

# Talking to Your Kids About Gender in a Gender-Confused World

In my home gender is a dividing line. Not in a negative way, but simply because I have two daughters and two sons. They do plenty as a four-kid team, but there are lots of boy/girl-specific things too. The girls share a room; the boys share a room. The girls are older; the boys are younger. That sort of thing. We're calling "Girls!" and "Boys!" a lot.

Distinguishing our kids—all people for that matter—as male or female seems straightforward enough. But in our culture that seemingly simple dividing line is being questioned; not just roles and stereotypes, but the most basic of issues—even for children.

**I'm thinking through this situation with them now so I'll be prepared. In the meantime, I'll be preparing them with truth and grace.**

On a recent trip to the children's section of the local library with my 5-year-old son, I perused the "new book" shelves as he darted over to the fish tank. Displayed near the top was a book about a little boy who made and wore a dress. I skimmed the book and read a letter the author included about gender-nonconforming children. I was troubled, but I put it back and turned my attention to collecting a stack of books with my son.

As we left the library, I couldn't stop thinking about that book. I wondered how my kids or I might react if a little boy like the one in the book was in one of my kids' classes. Or if one of my little boys said he wanted to wear a dress. And what might my girls want to wear that might usually be only for boys? So after some pondering and praying, here's where I

landed:

## Talk to Your Kids

If there is (or may someday be) a child we know who is clearly “gender-nonconforming,” I will talk to my kids about it.

I will remind them that they shouldn’t judge someone’s heart or character by what they play with or wear—to not focus on the outside, but to think about and try to understand what’s going on in his or her heart (1 Sam. 16:7). I will encourage them to be kind to the child. I’ll remind them to never tease or speak against the child in a group or one-on-one but instead speak words to build him or her up (Eph. 4:29).

I will also talk about the purposed and specific ways God created each one of us—including our gender. I could read them Genesis 1:27—God created man in His own image; He created them in the image of God; He created them male and female. God created boys and girls on purpose ... and that’s a blessing and a gift to us! I will remind them that while we’re each unique and won’t all look or act the same, there are some basic traits and specific commands in Scripture for different genders. Being a boy is awesome. Being a girl is awesome. They are different, but the differences are a part of God’s plan for life and His glory.

## Put Up Fences

If one of my children wants to wear something that is blatantly for the opposite gender (like the boy wearing a dress in the book), I will tell my child to look at our back yard. I’ll point out the fence. I’ll point out all the space in our yard inside the fence. I’ll remind them that the fence is there for a few reasons:

- To give them a safe place to play

- To mark off our property and our neighbors' property
- To keep things we want in, in and things we want out, out

I'll tell them that when it comes to clothes, Mom and Dad are going to put up some fences. Some will be for general appropriateness—like not wearing your best outfit out to play in the mud. Some will be for health and safety—like hats, gloves and coats in the winter. Some will be to reflect God's standards—such as modesty. And some will be to appropriately reflect their boy-ness or girl-ness. Now if those are our fences, there will still be a lot of room to “run around in the yard.” Still lots of room to make individual choices and express your own style ... but you can't ignore the fences.

I'll have one or both of these conversations with my kids someday. Most likely, there will be situations when they will be necessary. I'm thinking through them now, so I'll be prepared. In the meantime, I'll be preparing them with truth and grace. Have you considered how you might react in a situation like this? What are you doing to prepare your heart and the hearts of your children?

*Taken from **Heidi Jo Fulk's** blog post “Talking to Your Kids About Gender in a Gender-Confused World.” . Used with permission.*