

## **Greeting**

Good evening...My name...I'm so glad to see you here tonight. I hope you've had a good day.

Pass out the handouts...

Our structure will be: I'll teach for about 50 minutes, after that we'll break into groups (10-12) discuss for 15 minutes, and then we'll come back together for Q&A. We'll wrap up at 7:30pm.

I'll start with a prayer...

## **Introduction**

If you brought along a Bible, please turn to [Matthew 19:1–5](#).

We looked at this several weeks ago.

### **Matthew 19:1–5. Read**

So when Jesus is asked about divorce he says, *“Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female.”*

In other words, the purpose of things *“in”* the beginning carries on right down through history, to the present day. God put into creation an order, a purpose.

Remember the quote from the great Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck when he summarized the essence of the Christian faith in a single sentence. **The essence of the Christianity is that “the creation of the Father [was] ruined by sin [but it] is restored in the death of the Son of God and re-created by the grace of the Holy Spirit into” into the kingdom of God.**<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of tonight is to place gender in theological context by seeing how it fits within the big picture biblical arch from creation, through the fall, and into the resurrection.

**Transition:** Creation, Fall, Resurrection—These three spectacular events form the framework within which we can understand gender. So let's take each one in turn. Let's begin with gender in the creation of the world.

## **Gender in Creation**

If you have a Bible, please turn to the first page.

- **Genesis 1:27. Read it.**

Here we see that there are two different ways of being human – male and female.

And notice what God thinks about this. In **clv31**...God looks declares it good, very good.

“Embodied difference is good.”<sup>2</sup> Sexual differentiation is good.

Now let’s press pause for a moment and get a definition out there.

1. When I say **Sex** = I’m talking about Biological Sex. “The physical, biological and anatomic dimensions of being male or female.”<sup>3</sup> These facets include “chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, and internal reproductive anatomy and external genitalia,” along with secondary sex characteristics (i.e., have no direct reproductive function: e.g., facial hair in males and enlarged breasts in females.)<sup>4</sup> This is determined at fertilization (“An X-carrying sperm produces a female (XX) embryo, and a Y-carrying sperm produces a male (XY) embryo.”<sup>5</sup>)

So back to **Genesis cl**, here we see that humans bear “the divine image, and we bear that image in the diversity of male and female flesh.”<sup>6</sup>

And this focus on sex comes up again in the next chapter of the Bible.

**Genesis 2:18–25. Read it.**

And this is reaffirmed post fall in **Genesis 5:2**, and as we’ve already seen, it’s also cited by Jesus in the gospels (**Matthew 19:4** and parallels).

We must see that sexual difference as at the heart of God’s creation of humanity. It’s right there right at the beginning of the Bible. And science tells us that it’s right there at the beginning life.

We know that sex is determined at fertilization by the kind of sperm that fertilizes the egg. “Fertilization by an X-bearing sperm produces a 46, XX zygote, which normally develops into a female, whereas fertilization by a Y-bearing sperm produces a 46, XY zygote, which normally develops into a male.”<sup>7</sup>

You are a male or female based on your reproductive system. A male is biologically organized to donate genetic material. A female is biologically organized to receive genetic material and then gestate the resulting offspring. This is a fundamental, binary, stable difference.

Now, during the first six weeks of embryological development, males and females develop in more or less the same way, but then things change. From the seventh week on, males and females have differences that exist from the cellular level on up.

For example, the Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences published a report in 2001 titled *Exploring the Biological Contributions to Human Health: Does Sex Matter?* And the answer was yes.

To quote, there are “multiple, ubiquitous differences in the basic cellular biochemistries of males and females that can affect an individual’s health. Many of these differences...are a direct result of the genetic differences between the two sexes.”<sup>8</sup>

And “differences between the sex is increasingly regarded as vitally important for good medical practice, because scientists have found that male and female bodies tend to be susceptible to certain diseases in different ways, to differing degrees, and they respond to treatments differently.”<sup>9</sup>

Being a male or a female is a deep biological reality, it begins with our DNA and fetal development and it unfolds into every bodily system. Your sex, as a male or female, is a bodily, biological reality. This was how God intended it to be. In creation we see that embodied difference is good.

But there’s more going on here. In **Genesis 2:25**...not just sex, we’re also getting into gender... So let’s bring in a few more definitions.<sup>10</sup>

1. **Gender** = “the psychological, social and cultural aspects of being male or female.”
2. **Gender identity** = “How you person experiences yourself (or think of yourself) as male or female, including how masculine or feminine a person feels.”
3. **Gender role** = “ways in which people adopt cultural expectations for maleness or femaleness. This includes but is not limited to academic interests, career pursuits and so on.”

**Transition:** Now what happens to sex and gender with the fall?

### **Gender in the Fall**

Well, when sin entered creation, things break. And so we live in a world where **our bodies are both very good and terribly disordered**.

And we’re going to see this, tonight, in two very painful dimensions: the biological and the psychological.

#### ***First the biological.***

We live in a fallen world. And one of the ways the fall casts its shadow all around and through us is that for some of us it touches it us at the level of sex and gender.

Earlier I said that “fertilization by an X-bearing sperm produces a 46, XX zygote, which **normally** develops into a female, whereas fertilization by a Y-bearing sperm produces a 46, XY zygote, which **normally** develops into a male.”<sup>11</sup>

Normally, but things do go wrong.

**And they can go wrong at the Biological Level.**

And when that happens its called Disorders of Sexual Development (DSDs). This occurs in roughly 1 out of every 5,000 births.<sup>12</sup>

And when that happens it can result in:

- ambiguous external genitalia
- or a mismatch between internal and external reproductive organs
- or the incomplete development of reproductive organs
- or even in the formation of two sets of sex organs

Typically the cause is some sort of genetic mutation, or “chromosomal or hormonal defects.”<sup>13</sup>

Many of the conditions that develop from this are labeled as **Intersex**.

**Intersex or intersexuality** is a range of physical, biological, anatomical issues that make identifying a baby as male or female difficult. Here are just five examples:

1. **Klinefelter Syndrome** is a chromosomal disorder that occurs at conception when something happens that causes there to be more than the normal number of chromosomes. So instead of 46, there are 47 and the extra chromosome is an X. So people with this genetic disorder are XXY. They develop as males, but tend to have abnormal body proportions, with enlarged breasts, and they frequently suffer from sexual and reproductive problems including fertility.
2. **Turner Syndrome** is a chromosomal disorder, It occurs at conception. Something happens that causes there to be less than the normal number of chromosomes. Instead of 46, they have 45, and the missing, or partially deleted, chromosome is the X. So instead of XX or XY, this person is only an X. So this person develops as a female but she is infertile, because two X chromosomes are necessary for normal development of the ovaries.
3. True Hermaphroditism, older term. Now called **Ovo-Testicular Disorder of Sexual Development**: “the presence of both testicular and ovarian tissue in the same individual.”<sup>14</sup>
4. **Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome** (CAIS): This is very rare (1 out of 20,000 to 64,000 births). This is a person who is genetically XY (male) but there's a mutation in the gene that contains the androgen receptor protein, so the person cannot be influenced by testosterone. As a result, this person is genetically XY but they have “female genitalia

and an outward appearance as female.”<sup>15</sup> Most people with CAIS are raised as females, they look female, and their own sense of their gender identity is that they are female. Wikipedia reports only 2 known cases of someone with CAIS who thinks of themselves as a male.

5. **Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH):** “can have many outcomes” including “XX chromosomes but male external genitalia.”<sup>16</sup> This is the result of an enzyme deficiency.<sup>17</sup>

So there’s five examples of how a baby can be born with ambiguous genitalia. And what happens is that the doctors should try to discern the cause so that they can identify the underlying sex of the child. But remember, this is not “a third sex; they are either male or female, but with a disorder in their development. The sound medical response is to identify the predominant underlying sex and then take measures to provide health and functioning, as far as possible, through hormones and possibly surgery.”<sup>18</sup>

Now why am I going into all of this. Well, recently “there has been a push to reclassify these situations from the label “Disorders of Sexual Development” to “Differences of Sexual Development.” And there are two motivations here.

First, there is undoubtedly a very good and healthy and wise desire to avoid stigmatizing people.

The second motivation is not good. In fact, it’s unwise and unhealthy. It’s “the desire to erase the distinction between ordered and disordered development of...human...sexuality.” And this is a drive to “to obscure the fact that a natural order exists. Instead of normal versus abnormal human development, there would just be a variety of ways in which humans can develop.”<sup>19</sup>

But the problem is, whether it’s the sexual and reproductive systems of our body, or the respiratory system, or the cardiovascular system the idea of order and disorder is critical.

It’s based on an understanding of purpose and function. “A heart that doesn't pump blood well isn't ‘different,’ it’s diseased. A digestive system that doesn't process nutrients is disordered; it isn't ordered to its proper end. A similar logic applies to the reproductive and the sex organs.”<sup>20</sup>

**Transition:** So that’s the shadow of the fall at the biological level. Now let’s turn our attention to the effects of the fall on a psychological level. And to do this, let’s think about gender dysphoria.

## **Gender Dysphoria**

So what is Gender dysphoria?

- Gender dysphoria is the sense that your body and your gender identity don't match. It's a sense of inner restlessness, of not being at home in your male or female body.
- As Chaz Bono, a Transgender activist puts it, "There's a gender in your brain and a gender in your body. For 99% of people those things are in alignment. For transgender people they're mismatched. That's all it is."
- Or as one slogan puts it, "Some men are born in their bodies, others have to fight for it."

And in thinking about the issue, there's a great danger. It's such a hot cultural issue, with passions roused on both sides of the debate. And that's a danger. Because it means we can think about it as an issue—abstract, out there. And forget that what we're really talking about is *people*.

- People loved by God.
- People made in his image.
- Most of them have no interest in waging a culture war, they just want to live their lives. And many of them live their lives under conditions of deep distress.

According to one set of statistics,

- 34% of trans people attempt suicide.
- 64% are bullied.
- 73% are harassed in public.
- 21% avoid going out in public due to fear.

These are horrific. Because, again, we're not thinking about statistics. We're thinking about people.

- People like the Christian man in his 60s who is a member of a church pastored by an acquaintance of mine, who wakes up every morning wishing he was a woman.
- Or I have another very good friend whose friend underwent gender reassignment late in life, because he waited until his mother died because he didn't want to cause her any distress. No media fanfare. No great fuss. Just quietly, discretely changed his identity.
- Another friend of mine, in his home town, two years ago, a man hanged himself in a park because he was being bullied for being transgender.

When we talk about the issue of gender dysphoria we are talking about people loved by God. People made in his image.

And we have to admit sometimes professing Christians can say appalling things.

Like the church members I heard about who discovered that one of the children in their kids' Sunday school class was transgender. Born a girl, but living as a boy. And they wrote a letter to their pastor, "If that thing, whatever it is, is in Sunday school next week, we're leaving the church." That thing. What a revolting thing to say. And theologically stupid. That "thing" is a human being, made in God's image.

And yet, and yet we mustn't be sentimental. We shouldn't let our natural sympathy cloud our thinking on this. Precisely because we love people, we must let the gospel shape our beliefs and our behavior.

Three Things to Say about Gender Dysphoria...

1. We don't know it's cause (brain, psychosocial)
2. We do know it's not a choice, it's not a sin, and for many people it may not go away
3. And we know that it's a disorder

And so we should think of gender dysphoria like we think about other dysphorias focused on the body.<sup>21</sup>

For example, "those who suffer from anorexia nervosa...believe themselves to be overweight when in fact they are dangerously thin."<sup>22</sup>

One way this has played out is that "Some people with anorexia, for instance,...initially *feel* overweight but *know* they are not, so they struggle with their mistaken feelings until the feelings overwhelm them and they come to believe that they actually are fat, and this belief governs their actions. Likewise, some people with gender dysphoria *feel* as if they were the opposite sex but *know* that they are not, so they struggle with their feelings until the feelings overwhelm them and they come to identify as the opposite sex, and act accordingly."<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Michelle Cretella, the president of the American College of Pediatricians, wrote a 2016 article in the *Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons* that "a girl with anorexia nervosa has the persistent mistaken belief that she is obese; a person with body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) harbors the erroneous conviction that she is ugly; a person with body integrity identity disorder (BIID) identifies as a disabled person and feels trapped in a fully functional body. Individuals with BIID are often so distressed by their fully capable bodies that they seek surgical amputation of healthy limbs or the surgical severing of their spinal cord."<sup>24</sup>

Dr Paul McHugh is the University Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. For 26 years he was the director of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science at the Johns Hopkins University. During this time he was also the



psychiatrist-in-chief at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. Says that we must remember that gender dysphoria is a disorder of the mind, not a disorder of the body. He compares sex-reassignment surgery to liposuction for anorexics.<sup>25</sup>

**Transition:** So we're talking about one of the very painful ways that the long shadow of the fall lays across the lives of people. We've seen this at both the biological level and the psychological level. Now, the fall is not the end of the story. God does not abandon us to our broken bodies and minds.

And to show this, let's stick with the issue of gender dysphoria and consider it in light of the resurrection.

Find **1 Corinthians 15**.

### **Gender in the Resurrection**

In **1 Corinthians 15**, Paul argues from the resurrection of Christ to the future resurrection of all believers in Christ against some in Corinth who were denying the resurrection of the dead (**v12**).<sup>26</sup>

Christ has been raised (**vv3-11**) as the firstfruits of those who have died (**vv. 20, 23**), thus guaranteeing the resurrection of believers.

So Paul sets up a contrasting parallel between Christ and Adam: *'For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive'* (**vv21-22**).

And so in **1 Corinthians 15**, Paul establishes **two things**.

1. First, there is an **organic connection** between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of all in Christ; he was not raised in isolation, but because he is the Last Adam, the representative head of a new humanity, Christ was raised as the firstfruits of a great harvest.
2. Second, there is also an **organic connection** between Adam's body in creation, and Christ's body in the resurrection.

From **v35** onwards, Paul answers the objection, *'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?'* (**v35**).

And surprise, surprise his answer is rooted in the **Genesis** creation account.

He argues for both continuity and transformation. One of the ways he does this is with the analogy of sowing a seed (**v37**).

The great NT scholar, Richard Hays explains it this way:



‘The analogy of the seed enables Paul to walk a fine line, asserting both the radical *transformation* of the body in its resurrected state and yet its organic *continuity* with the mortal body that preceded it.’<sup>27</sup>

Paul observes the many different types of flesh and bodily glory within the creation (vv. 39-41). It is important to note, that he is working with the categories of Genesis 1.

- In verse 39, he lists the main categories of creatures from days five and six of creation (Genesis 1:20-28): humans, animals, birds, and fish, which are also the main categories of creatures over which humans are given dominion (1:26, 28).
- Then, he contrasts heavenly bodies and earthly bodies (vv. 40-41), and the heavenly bodies—sun, moon and stars—are those listed on the fourth day (Genesis 1:14-19).
- In other words, Paul’s argument for the resurrection is rooted firmly within the ordered creation as God made it. And this implies that we best understand the resurrection by reflecting on the original creation, because in the resurrection the original creation comes to fruition and completion.

And as Paul uses the analogy of the body as a seed to be sown he states, **‘But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body’ (v38).**

Now, we need to notice a couple of things here.

1. First, notice God’s sovereign authority over the kind of body with which the dead are raised. It is he, not we, who gives the form of the body, and he does it in conformity with *his* choice, not ours.

That has obvious application to the question of gender reassignment doesn’t it?

But equally important, notice the tenses of the verbs in **v38**. He gives (present tense) a body, *as he has chosen* (past tense—it’s an aorist for those of you who care about these things.) In other words, as he chose *in creation*.<sup>28</sup>

What this means is that if you were born with a female body, you will be raised with that same female body. If you were born with a male body, you will be raised with that body.

That fits with what we know of the resurrection appearances of Jesus.

He was raised bodily, able to be seen and touched, to eat fish with his disciples. And the tomb was empty: he did not rise with a different body, leaving the old one behind, but with the same body in which he was crucified. This means he was raised in his male body, which the Father had prepared for him in the incarnation.

And although the disciples were, at first, kept from seeing who he really was, nevertheless, when their eyes were opened, they saw him as immediately recognizable from his bodily form, which included the wounds he received in his death. And so Christ, who is the firstfruits of our resurrection, was raised with the same body and therefore the same sex and gender as was given to him in God's creational purposes.

2. A second thing we need to see about **1 Corinthians 15:38** is that in the resurrection there will be a wonderful transformation. [vv. 53-54.] *This* body (x4). Weak, frail, dying. will put on power, glory, immortality.

Just think about a bride putting on a wedding dress. One day her husband sees her in jeans and t-shirt. Next day, there she is in her wedding dress. Same woman—wonderful glorious transformation.

That's what Paul saying. That will happen to you, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ. Your body will be wonderfully transformed. But which body? *This* body. The one God gave you when you were born. Your female body. Or your male body.

Let me ask you, how does that thought strike you? How do you feel about your body? Do you feel comfortable in it? Or maybe uncertain, insecure, see and feel its imperfections, wish it was different.

But *This* frail, weak, dying body—*your* frail, weak, dying body—will clothe itself in immortality. And it will be magnificent. And on that day not one of us will say, I wish I had a different body. Because it will be magnificent. *Your* body. Your male body. your female body, will be yours. And it will be beautiful and glorious, forever. And you will feel completely comfortable and at home.

In his commentary on **1 Corinthians**, the great Christian Scholar, Anthony Thiselton gives us a very helpfully musical analogy.

He describes 'the post-resurrection mode of life as *a purposive and dynamic crescendo of life.*'<sup>29</sup>

How, in the light of creation and the resurrection, should we think about our ourselves and our bodies with their sex and gender?

Well, imagine a symphony, with the theme announced at the beginning in frail pianissimo on the woodwind. As the symphony develops, the theme grows, is challenged, and disappears. But then, at the climax of the final movement, with a magnificent crescendo, the same theme triumphantly returns *fortissimo*, scored for full orchestra, with brass to the fore. The same theme, but gloriously transformed.

And so, when it comes to our bodies and their sex and gender, there is an objective God-given moral order to creation, which is reaffirmed, renewed, and perfected through the resurrection.

This very obviously speaks to questions of gender dysphoria, and especially to ethical questions surrounding gender reassignment. **And it speaks a hard word.** We need to speak it with sensitivity, gentleness, and patience. But we also need to speak it with clarity.

We are **not autonomous moral agents**;

- we do not have absolute authority over our bodies and their sexual form;
- we live in a creation that is shaped by God's purposes—in creation and the renewal of creation through the resurrection.
- Through the resurrection, the gospel speaks clearly to us about the appropriate form of our bodies.
- We do not get to decide for ourselves whether we are male or female; God has already decided for us.
- And the resurrection shows us that he is committed, eternally committed, to that decision.

**The biological sex of my body at birth is also the biological sex of the body in which I shall be raised; it therefore defines my gender now.**

Put starkly, the resurrection of the body shows that gender reassignment is a rebellion against the moral order God has written on our bodies in creation in their sexual form as male or female.

It also indicates that whatever hormone therapy someone has undergone, and whatever reconstructive surgery has taken place, his or her true sex and gender has not changed; there is an underlying God-given and God-affirmed reality.

Again, to put it starkly: if someone was born male in God's purposes he remains male, whatever the outward form of his hormonally and surgically altered body may indicate.

However, if this speaks a hard word for some, there will be occasions when it speaks a word of comfort and hope for others.

Some people who undergo gender reassignment later come to bitterly regret their decision,<sup>30</sup> and desire to transition back again.

- For some, this will be prohibitively expensive.

- For others, given the extent of the hormone therapy and surgery they underwent, a full return to the appearance and function of their birth sex may well be impossible.

But impossible only in this life.

Listen to these wonderful words of Augustine, commenting on [1 Corinthians 15:13](#) ‘People are amazed that God, who made all things from nothing, makes a heavenly body from human flesh...Is he who was able to make you when you did not exist not able to make over what you once were?’<sup>31</sup>

Human physicians in this life cannot make over perfectly what they have unmade imperfectly, and whatever they attempt, even if somewhat successful, will come at the cost of great physical and emotional pain.

But the Great Physician will one day remake us perfectly, without pain, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ([1 Corinthians 15:51-52](#)).

That’s a wonderful truth that may provide incalculable comfort to someone who has undergone gender reassignment and now regrets it. It may also provide comfort and hope to the parents of a child who has undergone, or is planning to undergo, gender reassignment.

**Transition:** Now, for the last section of my talk tonight I want to shift gears and turn our attention to the church.

### **To be a Faithful, the Church needs Six Characteristics** (from Mark Yarhouse)

1. **Clarity.** We need “thoughtful reflection on a biblical perspective of...sex and gender.” As we learn “how to provide appropriate care to those in our [community]...who are navigating gender identity concerns, we...[must] remember that good theology and sensitive...care must be reflected in the doctrine, policies, and” in our actual engagement with people. And part of what this means is that we will not forget that “the very nature of sex and gender is being deconstructed by some people” in our society “in ways that even many transgender persons would be uncomfortable with.”<sup>32</sup>

“Christians often react to the deconstruction of sex and gender, and they should offer a reasoned response to it (i.e., retain convictions) in a spirit of mutual respect (i.e., civility) and a...heart of compassion...[We should] offer a thoughtful response rather than a knee-jerk reaction, particularly when there are people within our own communities who are navigating these gender identity concerns in their own lives. If the church only responds in the larger context of a culture war, we are going to have real casualties—people who see the church as interested in defending their turf rather than coming alongside those who are on the margins.”<sup>33</sup> Richard Mouw has written an excellent book, *Uncommon Decency*:

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*Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* teaching us “the importance of Christians displaying convicted civility. His concern is that there are too many Christians who are strong on expressing convictions but weak on displaying civility. Likewise, there are too many Christians who are remarkably civil, yet others know very little about what they believe or hold convictions about.”<sup>34</sup>

2. Relational ethic. We need to learn how to value people with whom we disagree, and not just value them, but sustain relationships with them while living faithfully before God. We are seeing a rise in the stories of people who found that going through a sex change transition did not bring the peace and wholeness they sought, but only new problems. And one of the many sad things we hear in these stories is that some of the people felt “that their dysphoria resulted from social hostility to people who don’t conform to gender norms or who have same-sex attractions.” We must “be respectful and compassionate toward people we may disagree with.”<sup>35</sup> And we must be compassionate with people who are not comfortable with their bodies.
3. Humility. We should be humble about what we know and what we do not know regarding gender dysphoria. Even as we offer clarity regarding the biblical witness about issues of sex and gender, we can still be humble regarding the current limitations to our understanding in this very complicated area. One way I can model this is to recognize that if someone’s “gender dysphoria reaches a level at which that person receives the diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria” then I will be only part of the input in that person’s life. That person will need a multidisciplinary team including “various mental health professionals, some with expertise in gender identity issues, as well as medical personnel such as endocrinologists.” A “team with different perspectives but with a common goal of serving the best interest of the person who is requesting help.”<sup>36</sup> I hope that we are discussion of the Christian vision of sexuality must be done with joy and with tears, “sharing with others in the heartbreaking complexity of these issues.” One pastor who is doing very good teaching on this subject, wrote in a book: “There is a lovely gentleman in our congregation, a godly man in his early sixties, who wakes up most mornings wishing he were a woman. He has had these desires most of his life, starting when he was just five years old. I weep with him in his struggle.”<sup>37</sup> And same can be said of people who because of abuse are dealing with the consequences of that abuse.
4. Climate. Too often, churches develop men’s ministries that “focus on themes of biblical manhood but end up looking too much like cultural associations with masculinity that are likely to be very difficult for the person struggling with gender identity concerns.” “Similarly, women’s ministries can focus on a kind of cultural femininity that is portrayed as the biblical expression of being a woman.” We must resist the temptation to respond to those in our culture who are trying to “deconstruct sex and gender” with a “knee-jerk reaction that swings the pole in the other direction.”<sup>38</sup> We must remember, “There are various ways to be real boys and real girls...we don't all have to conform to a stereotype. But this does not require adopting the view that gender norms are entirely artificial, mere 'social

constructs.”<sup>39</sup> And then there are some very practical things. For example, a Christian who was transgender remarked to their Christian psychologist, “One thing I have learned is that no matter how compassionate the people and pastor are, if there isn't a family bathroom, things get complicated fast and you don't go back.”<sup>40</sup>

Mark Yarhouse: “As Christians speak to this redemption, we will be tempted to join in the culture wars about sex and gender that fall closely on the heels of the wars about sexual behavior and marriage. But in most cases, the church is called to rise above those wars and present a witness to redemption. Let's say Sara walks into your church. She looks like a man dressed as a woman. One question she will be asking is, “Am I welcome here?” In the spirit of a redemptive witness, I hope to communicate to her through my actions: “Yes, you are in the right place. We want you here.” If I am drawn to a conversation or relationship with her, I hope to approach her not as a project, but as a person seeking real and sustained relationship, which is characterized by empathy as well as encouragement to walk faithfully with Christ. But I should not try to “fix” her, because unless I'm her professional therapist, I'm not privy to the best way to resolve her gender dysphoria. Rather, Christians are to foster the kinds of relationships that will help us know and love and obey Jesus better than we did yesterday. That is redemption. If Sara shares her name with me, as a clinician and Christian, I use it. I do not use this moment to shout “Integrity!” by using her male name or pronoun, which clearly goes against that person's wishes. It is an act of respect, even if we disagree, to let the person determine what they want to be called. If we can't grant them that, it's going to be next to impossible to establish any sort of relationship with them. The exception is that, as a counselor, I defer to a parent's preference for their teenager's name and gender pronoun. Even here I talk with the parent about the benefits and drawbacks of what they want and what their teenager wants if the goal is to establish a sustained, meaningful relationship with their child. Also, we can avoid gossip about Sara and her family. Gossip fuels the shame that drives people away from the church; gossip prevents whole families from receiving support.”<sup>41</sup>

5. Sanctification. To be a Christian is to be in a relationship with Jesus Christ that results in the Holy Spirit moving you toward greater Christlikeness. In an atmosphere of a gracious emphasis on spiritual growth, the church needs to provide a kind of sustained presence “while someone is navigating gender identity concerns, meeting with experts in gender identity issues and making key decisions about how best to manage their experiences of gender dysphoria.”<sup>42</sup>

Mark Yarhouse: “We can be sensitive, though, not to treat as synonymous management of gender dysphoria and faithfulness. Some may live a gender identity that reflects their biological sex, depending on their discomfort. Others may benefit from space to find ways to identify with aspects of the opposite sex, as a way to manage extreme discomfort. And of course, no matter the level of discomfort someone with gender dysphoria experiences (or the degree to which someone identifies with the opposite sex), the church will always encourage a personal relationship with Christ and faithfulness to grow in Christlikeness. Certainly we

can extend to a transgender person the grace and mercy we so readily count on in our own lives. We can remind ourselves that the book of redemption in a person's life has many chapters. You may be witness to an early chapter of this person's life or a later chapter. But Christians believe that God holds that person and each and every chapter in his hands, until that person arrives at their true end—when gender and soul are made well in the presence of God.”<sup>43</sup>

6. **Social Support.** In an atmosphere of grace, with these other elements in place (clarity, humility, climate, emphasis on sanctification), we are now in a position to offer the kind of social support that is so needed today. In an atmosphere of grace...[we can] come alongside people who are navigating this difficult terrain.” This will most likely be “a small community of fellow believers who are willing to pray for and with the person navigating this terrain, as well as to identify and follow through on practical needs that can be met in the life of the person who is gender dysphoric.”<sup>44</sup> “We must remember that the transgender and broader LGBT community are attractive because they answer the bedrock question, ‘Where do I belong?’ Most churches want to be a community where people suffering from any ‘dysphoria’ will feel they belong, for the church is, after all, a community of broken people saved by grace.” Mark Yarhouse: “A few years ago, my research team at the Institute for the Study of Sexual Identity conducted the first study of its kind on transgender Christians. We collected information on 32 biological males who to varying degrees had transitioned to or presented as women. We asked many questions about issues they faced in their home, workplace, and church, such as, ‘What kind of support would you have liked from the church?’ One person answered, ‘Someone to cry with me rather than just denounce me. Hey, it is scary to see God not rescue someone from cancer or schizophrenia or [gender dysphoria]...but learn to allow your compassion to overcome your fear and repulsion.’” When it comes to support, many evangelical communities may be tempted to respond to transgender persons by shouting “Integrity!” The integrity lens is important, but simply urging persons with gender dysphoria to act in accordance with their biological sex and ignore their extreme discomfort won’t constitute pastoral care or a meaningful cultural witness.”<sup>45</sup>



## **Recommendations**

Mark Yarhouse. "Understanding the Transgender Phenomenon," *Christianity Today*, June 8, 2015.

Mark Yarhouse. *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture*. Grand Rapids, IL: IVP Academic, 2015. This is the most helpful book I've found for understanding gender dysphoria from a Biblical, scientific, and psychological perspective. And this is the best book for learning how to respond to people and care for them if they are facing gender identity issues. If you're a cultural conservative tuned into the culture wars, please read this. If you're a cultural liberal tuned into the culture wars please read the next book.

Ryan T. Anderson. *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*. New York: Encounter Books, 2018. This book is about the gender *ideology* that is playing out in culture through issues of law, public policy, medicine, and education.

Beth Felker Jones. *Marks of His Wounds: Gender Politics and Bodily Resurrection*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Rich engagement with feminism by a woman from a Biblical perspective.

Sam A. Andreades. *enGendered: God's Gift of Gender Difference in Relationship*. Wooster, OH: 2015. Like the title suggests, this book is about the importance of gender in relationships from a Biblical perspective.

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- <sup>1</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics Vol. 1: Prolegomena*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 112.
- <sup>2</sup> Beth Felker Jones, “Embodied from Creation through Redemption: Placing Gender and Sexuality in Theological Context,” in Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, eds., *Beauty, Order, and Mystery: A Christian Vision of Human Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 21.
- <sup>3</sup> Mark Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture* (Grand Rapids: IVP Academic, 2015), 16.
- <sup>4</sup> Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, 17.
- <sup>5</sup> T. W. Sadler, *Langman’s Medical Embryology* (Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2004), 40. Cited in Ryan T. Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment* (New York: Encounter Books, 2018), 78. A more detailed description is, “The embryo’s chromosomal sex is determined at fertilization by the kind of sperm (X or Y) that fertilizes the oocyte; hence, it is the father rather than the mother whose gamete determines the sex of the embryo. Fertilization by an X-bearing sperm produces a 46, XX zygote, which normally develops into a female, whereas fertilization by a Y-bearing sper produces a 46, XY zygote, which normally develops into a male” (Keith L. Moore and T. V. N. Persaud, *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology* [Philadelphia: Saunders/Elsevier, 2003], 35. Cited in Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally*, 78.). The word “normally” is used because chromosomal and hormonal pathologies can disrupt and prevent normal development.
- <sup>6</sup> Beth Felker Jones, “Embodied from Creation through Redemption,” 22.
- <sup>7</sup> Keith L. Moore and T. V. N. Persaud, *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology* (Philadelphia: Saunders/Elsevier, 2003), 35. Cited in Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally*, 78.
- <sup>8</sup> Institute of Medicine, Committee on Understanding the Biology of Sex and Gender Differences, *Exploring the Biological Contributions to Human Health: Does Sex Matter?* ed. Theresa M. Wizeman and Mary-Lou Pardue (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2001), Executive Summary, I, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK222287/>.
- <sup>9</sup> Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally*, 85.
- <sup>10</sup> Following definitions from Yarhouse, *Understanding*, 16–17.
- <sup>11</sup> Keith L. Moore and T. V. N. Persaud, *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology* (Philadelphia: Saunders/Elsevier, 2003), 35. Cited in Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally*, 78.
- <sup>12</sup> Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally*, 88 referencing Peter A. Lee et al., “Global Disorders of Sex Development Update since 2006: Perceptions, Approach and Care,” *Hormone Research in Pediatrics* 85 (2016): 159.
- <sup>13</sup> Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally*, 88.
- <sup>14</sup> Yarhouse, *Understanding*, 164 n8.
- <sup>15</sup> Yarhouse, *Understanding*, 39.
- <sup>16</sup> Yarhouse, *Understanding*, 39.

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<sup>17</sup> Tom Mazur, Melissa Colman and David E. Sandberg, "Intersex: Definition, Examples, Gender Stability and the Case Against Merging with Transsexualism," in *Principles of Medicine and Surgery*, ed. Randi Ettner, Stan Monstrey and A. Evan Eyler (New York: Hayworth Press, 2007), 242.

<sup>18</sup> Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally*, 91.

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally*, 91.

<sup>20</sup> Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally*, 92.

<sup>21</sup> Famously, and controversially, Paul McHugh, "Psychiatric Misadventures," *American Scholar* 61, no. 4 (1992): 502, and Paul McHugh, "Transgender Surgery Isn't the Solution," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 12, 2014, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/paul-mchugh-transgender-surgery-isnt-the-solution-1402615120>.

<sup>22</sup> Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally*, 96. Referring to McHugh, "Transgender Surgery Isn't the Solution."

<sup>23</sup> Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally*, 96.

<sup>24</sup> Michelle A. Cretella, "Gender Dysphoria in Children and Suppression of Debate," *Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons* 21 (Summer 2016): 51.

<sup>25</sup> Paul McHugh, "Psychiatric Misadventures," 503, and McHugh, "Transgender Surgery Isn't the Solution."

<sup>26</sup> This section, "Gender in the Resurrection," is copied from a lecture by my friend, Matthew Mason, "The Wounded It Heals: Gender Dysphoria and the Gospel," presented at the 2016 Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Christ Our Hope, November 2, McLean Presbyterian Church, McLean VA. Audio and video recordings of this presentation can be found at, <https://www.adhope.org/media>.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation: A Biblical Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 270.

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1264. Quoting G. G. Findlay, "St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians," in W. R. Nicoll, ed., *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans [London, 1900], 1961), 2:934. Italics mine.

<sup>29</sup> Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1279.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Walt Heyer, 'I Was A Transgender Woman', *The Public Discourse* (April 1st, 2015), online at <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/04/14688/>; Walt Heyer, "'Sex Change' Surgery: What Bruce Jenner, Dianne Sawyer, and You Should Know', *The Public Discourse* (April 27th, 2015), online at <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/04/14905/>.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Gerald Bray, ed., *1-2 Corinthians*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, vol. VII (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 178. Obviously he did not have gender reassignment in mind, but surely his words apply here also.

<sup>32</sup> Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, 157.

<sup>33</sup> Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, 43.

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<sup>34</sup> Yarhouse, *Understanding*, 167 n 40. Referencing Richard Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010).

<sup>35</sup> Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally*, 4.

<sup>36</sup> Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, 158.

<sup>37</sup> Todd Wilson, *Mere Sexuality: Rediscovering the Christian Vision of Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 137.

<sup>38</sup> Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, 158.

<sup>39</sup> Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally*, 145.

<sup>40</sup> Yarhouse, *Understanding*, 158.

<sup>41</sup> Yarhouse, "Understanding the Transgender Phenomenon," *Christianity Today*, June 8, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, 158–59.

<sup>43</sup> Yarhouse, "Understanding the Transgender Phenomenon."

<sup>44</sup> Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, 159.

<sup>45</sup> Yarhouse, "Understanding the Transgender Phenomenon."