

Why the Church Must Address the War on Gender

Something strange is happening in America today when it comes to gender. Facebook now offers 71 gender categories. Popular actress Ellen Page has announced that she's "transitioning" and now will be living as a man named Elliot Page. Several other high-profile celebrities have announced they are raising their young boys to be girls, or vice versa.

LGBTQ philosophy has not just influenced trendy tech companies and progressive Hollywood, but it has also made its way into our schools, universities and medical care. Some hospitals are ending the practice of listing gender at birth, while social scientists in academia have faced intense backlash if their findings run counter to this new worldview. In some elementary schools, teachers are told if a boy wants to use the girls' restroom, he should be allowed to do that since he "identifies" as a girl.

LGBTQ as a Belief System

I believe the best way to understand the LGBTQ movement is as a belief system. I view a LGBTQ proponent the same way I do a Muslim, Hindu or any other adherent to a religious sect. LGBTQ stands for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning." The cornerstone of their doctrine, I believe, was laid down in 1955 by psychologist John Money when he theorized that sex and gender were two distinct concepts.

"Biological sex may be genetic, but gender is merely a social construct," Money says.

More than 60 years later, this loose view of gender combined with teachings on "sexual orientation identity" have formed the core of LGBTQ belief. This belief system includes an ever-increasing list of concepts that take personal faith to

accept, like “nonbinary” people, “pansexual” people, “bisexual transgender women” and “lesbian cisgender women.”

According to the philosophy, I’m considered a heterosexual “cisgender male” (I identify with the same gender as my biological sex) and I hold a binary (male and female only) view on gender.

How should we respond to all this?

I’ll be the first to admit, when I read an article by a transgender author basically saying that people like me (a “cisgender” who holds a traditional view of gender) should not be allowed to exist, I can become afraid. I clearly see the violence that can result from such dogmatic, hate-filled rhetoric. I can be tempted to retaliate, mock or attack these people’s beliefs, and my fear is only amplified when I see this worldview gaining more and more influence in Western culture.

But listen to me: We must never give in to the spirit of fear. The great apostle Paul taught us, “God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and self-control” (2 Tim. 1:7).

So I refuse to be afraid, because fear and love cannot coexist. The apostle John taught “there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18a). Love and fear cannot share the same heart. This is why when fear takes control of us, we lose our ability to show mercy to others. We can only criticize, mock and attack them.

LGBTQ as People

Here are four thoughts to encourage you, that you too may resist fear and pursue love in regard to the LGBTQ community and its new philosophy:

1. God created them.

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created Him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27).

This Scripture is obviously what defines our beliefs about gender. Although we accept that our world became broken and messy because of sin, we still hold on to the truth that God’s original design was only two genders, male and female. More than that, we believe God’s glory and personality are expressed through masculinity and femininity.

But let’s start with the last three words of this verse, “He created them.” The LGBTQ people we’re talking about here are human beings, made in the image and likeness of God. They are not your political opponents. They are not “those” people. They are not monsters. They’re fallible and broken human beings, just like you and me. They’re capable of being misled and deceived, just like you and me.

With this in mind, the apostle Peter commanded us to “honor all people” (1 Pet. 2:17a). Notice “all people,” not some people—not just the ones who agree with you. All people bear the image of God. Therefore, we are called to honor them as we honor God.

Yes, some are misguided. Some even hate us. But in this, the apostle Paul reminds us, “Our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). We must not allow ourselves to become embittered toward any person held captive by the evil one.

2. Remember, trans behavior is not new.

Let me echo Solomon here, “There is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9b).

As stated earlier, LGBTQ is a belief system, a way of seeing the world, and we know misguided belief systems are not new to

mankind. In fact, we humans seem to be very good at coming up with all kinds of strange beliefs about God, ourselves and the world.

We also know transgender behavior itself is not new. For thousands of years, the Indian culture has recognized a third gender, the hijra, mostly males who live as women. Ancient Roman culture was replete with homosexual and transgender behavior. In A.D. 65, the most powerful man in the world, Emperor Nero, married another man. Nero took on the “gender identity” of a woman during the ceremony. Three years later, Nero married another man, but this time, the emperor had his “bride” castrated and dressed as a woman. This new “wife” even adopted “preferred pronouns,” with the Roman court addressing him as “Lady,” “Empress” and “Mistress.”

This Roman example should give us great hope! Think about it for a second: The Roman culture goes from Emperor Nero marrying two men in the first century to Emperor Constantine seeking the church’s blessing and declaring Christianity the formal state religion in the fourth century.

Wow! How did the church do it? Not protesting in the streets. Not posting memes on social media. Not petitioning their congressmen. Not complaining to their neighbors. Not lecturing Nero and his two husbands. No, followers of Christ changed Roman culture simply by imaging the Son of God in their daily lives and offering intercession for their fellow man. Yes, Christians conquered the Roman Empire through love.

3. Pray for freedom, not favoritism in America.

As believers, we should pray for freedom in the United States. We don’t need favoritism. Please hear this. We don’t need everyone to believe as we do. We don’t need everyone to think as we do. Why? Because the Word of God is like a lion. You don’t have to worry about protecting it. You just have to let it out of its cage, and the lion will take care of the rest.

Friend, have confidence in His Word. Have confidence in His miraculous power to save and transform lives.

So, we should pray for freedom and that the rulers of our land always side with individual liberty. Pray for decisions like the recent one from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit, a federal court, which struck down Florida ordinances banning minors from seeking professional help to combat unwanted same-sex attraction or gender confusion. Minors should not be forced to take this counseling, nor should they be banned. Let parents and their children make this decision for themselves.

We should pray according to the pattern the Lord gave us, "Our Father, who created all people, let Your name be honored. Let broken or confused people everywhere honor Your name. Give them grace, as You gave us grace. Allow them to see, as You let us see, because we know apart from You no man can see clearly.

"Let Your kingdom come and Your will be done in America, as it is in heaven. We know Your Holy Spirit is the 'Spirit of liberty.' We pray for all courts and branches of government in the U.S. to side with individual rights and civil liberty. We thank You for our freedoms and pray we would continue to have the freedom in America to present our spirituality to the world."

4. Pray for our own lives.

Just as important as our prayers for the outside—maybe more important—are our prayers for our own lives. We must never forget this, because the moment we do, we become a foolish man pointing out the speck in another's eye and blind to the log in our own.

Yes, it's easy to mouth off to others. It's another thing to live quiet, submissive and humble lives with good conscience before God. Do you remember what the apostles taught women

married to misguided husbands? They said if any husband does not obey the Word, “they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, as they see the purity and reverence of your lives” (1 Pet. 3:1b-2).

God forbid we should talk about Him without displaying Him through our actions. For we know great judgment is reserved for anyone who tries to teach others but does not live it out themselves. So, again, let us pray according to the Lord’s pattern:

“Give us our daily bread. Meet the needs of Your servants, that we may be good, productive and helpful citizens in this country, bearing witness of the truth. Forgive us our sins and shortcomings, as we forgive others’ shortcomings and sins. We forgive those who are blind, speak against the truth and resist Your ways, because we know we’ve done all these things. We forgive those who hate us, because You forgave us when we hated You.

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us, our children and our families from evil things and false beliefs. Keep us far from resentment and anger at those confused about their gender and even those who speak against the truth. Let us never mock or attack, but make us ‘wise as serpents and harmless as doves’ (Matt. 10:16b).

“Yes, allow LGBTQ people to find us harmless as doves, filled with love, kindness and a listening ear.”

How do I address a transgender person? Studies show that less than 0.6% of the population identify as transgender. So chances are you do not know one. I actually do. As a bivocational minister, I am a technology integrator in Northeast Florida for architects and custom home builders. One of my best technicians, whom I’ll call “Joe,” is a person who was born a woman but has “transitioned” to live as a man. So how do I treat her?

Well, I know the apostles taught “if it is possible, as much as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18). They also say, “If someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way” (1 Pet. 3:15-16a, NLT).

With these things in mind, I have chosen to use my technician’s “preferred pronouns” in daily interactions with her. I respect Joe, and I accept Joe’s choices, while at the same time, I offer a quiet and sincere testimony to Joe and the rest of my company.

I compare my approach with Joe to how I would interact with a Muslim co-worker. I’d never start the conversation, “Hey, bud. You’re wrong. Allah is not the true God, and your prophet Muhammad spoke on behalf of demons. No offense, though.” Why not? Because love is not rude, and this would just be stupid. Why would I say such careless words? These people don’t believe as I do, and why would I expect them to? I didn’t even believe as I do until the Lord opened my eyes.

I’m confident in the Lord that my advice is sound, but ultimately, I leave it to the conscience of every believer, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to help them navigate through such sticky situations.

AJ Hall came to faith as a young club DJ through a miraculous event at his father’s deathbed in 2003. Today he is a DJ, writer and ordained minister. He is bivocational and is a technology integrator for Luxury Architects and Home Builders in Northeast Florida. Follow his blog at [.](#)

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