

**Thinking Biblically**  
**Valley Fourth Church Conference**  
**A Gracious and Biblical Response to Gender Dysphoria**  
Todd L Miles (tmiles@westernseminary.edu)

### **The Issue: What is Gender Dysphoria**

- It used to be called Gender Identity Disorder
- Sex=Physical, biological, and anatomical dimensions of being male or female
- Gender=Psychological, social, and cultural aspects of being male or female
- Gender Identity=How a person experiences himself as male or female
- Gender Dysphoria=Negative and distressing experiences of gender identity in which a person's gender does not match or align with birth sex.

### **What does the Bible Say?**

- *Oft-cited passages: Lev 18:22; Deut 22:5; 23:1; Matt 19:12; Acts 8:26ff; Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9-10*
- *Creation: Gen 1-2. Male and Female are like each other in that both are humans and both are created in God's image. Different in that they are sexual others with different roles for which they were designed. Function flows from design. God calls "good."*
- *Fall: Gen 3. Sin enters the world. We are affected to the core of our beings. Included in the fall is sexual brokenness and our assuming of the roles. In all of creation, form and function are affected. Adopting a transgender identity embrasure is a sin.*
- *Redemption: Saved from the penalty of sin and progressively being saved from the power of sin. Some come to Christ and experience instant freedom from some besetting sins and habits. Some find freedom from some sins after a period of intense struggle and growth in sanctification. Some continue to struggle for their entire lives.*
- *Glorification: Freedom from penalty, power, and presence of sin. Curse is lifted. New bodies. Consummated New Covenant hearts.*

### **Different Frameworks<sup>1</sup>**

- **Integrity:** Male and Female are part of design and structure of creation. Gender Dysphoria denies and threatens the structure and design of Creation.
- **Disability:** A non-moral condition brought about by living in a broken world (much like physical handicaps).
- **Diversity:** Something to be celebrated, much like the ethnicities and genders. Why is this important? It is the basic disposition of many of the secular controlling institutions in America, including our public schools and universities.

### **Treatments**

- No known cause of gender dysphoria.
- Gender dysphoria occurs in all age groups and all sexes.
- Children
  - Behavior intervention (seems to work), counseling, waiting, hormones (suppresses puberty)

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<sup>1</sup> This framework is used by Mark Yarhouse throughout his book, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture* (IVP, 2015).

- Adolescents and adults
  - Reversible (counseling and behavior), partially reversible (hormone therapy), irreversible (surgery)
- Irreversible treatment long-term outcomes
  - Studies are still nascent but evidence suggests that considerably higher risks of suicide completion and suicide attempts. Transsexuals are a group also demonstrated to need long-term somatic and psychological follow-up and care.
  - Let's be clear on this: You cannot make a man a woman or a woman a man.
  - Comparison to anorexia nervosa.
- Christian Counseling is also still in early stages. (Narrative therapy, sexual identity mapping, etc.).

### **Pastoral Concerns and Strategies**

- The pressure in society is to see gender dysphoria as something to be celebrated and then to "solve" through an irreversible procedure (sex-change surgery and hormone therapy). Gender confusion in children is being magnified and cemented through early "identification" and normalization.
- Is gender dysphoria a "sin" issue?
  - People who experience gender dysphoria are not sinning, though their confusion and dysphoria is a result of the fall.
  - Acting out on that dysphoria and rejecting God's good authority in your life, in this case the monumental issue of sexual identity, is sin. Accepting and pursuing a transgender identity is, in my opinion, sin.
- Would an unbelieving transvestite or an unbeliever struggling with gender dysphoria feel welcome in your church? Would a believer struggling with varying levels of gender dysphoria feel welcome in your church?
  - Sinners should feel more cared for and loved in the church than anyplace else.
  - What are implications of James 2:1-5.
- Pastors need to be informed on this issue. Gender dysphoria is not the same as homosexuality. T folk do not see themselves as homosexual.
- There are ministries devoted to counseling individuals who have undergone irreversible procedures and now regret their decisions.
- Does your church know what it is to be male/female, masculine/feminine in the biblical sense? How much of what our church "believes" is actually a social construct?
- Bathroom issues. It might be a good idea to have a "family" restroom that is male/female. There are many reasons, unrelated to this issue, to have such a facility.
- Teach your congregation about sexuality and gender roles.
- Tighten your church discipline language
- Develop community climate of compassion, love, and kindness.
- Speak the truth in love

### **Resources on the Church and Transgenderism**

Ryan Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment* (Encounter Books, 2018)

Nancy Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Baker, 2018)

Vaughan Roberts, *Transgender* (The Good Book Company, 2016)

Andrew T Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate: What Does the Bible Actually Say About Gender Identity* (The Good Book Company, 2017).

Mark Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture* (IVP, 2015). See also his short essay in Christianity Today:  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/july-august/understanding-transgender-gender-dysphoria.html>