

# A Sincere Question For Those Who Identify as Transgender

If you identify as transgender and have read my previous articles or book chapters dealing with transgender issues, you almost certainly count me as an enemy, not a friend, a transphobic bigot lacking empathy—or even worse.

And I understand why you feel like that.

After all, I still refer to Bruce Jenner as Bruce and use male pronouns when speaking about him.

That alone would brand me as a transphobe in your eyes.

But what if there is something wrong with today's understanding of transgender identity? What if our current approach is not the best approach? What if God has a better way?

Over the last 10 years, as I've interacted online or face to face with transgender men and women, some have been gentle, fragile souls, having suffered much over the years and are obviously very sensitive about such deep-seated, painful, and personal issues.

Others have been angry and hostile, to the point of posting violent threats and ugly wishes, reminiscent of the male-to-female transgender who threatened Ben Shapiro on national TV a few weeks back. (I had a similar, but less extreme, experience a few years back when a transgender "woman" challenged me in very male, macho terms. Somehow, "she" had not lost "her" masculine side.)

But even in the case of those who are angry and hostile, I recognize that there is often pain behind the anger, and in their eyes, people like me have played a big role in their

suffering.

Someone very close to my family whom I have known all my life came out as transgender a few years back, and I reached out to him, telling him I wanted to hear his story in detail, without responding or arguing.

But after sharing a little with me via email, explaining decades of secret fears and shame and tears, he cut me off, wanting nothing to do with me anymore.

Others have reached out to me as followers of Jesus, asking about God's will for their lives after having sex-change surgery, while still others have spoken to me about their fulfillment as transgender Christians. And yet the longer we interact, the more pain and uncertainty I hear, almost as if they must continue to prove to themselves (and others) that they did the right thing. (Again, you can chalk this up to systemic "transphobia" or you can ask yourself if there are other factors at work.)

My question, though, is very simple, and I ask it not to be antagonistic but rather to foster discussion: What is the definitive test that demonstrates you are transgender?

I'm not talking about being intersexed or having an identifiable chromosomal abnormality.

I'm talking about someone who is a genetic male but believes he is a female (or the reverse).

What is the definitive test that confirms this identity?

It is true, of course, that I am not a medical or psychological professional, but I have consulted specialists in the field who have worked with transgender-identified individuals for decades, and I have read studies confirming what I believe as well as challenging what I believe.

I have seen the academic studies saying that there are brain

differences between transgender individuals and straight individuals. I have read other studies that they say there are no such differences. And then I have read still other studies that claim that any differences in brain structure are due to the plasticity of the brain (in other words, they are the result of a transgender focus rather than the cause of it).

I'm quite aware of the pitched debate that took place within the American Psychiatric Association over the classification of gender dysphoria (formally gender identity disorder), and it's clear that politics were involved as much as science.

And I've talked with transgender individuals who are sure that, if tested, they would have a chromosomal abnormality or a clear difference in their brain, yet those I interacted with have transitioned without undergoing any such test.

I'm also aware that there have been no comprehensive brain studies of children who identify as transgender, charting their development over a period of years. (And let's not forget that studies indicate that many, if not most, children who identify as transgender, no longer do so after puberty and many of them subsequently identify themselves as gay.)

Recently, a transgender individual referred me to a trans-friendly website, Trans 101 for Trans People, thinking it would present me with useful information. (Actually, what I read there confirmed what I already understood.)

The very first question was: "Help! I think I'm trans. How do I know for certain?"

The answer said, in part, "You very well might be trans. At this time there is no test that will give you a definite 'Yes' or 'No.'"

And that is exactly the point I am making.

For the vast majority of trans-identified people, they are

sure they are transgender not because of a verifiable, external test, but, ultimately, because their perception is their reality.

Where this can lead (and has led) is obvious, with people switching back and forth between genders by the day or hour, with others living as “gender outlaws,” with others claiming multiple genders, with others choosing not to identify as any gender, and still others not identifying as fully human—all because of deep-seated perceptions.

Is it really so hateful, then, to suggest that we invest more time and energy and prayer to understand why some people, even beginning as little children, believe they are trapped in the wrong bodies?

Is it really transphobic to say that the very best solution is to help people find wholeness from the inside out?

Whenever I address these subjects in a church setting, I urge those attending to welcome everyone who visits their congregation with warmth and love, be it two gay men holding hands as they worship or, to all outward appearances, a man wearing a dress.

And I call them to pray for God’s wisdom, power, and grace to have answers for those who struggle, being sure that there is a better way than celebrating transgender identity, putting children on hormone blockers, then subjecting them to the radical act of sex-change surgery, only to live on hormones the rest of their lives.

There must be a better way than this, and true love does not celebrate Caitlyn Jenner. Instead, true love prays for Bruce to find wholeness and peace.

You can call me hateful and transphobic if you like, and you can ridicule me as uneducated and bigoted, but if we all agree that growing up and living with the perception that you’re

trapped in the wrong body is painful and difficult, then let's join together and find God's best way to make you whole.

Today, we look back at old surgical and medical practices with shock, amazed at what was considered "scientific" and "cutting edge" back then.

Perhaps in the not too distant future, we will look back at today's "solution" to gender dysphoria—sending a girl to school dressed like a boy, putting her on hormone blockers, then prescribing sex-change surgery and more hormones for life—as utterly primitive and outmoded.

Perhaps we will find a better way.

Is it really "transphobic" to hope and pray and work towards this goal?

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