

Which Identity?
Growth Group Discussion Guide
Embodied, Week 2

Intro questions (spend some time with these, as they will help ease us into our new series)

- What is one aspect of your identity by which people know you? For example, what is one sentence someone might use to describe who you are? Have fun with this—you might even try sharing one thing about yourself that people in your group don't already know about you!
- This week's sermon and growth group discussion deal with the sense of conflict that some people feel between their biological sex and their gender identity. Specifically, we're wrestling with the question of which identity such a person—assuming they are seeking to honor God—should choose to adopt. But we're going to begin with the place that the sermon ended—Jesus' comments on gospel identity.

1. Read Matthew 16:21-27, then discuss the following. (Leaders: it is OKAY if you spend all of your time on this first section, if your group needs to linger here. Please discern what the needs of your group are.)

- In v. 21, Jesus tells his followers what it will look like for him to accomplish his mission. What aspects of this picture are surprising to them?
- What do you think was in Peter's mind as he tried to correct Jesus?
- In the first-century world, what would the disciples be thinking when Jesus told them that it was necessary to "take up their cross and follow" him? What would this instruction mean to their ears?
 - Do you think that in 21st-century Christianity, we've lost the full weight of what Jesus calls us to? Why or why not?
- Jesus talks about our core identity in v. 25. Pastor Josh's explanation was as follows: "*to be his disciple is to **lay down your own attempts to define your identity, and take up the identity he gives you.** It means to lay down whatever we look to, to define who we are, and let Jesus do that for us. And he says that as we do this, we find our real life—the life we've ultimately longed for, and which we thought we would find in making our own identity.*"
 - Do you think this description captures Jesus' meaning in v. 25? Why or why not?
- In what ways does this teaching of Jesus collide with the prevailing values of our culture? (After you discuss this question in a broad sense, be sure to apply it to questions of sexuality and gender identity.)
- The big idea of this week's sermon was, "***The life we long for is found in the identity God gives us, rather than one we make for ourselves.***"
 - Pastor Josh applied this idea to the question of transitioning, and in particular, the myth that if a person is struggling with gender dysphoria, transitioning will help them to find their true identity. But Josh also explained that we all wrestle with this myth in various ways, that we will find some identity that will complete us apart from Jesus. In what ways have you experienced this myth?
 - What has been your experience with this big idea? Have you found it to be true in your experience?

2. This Sunday's sermon also addressed the question of whether someone experiencing dysphoria ought to transition, through two other sets of lenses. Practical wisdom and gender roles in the Bible. Discuss these matters below.

- Pastor Josh laid out a number of facts regarding “Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria” (ROGD) which is the sudden experience of dysphoria during adolescence, especially among females. The prevailing approach for treating ROGD is to encourage transitioning, rather than treating other mental health issues, or the trauma that often precedes ROGD. Moreover, a range of studies have shown that in 61-88 percent of cases, the dysphoria goes away after puberty.
 - What practical wisdom, if any, do you think that this overview of ROGD sheds on the question of transitioning, especially for adolescents? What might you advise a young person, struggling with dysphoria, to do?
- How can our church help foster safe spaces for teens to share what they are struggling with, especially when it comes to issues of sexuality and gender identity?
- Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, then discuss the following.
 - *Please note that we are not equating Paul's use of the term, “sexual immorality,” with gender dysphoria. We are interested in how Paul views the human body.*
 - In this passage, how many times does Paul equate “you” with “your body?”
 - What bearing does this observation have on the question of “who is the real you” when it comes to gender identity?
- Read 1 Corinthians 11:2-15, then discuss the following.
 - *Please note that commentators have wrestled for centuries over the interpretation of this passage. And yet, some clear principles emerge.*
 - Pastor Josh said that regardless of how we apply various specifics of these verses, the following is clear: Paul recognizes gender distinctions as being from God, and therefore, as good.
 - Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? What bearing does it have?
 - Josh also made the following claim: “Paul is clearly laying out the principle that **men and women should maintain distinctions in how they seek to present themselves.**” In what way does this principle impact our current conversation about whether someone should transition, who is seeking to honor God?
- **Application:** Regardless of where you stand on the issue of transitioning, what is one take-away that you think God is showing you from this sermon and discussion?

3. Prayer

- If this discussion has raised any pain or struggle, take time to pray accordingly.
- Take some time to share and pray about other needs and concerns that may exist among your group.