

What to Say to Your Child About Transgender Bathrooms

"Mom, there's a girl in my class who says she's a boy, and we're all supposed to treat her like a boy. We call her a boy name and everything. Is she a boy, Mom?"

A Brave New World?

My nephew was 9 years old when he asked his mother this question. How would you answer? Ready or not, the question is coming. With the legalization of gay marriage and Obama's recent directive that all public schools provide transgender bathrooms or risk the loss of federal funding, parents are officially swimming in uncharted territory.

It's an ocean of relativism, where absolute truth is outdated at best and offensive at worst. The only "reality" in our society is that people determine their own reality. Giving individuals the freedom to formulate their own "truth" is seen as tolerant while denying such a freedom is often viewed as arrogant and small-minded.

But it wasn't always this way. There was a time when mainstream society held to certain absolute truths, such as the biological and scientific truth that God created two genders: male and female (Gen. 1:27). Basic societal laws regarding marriage, restrooms, college dormitories, organized sports and the like supported this absolute truth.

Not anymore.

How do we raise children in this "brave new world"? More and more, I hear Christian parents making statements like "I don't want to impose my beliefs on my children. I want to allow them to find their own way. I want to raise them spiritually neutral." It sounds humble, and society applauds. "Let Johnny

find his own reality! If it turns out he's really Jenny, more power to him!"

But the Bible calls such human "wisdom" foolishness.

As a matter of fact, the Bible urges parents to take exactly the opposite approach, intentionally raising their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. In Deuteronomy 6:6–7, after exhorting the Israelites to love the one true God with their whole hearts, Moses issues a mighty charge:

And these words ... shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise (emphasis added).

That is spiritual training around the clock! It is a lifestyle of instilling truth deeply within the hearts and minds of our children. Proverbs 22:6 reiterates, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." The book of Proverbs goes so far as to say if we withhold spiritual discipline and instruction from our children, we set our hearts on putting them to death (Prov. 19:18). Yikes, right?

Getting Down to the Nitty-Gritty

So what should we be teaching our children when it comes to transgender policies? How can we use the Bible to answer our kids' toughest questions? I could write a theological paper, but many smarter bloggers have already done that. Instead, I want to write mom-to-mom with simple, practical words I would actually use in the lives of my own children when the time comes.

Let's tackle my nephew's question first:

Are girls who think they're boys actually boys? (Or vice

versa?)

No, son, the little girl in your class is not a boy. Being a boy or a girl is not about how you feel, what you look like, the clothes you wear or the toys you like to play with. The Bible says God chooses whether we are born boys or girls. Our gender is precious and part of His beautiful plan for our lives. We cannot change it, no matter what we do. Even if someone believed he was a monkey, it would not make him a monkey. Feelings do not change the truth. The Bible says Jesus is the truth (Gen. 1:27; John 14:6).

Why do some people want to be (or say they are) a different gender?

Some people don't accept the gender God has given them because we are born sinful, and we live in a broken world. Sin makes people sad, rebellious and confused. You and I are this way too. We don't want to follow God's plan. Instead we want to be the boss of our own lives. But God alone deserves to be the Boss. He is the strongest, wisest and most loving. Following Him is the best decision we will ever make (Rom. 3:23; Ps. 51:5; 1 Cor. 1:25; Ps. 62:11).

How should I treat a kid in my class who says he is a girl?

You must remember that God loves that little boy very much. Jesus died to save him from his sin. One of the ways you can love and honor God is to love that boy. Treat him kindly. Do not ever make fun of him or talk about him behind his back. Instead, pray that God would teach him who God wants him to be. Always remember that just like you, he is very valuable to God (John 13:35, 3:16; Col. 4:6).

If kids ask me what I believe about this, what should I say?

Do not be afraid to tell the truth! The Bible says to speak the truth with love. You can tell your classmates that you

believe God decides whether we are boys or girls, not us. Tell them that God loves us even if we are confused about our gender. Tell them He died to save us from sin and brokenness. If you get in trouble for sharing what you believe, your father and I will speak up for you. According to the law of our country, you are allowed to believe the Bible and talk about it. Never be ashamed to follow Jesus! Jesus once said that if we are ashamed of him before others, He will be ashamed of us before the Father (Eph. 4:14-15; Mark 8:38).

Should I call a boy a female name if the teacher tells me to?

The Bible says we should obey people in authority, like teachers and principals, as long as their rules do not violate God's rules. It's OK to call a boy a female name if that is what your teacher says to do. It is not sin to call someone a name they want to be called. A name is just a name. It doesn't make someone male or female. But as you call this boy a new name, remember in your heart that he is still a boy and pray that God would help him realize that too (Rom. 13:1; Ps. 103:19).

What should I do if the teacher says a girl can come in the boys' bathroom or locker room? (Or vice versa?)

Tell your teacher that you are not comfortable changing in the locker room with a girl present. Ask if you may use a private bathroom, and when you get home, your father and I will call the school to talk about it more. If the teacher does not let you use a private bathroom, politely say you will not go in the locker room, and your mother is happy to pick you up and take you home. At that point, your dad and I will handle the situation for you. Remember, you do not have to obey someone in authority if their rules violate God's rules. God says that we are to be pure and set apart. Part of purity means boys and girls should not see each other undressed (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Thess. 4:7).

A Starting Point

Always, the challenge in blogging is tackling a big subject in a small amount of space without dying the death of a thousand qualifications. That being said, obviously these answers are just a starting point. Obviously, they will launch us into deeper discussions. Obviously, our responses will vary depending on our child's age and spiritual maturity.

My hope in this article is not to offer "quick-fix" answers to major spiritual questions. My hope is to offer a glimpse of theology applied. My hope is to challenge parents to think carefully about how we are influencing our children's worldview. Whether we realize it or not, we always raise our kids with a specific worldview. To tell Johnny that he can believe whatever he wants to believe about God with no eternal consequences is not raising him "spiritually neutral." It is indoctrinating him with a very particular, biased worldview.

Parents, that means we have a choice to make. We can ride the tumultuous tides of culture, or we can ground our children in the God of Light, whose teaching and character does not change like shifting shadows (James 1:17). Either way, neutrality is simply not an option. {eoa}

*Reprinted from © Revive Our Hearts: True Woman. **Jeanne Harrison** is a student pastor's wife and mom to three little girls. Jeanne blogs about finding contentment in the lot God has given us—be it beautiful, painful, or at times downright disgusting! Recently she published her first book, Loving My Lot: A Young Mom's Journey to Contentment.*