

Bruce Jenner, the Bible and the Transgender Debate

Olympic track and field star Bruce Jenner was named Male Athlete of the Year in 1976, and soon he appeared on the front of the Wheaties cereal box. He was the poster boy for American masculinity. The 6-foot-2-inch-tall decathlon champion was even considered for the title role in the 1978 *Superman* movie because of his muscles and agility.

But last week Jenner dropped the proverbial bomb when he admitted to a huge TV audience that he is on a transgender journey. In his April 24 interview with ABC's Diane Sawyer, he said he had experimented with cross-dressing as a child—and later when he was married to his three wives. Sometimes referring to himself as “he,” and sometimes “her,” the 65-year-old Jenner says he now realizes he has “the soul of a female.”

“My brain is much more female than it is male,” Jenner said. “It’s hard for people to understand that, but that’s what my soul is.”

Tabloid publications have been speculating about Jenner’s struggle for years, since he began starring in the reality show *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*. Although Jenner says he still has “all the male parts,” he wears his long hair in a ponytail, he’s had breast implants and other plastic surgery, he sports a French manicure and he’s undergoing hormone injections.

The public reaction to Jenner’s announcement was largely supportive—especially from American celebrities. Oprah Winfrey tweeted: “All of us deserve to be loved for who we are.” Talk show host Ellen DeGeneres said Jenner’s public admission was “saving lives and opening minds tonight.” Pop singer Lady Gaga

simply tweeted: “Bravery.”

Then, just hours after the ABC interview aired, an Australian radio station started the #PaintYourNailsForBruce hashtag—urging both men and women to get colorful manicures to show their support for Jenner. The message was clear: Don’t judge Bruce Jenner. Accept his choices. Be tolerant.

I would never bash Jenner or any other person who wrestles with their gender identity. Every human being deserves love and respect, and Christians—of all people—should be ready to offer support for anybody who struggles with emotional problems. But because I am a Christian, I can’t just accept someone’s behavior if it is destructive or unhealthy for them. To affirm a person’s wrong choices just to make them feel accepted is *not* love.

If a person with gender confusion came to me for help, I would have to point out these important truths:

1. Gender is part of God’s sacred creation. Gender is God’s idea. Genesis 1:27 says: “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” My gender is part of my created identity; it is God’s plan for my life. It is not fluid or changeable. It is fixed. Just as a dog cannot be changed into a cat or a fish into a bird, a man cannot be changed into a woman, or vice versa, because gender is a fundamental aspect of creation.

2. Satan is the cause of gender confusion. Because of the entrance of sin into the world, human beings struggle with all kinds of mental, emotional, physical and sexual brokenness. The world is full of abuse, violence, fear, ignorance, sickness, poverty and addiction—and all of this is fueled by the devil, whom Jesus called “a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). Sin began when the devil went to Eve and questioned God’s truth (see Gen. 3:1). Satan even questioned Jesus’ identity as God’s Son (Matt. 4:1-11).

As long as we are under the influence of sin, our minds are “darkened” (Eph. 4:18). Paul went so far as to say that the devil “has blinded the minds of the unbelieving” (2 Cor. 4:4). A person who is apart from Christ can be tormented by all kinds of evil, degrading thoughts. The devil does this because he hates people—because we are made in God’s image.

3. Sex change surgery does not fix a person’s gender confusion. Author Walt Heyer had a sex change operation in the 1980s and lived as a woman for eight years, but he later realized that he had made a mistake. He now has a website, , where he writes: “Eventually, I gathered the courage to admit that the surgery had fixed nothing—it only masked and exacerbated deeper psychological problems.” Heyer points out that studies performed on 500 transsexuals proved that surgeries and hormone therapy did not cure these people of their confusion.

4. Christ offers healing from gender confusion. When the apostle Paul went to the Greek city of Corinth he preached to people from all kinds of sinful backgrounds, and many of them embraced faith in Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Paul mentions fornicators (unmarried people having sex with each other), adulterers, idolaters, homosexuals and “effeminate” men—that is, men who dressed as women to engage in prostitution. Yet Paul says these people were set free from these sinful lifestyles after they believed in Christ.

Paul did not promote tolerance or acceptance of gender confusion; instead he offered the hope of healing. Isn’t that a better expression of love? While today’s culture pretends to care about people like Bruce Jenner by putting a sympathetic Band-Aid on this problem, Jesus can go to the root and totally heal it.

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