

# The Transgender Challenge: An Evangelical Response

For Christians, the first question to ask when confronting any issue is: What does the Bible say? The answer to this question is fundamental to Christian faith and practice. The ultimate authority for our understanding of reality is the Bible, which is nothing less than the very Word of God. Our knowledge on anything of importance regarding essential questions of life is grounded in the reality that the one true and living God is also the God who speaks.

In recent times, evangelicals have learned the necessity of developing an evangelical theology of the body. Evangelicals must recognize, given the confusions of our day, that God has a sovereign purpose for creating us as embodied creatures—creatures that are male and female. Moreover, we must consider that God has given us a bodily structure unique to the man and the woman. An evangelical theology of the body will immediately challenge one of the fundamental assumptions of the secular age—that our existence as male and female is nothing more than a biological accident brought about by an aimless process of naturalistic evolution. The modern secular mind assumes that gender and biology are not necessarily linked. Indeed, the modern assumption is that gender is essentially nothing more than a socially constructed concept that discriminates and oppresses rather than liberates.

The Christian worldview confronts that assumption head-on. Scripture clearly defines human beings as male and female, here not by accident but by divine purpose.

Furthermore, this purpose, along with every other aspect of God's creation, is declared by the Creator to be "good." This means that human flourishing and happiness will take place only when the goodness of God's creation is honored as God

intended. An evangelical theology of the body affirms the goodness behind male being male and female being female.

The brokenness of the world explains why sinners will often deny the distinctions between male and female.

Ideologists of the sexual revolution are partly correct when they argue that much of what our society celebrates as masculine or feminine is socially constructed and should be discarded. Scripture should inform and correct our notions of what is masculine and what is feminine.

But Scripture clearly refutes any theory that gender is only a social construction or that human beings are free to define gender in a way different than the way God defined male and female in the act of creation.

As Scripture also makes clear, the identity of the human being as male and as female points to marriage as the context in which the man and the woman, made for each other, are to come together in a union that is holy, righteous and absolutely necessary for human flourishing.

Sex, gender, marriage and family all come together in the very first chapters of Scripture in order to make clear that every aspect of our sexual lives is to be submitted to the creative purpose of God and channeled into the righteous arena of human sexual behavior—marriage—which is defined clearly and exclusively as the lifelong, monogamous union of a man and a woman.

The reality of human sinfulness explains why there are those who are deeply troubled and confused about something as fundamental as their gender and self-identity. The brokenness of the world also explains why there are entire ideologies, theories and systems of thought constructed by sinners in order to justify their sin. This is exactly what Paul indicts in Romans 1 when he describes suppressing the truth in unrighteousness and exchanging the truth of God for a lie.

As we read the Apostle Paul's words in Romans 1, we must recognize he is indicting all of humanity in that charge. This means that all of us, left to our own devices, suppress the truth in unrighteousness and justify our own sin by creating our own rationalizations. We are rescued from that process of fatal self-deception only by the revelation of God in holy Scripture and by the victory of Christ in His cross and resurrection.

It is urgently important that Christians affirm that we are not smarter or more morally righteous than those around us. We are instead the beneficiaries of the grace and mercy of God because we have come to know salvation through Christ and guidance in faithful living through the gift of holy Scripture.

Christians guided by Scripture recognize that controversies and confusions over sex, marriage and other issues are part of what it means to live in a fallen world. The church must honor the good gifts God gives us in order to accomplish two great purposes. First, to obey God and to find true happiness and human flourishing as we obey. Second, to live out that obedience before a watching world in order that others may see the glory of God in the Christian's faithfulness, so that others who need Christ may find Him.

In other words, the Christian's faithfulness in marriage and faithful defense of marriage is an act of Christian witness—indeed, one of the boldest acts of Christian witness in this secular age.

The final chapter of Scripture reminds us that we will deal with human brokenness and the effects of human sin until Jesus comes. Until then, we are to be found both washed and waiting, eager for the redemption of our bodies and for the fullness of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. {eoa}

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