretella, MD, “Gender Dysphoria in Children,” The American College of Pediatricians, August 2016.). In fact, the American College of Pediatricians has come out against sex reassignment among minors as being equivalent to child abuse.

One of the most absurd claims is blaming God for our broken feelings. This occurs when someone claims that God “made” them with these feelings. “I’ve felt that way all my life therefore God made me that way.” We are both the product of God’s creation and sin’s corruption, so not everything about us or in us is from God. What is from God will be in harmony with his word and his creation.

[Slide 4] The third Biblical truth that comes into play, closely related to the idolatry of feelings, is the radical individualism that seeks to define morality and reality by own’s personal perception. Even if the whole world sees you as a female, if you think you are a male, that is how it has to be. Radical individualism is not a new thing. It happens when a culture drifts far from God. You can see radical individualism in the pages of Scripture especially in Judges 21:25 where it describes the days of the judges as a time in Israel where everyone did what was right in their own eyes. It’s expressed today by the demand from transgendered people that we all have to let them use the bathroom of their choice rather than the bathroom of their inherited sex because their reality trumps ours. Everyone else has to abide by their perception rather than abide by biological reality because what is right in their eyes takes precedence over everything else. That’s radical individualism.

[Slide 5] The fourth Biblical truth is the tendency of sinful people to redefine good and evil. Listen to Isaiah 5:20-21 which describes the mindset and practice of sinful people. Read. I am now thinking primarily of those on the progressive left who think they are doing a good and noble thing by championing the transgender cause. From their perspective, noble tolerance means you support and encourage people to choose whatever gender they want. It’s all about choice, personal freedom, tolerance of other people’s choices, etc. Thus anyone who questions the goodness or morality of transgenderism must be motivated by hateful, phobic feelings, for in their opinion there can be no rational reason to oppose transgenderism. These people immediately preclude any kind of civil discourse and jump right to name calling and character assassination, because all they have going for them are their feelings. They don’t have a well-developed moral code. They’re not interested in persuading through reasoned argument. They will use shame and intimidation to make their point.

Consider this example of shame and intimidation from the Christian Research Journal, Volume 39, number 3, p. 17.

“Accordingly, if bigots spew hateful ideas that hurt people, and you silence them, you’re not viewed as a violator of religious liberty, you’re viewed as a hero, patriotically defending the world against hateful, toxic influences. So when gay journalist and media figure Dan Savage spoke at a student journalism conference, mocking the Bible and believers by referring to the ‘bull—in the Bible about homosexuality’ and calling Christians who walked out on his profanity-laced tirade ‘pansy a—ed,’ his audience of future journalists cheered.

Liberal activists would call the decision to transition a good decision because it makes a person stay true to their feelings. I would call that decision an evil decision because the person is rejecting God’s design and is not staying true to God’s will. They would say that the choice to transition is a sweet decision that will lead to sweet results. I would say that it is a bitter decision that will lead to bitter results for the person transitioning.

[Slide 6] If transitioning to a different gender is against the will of God, then we would expect that decision to bring harmful effects upon the transgendered individual. God doesn’t forbid good things. He forbids harmful things. So, is helping people to transition to a different gender really helping them? The answer is no. Those who think they are helping people by encouraging them to transition are not really helping them. They are not solving the core problem that led to the desire for a different gender.

Dr. Paul McHugh is the University Distinguished Service Professor of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University. In an article entitled Surgical Sex at firstthings.com he explains why Johns Hopkins stopped doing sex change operations. When the staff at Johns Hopkins followed up on patients after their surgery this is what they found.

He found that most of the patients he tracked down some years after their surgery were contented with what they had done and that only a few regretted it. But in every other respect, they were little changed in their psychological condition. They had much the same problems with relationships, work, and emotions as before. The hope that they would emerge now from their emotional difficulties to flourish psychologically had not been fulfilled.

We saw the results as demonstrating that just as these men enjoyed cross-dressing as women before the operation so they enjoyed cross-living after it. But they were no better in their psychological integration or any easier to live with. With these facts in hand I concluded that Hopkins was fundamentally cooperating with a mental illness. We psychiatrists, I thought, would do better to concentrate on trying to fix their minds and not their genitalia.

He goes on to say:

I have witnessed a great deal of damage from sex-reassignment. The children transformed from their male constitution into female roles suffered prolonged distress and misery as they sensed their natural attitudes. Their parents usually lived with guilt over their decisions—second-guessing themselves and somewhat ashamed of the fabrication, both surgical and social, they had imposed on their sons. As for the adults who came to us claiming to have discovered their ‘true’ sexual identity and to have heard

about sex-change operations, we psychiatrists have been distracted from studying the causes and natures of their mental misdirections by preparing them for surgery and for a life in the other sex. We have wasted scientific and technical resources and damaged our professional credibility by collaborating with madness rather than trying to study, cure and ultimately prevent it.

Unfortunately under great pressure from the LGBT community, John Hopkins has reversed its policy and will now do sex reassignment surgery.

Those who transgender experience much higher suicide rates. Dr. McHugh in an article in the Wall Street Journal in May 13, 2016 writes: “Beginning about 10 years after having the surgery, the transgendered began to experience increasing mental difficulties. Most shockingly, their suicide mortality rose almost 20- fold above the comparable non-transgender population.” (Paul McHugh, “Transgender Surgery Isn’t the Solution,” The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 2016. A recent study reported in World Magazine (April 15, 2017) showed at least 30 percent of youth identifying as transgender had attempted suicide. Another 40 percent reported self-injury. Activists will contend these statistics result because society doesn’t affirm transgender people and drives them to despair, but they have no evidence backing that claim.

The simpler explanation is that transgendered individuals began with emotional and mental problems they thought transitioning would solve, but which it didn’t. Walt Heyer is a 76 year old ex-transgender who has reverted back to his biological male state. He notes that every single person who contacts him reveals some kind of traumatic background and psychological scars. He says that “transgenderism is an umbrella term for a group of mental disorders that have not yet been treated.” (World Magazine, April 15, 2017, p. 36) It’s hard to live life when a person rejects who they are and denies fundamental reality.

Another high price of transgendering is the lifelong use of sex hormones to keep the body from reverting back to its normal state. Men have to take estrogen. Women have to take testosterone. Who knows what will be the full price on bodies not designed for the regular application of the wrong hormones? Doctors warn of increased risk for heart disease, diabetes, and blood clots from cross-sex hormones. Cross-sex hormones can induce sterility. I suspect it will take some more time before we become aware of all the negative consequences of denying your own sex and living a lie.

[Slide 7] In my remaining time, let’s talk about how you might minister to someone who is thinking about transitioning. Let’s begin with the word “listen.” Listen to their story. Find out why they want to become a different sex. I have suggested that most people are not trying to be rebellious but are rather dealing with some severe discomfort or emotional pain. Listen first to understand. All behavior is motivated. Some powerful emotions or experiences exist in their life for them to want to make such a drastic change. Try to discover what motivates them.

Ask them whether if they could find a way to emotional wholeness, health, and happiness that did not involve denying their birth sex, would they try it? Listen carefully to their answer.

[Slide 8] The second word is “acknowledge.” Acknowledge their pain. Express sorrow and sympathy for their emotional struggle. The Bible exhorts us to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep. This is a time to weep with those who weep. Empathize with their struggle, even if you don’t agree with their reasoning or decision.

[Slide 9] The third words are “speak truth.” Bring God into their situation. Talk about God’s love for them but also that He was the one who created their original sex. Talk about the

corrupting influence of sin and how it distorts us, including our feelings. Talk about the need for faith to trust God's plan and his word, rather than trusting our feelings.

[Slide 10] The fourth word is "fellowship." Encourage them to seek out authentic and loving relationships in fellowship with devoted followers of Christ who will encourage them to seek God's help. Find people who can model how to live well with pain and disappointment

[Slide 11] The fifth word is "counsel." Seek a godly counselor to help deal with the deeper issues of the soul that underlie their struggles. The problem is not the wrong body. The problem is the wrong thinking and feelings.

In this issue as in every other issue we need to look to God for help and strength and to his word for wisdom and truth. There is a better way than denying reality. Let's pray.