

Purpose: This 1 hour session provides an overview of key terms and key works on transgender issues while also providing a biblical/theological foundation for practical application.

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Key Terms (a fuller set of terms begins on Page 14). Definitions are from Brown University LGBTQ Center unless otherwise noted).

ASSIGNED SEX (Assigned Sex at Birth): The process of sex designation.

Pastoral note: we view this as identical to biological sex when accurately designated.

CISGENDER: A person whose gender identity is aligned to what they were designated at birth, based on their physical sex; 2) A non-trans* person.

Pastoral Note: this is increasingly being used in a demeaning manner.

GENDER DYSPHORIA: From Boston Children's Hospital: Gender dysphoria occurs when there is a conflict between the sex you were assigned at birth and the gender with which you identify. This can create significant distress and can make you feel uncomfortable in your body. People with gender dysphoria may want to change the way that they express their gender.

GENDER IDENTITY: An individual's internal sense of being male, female, both, neither, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

HETERONORMATIVITY: Lifestyle norm that insists that people fall into distinct genders (male and female), and naturalizes heterosexual coupling as the norm.

INTERSEX: One who is born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, and/or an internal reproductive system that is not considered "standard" or normative for either the male or female sex.

NON-BINARY: Describes a gender identity that is neither female nor male; 2) Gender identities that are outside of or beyond two traditional concepts of male or female.

Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria (ROGD): Medical News Today: a sudden onset of gender dysphoria in adolescents or young adults who did not display signs of gender

dysphoria in childhood. It hypothesized that ROGD might occur due to social influence from peer groups and social media use in combination with limited coping mechanisms to deal with strong or negative emotions. This term is not deemed “scientific” and many organizations oppose the term and studies that contributed to the term.

Pastoral Note: Progressive organizations typically deny this exists and conservative organizations normally use this term to describe the astronomical rise in suddenly identified gender dysphoria that is even more common amongst teenage girls.

SUICIDE ULTIMATIM: From Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied*: This is a common counseling tactic with little scientific support, but many will say “would you rather have a dead son, or a living daughter.” “Transitioning is taught as the only option to save someone’s life. This isn’t psychological or ethically responsible.”

*TRANS**: Umbrella term.. Used to denote the increasingly wide spectrum of identities within the gender variant spectrum. The asterisk is representative of the widest notation of possible trans* identities. Aimed at promoting unification among gender variant communities by placing focus on gender transgression over specific identity labels, genders, or bodies.

TRANS MAN: From Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*: A biological female who identifies as a male.

TRANS WOMAN: From Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*: A biological male who identifies as a female.

Recommended Resources:

God and the Transgender Debate: What Does the Bible Actually Say About Gender Identity, Andrew Walker, 2017.

Walker is an evangelical Christian and this helpful book covers a lot of topics including how to talk to children about things they are observing in society. This book can be used to dialogue with someone from the trans community about the gospel and biblical perspectives on these issues.

Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution, Carl R. Trueman, 2022.

This book is a condensed version of *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*. It traces the story of identity transformation. It looks at how feelings have become the source of authority in one's life resulting in a new era of "expressive individualism." This book looks at key figures such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, etc. to discover how the human person became a self, how the self became sexualized, and how sex became politicized, resulting in the transgender movement.

Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say, Preston Sprinkle, 2021.

Sprinkle provides a good overview of key definitions and interacts well with scientific studies. Sprinkle does not affirm transgender ideas, but strives to help us remember that every trans person is a unique person and that when you have met one, you have only met one! Sprinkle's appendix does a great job surveying relevant studies on transgenderism, mental health, and suicide.

Brad Hambrick's Videos and Blogs:

"Parent Equip: Parents Discussing God's Design for Sexuality with Kids and Students" on Brad Hambrick.com 10/30/2019. Also printed and attached to this packet.

"Necessary Conversations About Sexuality and Gender" on HarvestUsa.org by Brad Hambrick 11/22/2018. Also printed and attached to this packet.

Youtube Video: "A Biblical Perspective on Sex and Gender" by Brad Hambrick, February 2020 to Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Go Conference.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVzxAYAntro>

Other Influential Works:

The Global Sexual Revolution: Destruction of Freedom in the Name of Freedom, Gabriele Kuby, 2015.

Kuby is a conservative Catholic who looks at the political and financial support associated with the sexual revolution, including the rise of intolerance and discrimination against those that hold to traditional sexual norms.

The End of Gender: Debunking the Myths about Sex and Identity in Our Society, Debra Soh, 2021.

Soh is a non-believer with a progressive sexologist, feminist background. Soh argues that trans ideas are silencing legit science, are not supported by solid science normally, and are at odds with feminism. Soh discusses the pressures she has felt articulating these stances in academia, notes that if there are no differences in the sexes, then why does a person feel a need to transition, and notes that if a person's choice should always be celebrated and applauded, why do we not applaud those that identify their gender in harmony with their biological sex.

This is an interesting book from an unusual source with numerous statements that are not biblical, but that offers a valuable critique of the trans movement from a non-Christian viewpoint.

Gay Straight and the Reason Why: The Science of Sexual Orientation, Simon LeVay, 2014.

LeVay is a non-Christian, homosexual who surveys decades of scientific studies to try to find scientific rationale for why people are homosexual, but most of his suggestions are lacking significant scientific support and in the process of trying to argue for scientific rationale for people to be prone to homosexuality, he unintentionally destroys any arguments from science supporting transgenderism.

Affirming God's Image: Addressing the Transgender Question with Science and Scripture, 2019.

J. Alan Branch takes a fair, respectful, and factual tone in addressing this complex issue of transgenderism through a biblical lens. He reviews scientific research around the transgender experience, gives an overview of the history of transgenderism, discusses

important terminology surrounding gender issues, examines why people pursue gender reassignment surgery, and evaluates what happens after surgery. He provides valuable insights on how to navigate conversations around this topic and ends the book with two practical chapters for families and churches; providing the reader with guiding principles for how to address the transgender issue in a Christ-honoring way.

BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Creation and the Fall

All things come from God, through God, and by God into existence. He is the author, created, and sustainer of all things. He created all things with a purpose and it was very good.

From God's authoritative love he orchestrated and designed all things to glorify him and enjoy him forever.

Genesis 1:31a – "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."

However, due to sin man became lost, blind, and spiritually dead. They no longer knew who they were because they turned away from the one who gave them life.

How can man find who they are again? Who am I?

God has Authority

God reveals his authority to mankind as author, created, and sustainer of all things through his Son, Jesus Christ. From his authority we find out how we are to fulfill our purpose in life.

Matthew 28:18-20 – "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Because of the work of Christ on the cross, how do we fulfill our purpose in life?

God is Love

God's authority is not abusive, but instead it is loving. It's not just loving, but it is love itself. God's authority is what defines love.

1 John 4:8-11 – "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might love through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

Romans 12:9 – "Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good."

How does the world today define love and how is it different from God's definition of love?

Identity: Finding Out Who We Are from The Lord

True purpose and identity can only come from the Lord because he alone is the author, created, and sustainer of all things. True *joy* can come by following Christ and listening to who he says man is.

Who does God say we are? What are we made to do?

Genesis 1:27 – "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

1 Corinthians 10:31 – "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

If believers in Christ only have their true identity restored through Christ, then what about unbelievers? What is the identity of those who do not know the Lord?

• They are _____.

• They are _____.

• They are _____.

Therefore, _____.

Romans 1:21-32 – ²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became *futile in their thinking*, and their *foolish hearts* were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became *fools*, ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³²Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

A BRIEF LOOK AT QUEER THEOLOGY

Queer Terminology:

Three meanings of the word “queer”: first, as an umbrella term; second, as transgressive action; and third, as erasing boundaries.

The third meaning of “queer” is grounded in the academic discipline known as queer theory. Queer theory challenges and disrupts the traditional notions that sexuality and gender identity are simply questions of scientific fact or that such concepts can be reduced to fixed binary categories such as “homosexual” vs. “heterosexual” or “female” vs. “male.” As such, this third definition of “queer” refers to the erasing or deconstructing of boundaries with respect to these categories of sexuality and gender.

Defining Queer Theology:

Queer theology is “talk about God ” that challenges and deconstructs the natural binary categories of sexual and gender identity.

Queer Distortions of Authority

Sources of Authority: Queer Scripture, Tradition, Reason, Experience

Queer theology draws upon scripture—that is, the Hebrew and Christian scriptures (also known as the First and Second Testaments)—*in creative ways*.

Queer theology draws upon tradition—that is, church history as well as the teachings of the church over the last two millennia—*in creative ways*. By “reclaiming” the Christian tradition, these queer scholars have located the LGBT experience squarely within the history and teachings of the church. As such, they draw upon this work as a source [authority] for constructing their own theologies.

Queer theology also draws upon reason—that is, our ability as human beings to observe the world and use philosophy to know God. Queer theologians have increasingly drawn upon *reason in the form of poststructuralist philosophy*—that is, queer theory— in constructing their queer theology.

Queer theology draws upon experience as a source for theology. As in the case of other contextual theologies, queer theology is *premised* upon the belief that *God acts* within the specific contexts of our lives and experiences, despite the fact that LGBT lives and experiences have been excluded from traditional theological discourse. Indeed, *queer*

*experience is an important—if not critical—source for doing **theology** from a queer perspective.*

Queer Distortions: Love

Radical love is a love so extreme that it dissolves our existing boundaries, whether they are boundaries *that separate us from other people*, that *separate us from preconceived notions of sexuality and gender identity*, or that *separate us from God*. [“Boundaries” separate us from God, not sin as He defines it.]

Queer Distortions: Identity

The noticeable trend is the increasing focus by queer theologians on issues of race, class, and other factors in addition to sexuality and gender identity. These issues are grounded in notions of intersectionality from critical race theory.

As in the case with queer theology, these works are less concerned with fixed identities and identity politics, but rather with the ways in which these identities are *fluid and constantly changing*, depending upon the power dynamics of a given social context.

IMPLICATIONS/APPLICATION

Walker’s book and Sprinkle’s book are both helpful.

As a church body, we are composed of people saved by grace from all types of sinful backgrounds (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

“A church should be the safest place to talk about, be open about, and struggle with gender dysphoria...where people know they are loved, even if they disagree” (Walker, 122).

“We are only firmly anchored, able to grow and to share the gospel without being tossed about by every idea and argument from both the conservative and progressive ends of the spectrum, if we are ‘speaking the truth in love’ (Eph. 4:15). Neither love nor truth is an optional bolt-on to our Christianity.

Most of us, depending on our particular character, tend to bend toward one or the other: to love or to truth. The struggle is to showcase the one we bend away fromremember that loving someone is not the same as agreeing with them, and sometimes loving someone requires you to disagree...don't neglect love. After all, it's love that wins a hearing for the truth that inspired that love in the first place" (Walker 128).

Practically, we need to remind ourselves and interact with others in light of God's authority, God's love, and our identity in Christ.

As a church:

We remember God's authority over life and place ourselves under God's Word. We study the Bible to know what it means in its original context, so that we can know how to apply it in our context. What God calls right and good, is right and good whether it is popular or not.

We recognize the manner in which God displayed his love. His love was non-affirming, and yet was sacrificially displayed for those in rebellion. His love was not blind, but was all-seeing. His love is not affirming of evil or sin; our sin is the very reason for the cross! We must define love according to God's love instead of settling for the shallow definitions of love the world tries to use.

We recognize our identity in Christ as ones rescued from sin and for a life of holy service according to the power of the Holy Spirit as we relate to God the Father and imitate his holiness and love for others. Discipleship is a life-long journey where we grow in our knowledge of God and how accurately we manifest his holy, loving character.

As parents: see the above material first!

Have an open dialogue with your children about things they see in our broken world. Discipleship is a life-long journey and as they journey in our world for God's glory, God has put you as parents into their life for the journey and not just for one-time conversations about sexuality.

Help them recognize the binary nature of biological sex, and the many colors of gender expression across time. Just because a boy likes pink, he isn't actually a girl! Cultural stereotypes do not fit all men and women and that is okay for men and women!

Remind them that not everyone accepts God's authority or shares our views that start with God and his loving, holy, authority as seen in the Bible. Those that disagree with God's loving, holy, authority are often now thinking that those that do not "feel like" a male might not actually be male. This is a rejection of God's loving, holy, authority and a rejection of God's intended identity for them in Christ where their biological sex matches their gender.

All People, Especially Teens:

Recognize your identity is in Christ's acceptance and his purpose for you. Though you may be "canceled" by friends and culture, your identity can still be stable and grounded in Christ. Find your support in God and as part of a church with brothers/sisters in Christ that will care for you.

QUESTIONS

What about those born intersex?

Sprinkle's book deals well with this. Some studies suggest up to nearly 2% of people are intersex. However, Sprinkle notes that the great majority of these people never knew they fit the definition of intersex! In the rare cases of ambiguous genitalia, this does not create a third type of biological sex or for their gender. Sprinkle also notes that many people struggling with intersex conditions take offense as being the "proof-text" for the trans* progressives.

Can a person have a male brain or a female brain?

Sprinkle looks at how inconclusive these tests are and how many are based upon cultural stereotypes of men and women. Debra Soh also remarks about the stereotype issues and lack of conclusive scientific evidence on gendered brains. Many discussions suggesting conclusions do so without regard to neuroplasticity (the structural and functional changes of the brain as one practices a behavior/thought pattern).

Should we use someone's preferred pronouns?

Jacob - No, because by doing so we have affirming their false sense of identity.

Jason - We should try to use their name instead. Though preferred pronouns can affirm their false sense of identity, I am reluctantly willing to do so while preferring/requesting an opportunity to discuss why/how they chose those pronouns and how this is hard for me because of likely not agreeing with their rationale.

Sam - No. One of the main issues for me is best practice. I do agree that a Christian could reasonably find a false pronoun useful circumstantially but I have yet to encounter a scenario where it is optimal for the spiritual good of all involved.

Other Questions

Expanded Glossary (from Brown University LGBTQ Center unless noted):

***Pastoral Note: These definitions change frequently and are used differently by different people.

AGENDER (Also Non-gender): Not identifying with any gender, the feeling of having no gender.

ANDROGYNOUS: A person who may appear as and exhibit traits traditionally associated as both male and female, or as neither male nor female, or as in between male and female.

ASEXUAL: 1) A sexual orientation where a person does not experience sexual attraction or desire to partner for the purposes of sexual stimulation; 2) a spectrum of sexual orientations where a person may be disinclined towards sexual behavior or sexual partnering.

ASSIGNED SEX (Assigned Sex at Birth): The process of sex designation.

Pastoral note: we view this as identical to biological sex when accurately designated.

AUTOGYNEPHILIA: From NIH, National Library of Medicine: Autogynephilia is defined as a male's propensity to be sexually aroused by the thought of himself as a female. The concept of autogynephilia defines a typology of MtF transsexualism and offers a theory of motivation for one type of MtF transsexualism. Autogynephilia resembles a sexual orientation in that it involves elements of idealization and attachment as well as erotic desire. Nearly 3% of men in Western countries may experience autogynephilia

BISEXUAL: A person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to males/men and females/women. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders, and there may be a preference for one gender over others.

BUTCH: A person, usually female identified, who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. Most frequently claimed as an affirmative identity label among lesbian women, and gender non-conforming people designated female at birth.

CISGENDER: A person whose gender identity is aligned to what they were designated at birth, based on their physical sex; 2) A non-trans* person.

Pastoral Note: this is increasingly being used in a demeaning manner.

DRAG QUEEN: A person who identifies as a man or male who dresses in feminine or gender-marked clothing, makeup, and mannerisms for the purpose of theater or performance. Many drag queens perform by singing, dancing or lip-synching; 2) A person who feels connection to a female or feminine identity while wearing feminine clothing, either in a performance space or in everyday life; 3) A person of any gender identity that identifies with feminine drag “queen” performance communities.

FEMME: A person who expresses and/or identifies with femininity; 2) A community label for people who identify with femininity specifically through a queer and/or politically radical and/or subversive context; 3) A feminine-identified person of any gender/sex.

FLUID: A gender identity where a person identifies as 1) neither or both female and male; 2) Experiences a range of femaleness and maleness, with a denoted movement or flow between genders; 3) Consistently experiences their gender identity outside of the gender binary.

FTM or F2M (Female-to-Male): Term used to identify a person who was designated a female sex at birth and currently identifies as male, lives as a man, or identifies predominantly as masculine. This includes a broad range of experiences, from those who identify as men or male to those who identify as transsexual, transgender men, transmen, female men, new men, or FTM. Some reject this terminology, arguing that

they have always been male internally and are now making that identity visible, where others feel that such language reinforces an either/or gender system. Some individuals prefer the term MTM (male-to-male) to underscore the fact that although they were assigned female at birth, they never had a female gender identity.

Pastoral Note: note the ways in which this definition varies!

GAY: Term used to refer to homosexual / same gender loving communities as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual; 2) Term used in some cultural settings to specifically represent male identified people who are attracted to other male identified people in a romantic, erotic, and/or emotional sense.

GENDER: A social combination of identity, expression, and social elements related to masculinity and femininity. Includes gender identity (self-identification), gender expression (self-expression), social gender (social expectations), gender roles (socialized actions), and gender attribution (social perception).

GENDER BINARY: The cultural insistence of two diametrically opposed, traditionally recognized genders - male and female; 2) The idea that there are only two genders: male and female. May include a sensed requirement that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or.

GENDER DYSPHORIA: From Boston Children's Hospital: Gender dysphoria occurs when there is a conflict between the sex you were assigned at birth and the gender with which you identify. This can create significant distress and can make you feel uncomfortable in your body. People with gender dysphoria may want to change the way that they express their gender.

GENDER EXPRESSION: How one chooses to express one's gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, body characteristics, etc. Gender

expression may change over time and from day to day, and may or may not conform to an individual's gender identity.

GENDER IDENTITY: An individual's internal sense of being male, female, both, neither, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

GENDER NON-CONFORMING: Gender expression or identity that is outside or beyond a specific culture or society's gender expectations; 2) A term used to refer to individuals or communities who may not identify as transgender, but who do not conform to traditional gender norms. May be used in tandem with other identities.

GENDER ROLE: The behaviors, attitudes, values, beliefs etc. that a cultural group considers appropriate for males and females on the basis of their biological sex.

GENDER QUEER: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity is outside of, not included within, or beyond the binary of female and male; 2) Gender non-conformity through expression, behavior, social roles, and/or identity.

GENDER VARIANT: People whose gender identity and/or expressions are different from the societal norms; 2) Broad term used to describe or denote people who are outside or beyond culturally expected or required identities or expressions.

HETERONORMATIVITY: Lifestyle norm that insists that people fall into distinct genders (male and female), and naturalizes heterosexual coupling as the norm.

HETEROSEXISM: Prejudice against individuals and groups who display non-heterosexual behaviors or identities, combined with the majority power to impose such a prejudice.

Pastoral Note: note the inclusion of the concept of "majority power" in this definition.

INTERSEX: One who is born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, and/or an internal reproductive system that is not considered “standard” or normative for either the male or female sex.

MTF or M2F (Male-to-Female): Term used to identify a person who was designated a male sex at birth and currently identifies as female, lives as a woman, or identifies as feminine. This includes a broad range of experiences, from those who identify as women or female to those who identify as transsexual, transgender women, transwomen, male women, new women, or as MTF as their gender identity. Some reject this terminology, arguing that they have always been female where others feel that such language reinforces an either/or gender system. Some individuals prefer the term FTF (female-to-female) to underscore the fact that though they were assigned male at birth, they never had a masculine gender identity.

NON-BINARY: Describes a gender identity that is neither female nor male; 2) Gender identities that are outside of or beyond two traditional concepts of male or female.

PANSEXUAL: ... 2) A sexual orientation signifying a person who has potential emotional, physical, and/or sexual attraction to any sex, gender identity or gender expression....

PASSING: The ability to present oneself as their chosen gender identity rather than one’s assigned gender; 2) Being normatively accepted as one’s promoted identity, as part of specific cultural expectations; 3) An individual’s desire or ability to be perceived as a member of a particular gender, race, or cultural group.

POLYAMORY: Refers to having romantic, emotional, and/or sexual relationships with multiple partners and can include: open relationships, polyfidelity (which involves multiple romantic relationships with sexual contact restricted to those), and sub-relationships (which denote distinguishing between a “primary” relationship or relationships and various “secondary” relationships).

RAPID ONSET GENDER DYSPHORIA (ROGD) : From Medical News Today: a sudden onset of gender dysphoria in adolescents or young adults who did not display signs of gender dysphoria in childhood. It hypothesized that ROGD might occur due to social influence from peer groups and social media use in combination with limited coping mechanisms to deal with strong or negative emotions. This term is not deemed “scientific” and many organizations oppose the term and studies that contributed to the term.

Pastoral Note: Progressive organizations typically deny this exists and conservative organizations normally use this term to describe the astronomical rise in suddenly identified gender dysphoria that is even more common amongst teenage girls.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: An individual’s physical and/or emotional attraction to and desire to sexually or emotionally partner with specific genders and/or sexes. e.g., homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, asexual.

SUICIDE ULTIMATIM: From Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied*: This is a common counseling tactic with little scientific support, but many will say “would you rather have a dead son, or a living daughter.” “Transitioning is taught as the only option to save someone’s life. This isn’t psychological or ethically responsible.”

*TRANS** : Umbrella term, originated from Transgender (see below). Used to denote the increasingly wide spectrum of identities within the gender variant spectrum. The asterisk is representative of the widest notation of possible trans* identities. Aimed at promoting unification among gender variant communities by placing focus on gender transgression over specific identity labels, genders, or bodies.

TRANS MAN: From Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*: A biological female who identifies as a male.

TRANS WOMAN: From Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*: A biological male who identifies as a female.

TRANSPHOBIA: The fear, hatred, or intolerance of people who identify or are perceived as transgender; 2) Fear and hatred of all those individuals who transgress, violate or blur the dominant gender categories in a given society.

Parent Equip: Parents Discussing God's Design for Sexuality with Kids and Students

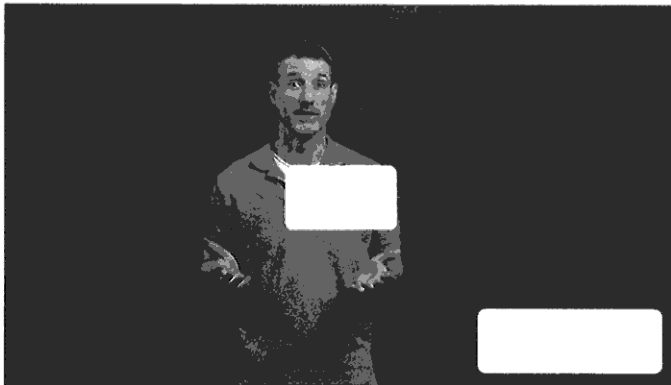
BY BRAD HAMBRICK | OCT 30, 2019 | CHURCH RESOURCE | 0 COMMENTS



This video was created as part of the The Summit Church's efforts to equip parents to be the primary disciplers of their children. We hope it is useful for the equipping of many parents. A printable PDF of the transcript can be found [here](#). The script for this video is also included below. There resources referenced at the end of the video are:

- [#ManTrip6: Reflections on a Smoky Mountain Adventure](#) (talking about sex in elementary years)
- [The Pre-Sex Talks with Adolescents](#)

- **Talking to My Boys after the Transgender Talk at Their Public School**
- **Parent Equip: Talking to Your Children about Purity** (with Pastor J.D. Greear)
- **Do Ask, Do Tell, Let's Talk: Why and How Christians Should Have Gay Friends** by Brad Hambrick



Let's start by admitting that this discussion is both uncomfortable and necessary. These are not conversations that parents look forward to. It feels like removing some of the sweet innocence from our children.

But the reality is, if we do not teach our children about sexuality, someone else will. Silence does not preserve innocence. The world is happy to fill our silence. Silence surrenders the opportunity to educate our child's innocence into maturity to our child's friends, teachers, and the internet.

Before we consider what to say, let's start with five guiding principles:

First, you want to talk earlier enough that you are sure you are the first to talk. It is better to have these conversations pro-actively, so you have the initial conversation describing things accurately. The alternative is to wait until crude language from peers or exposure to sexually explicit material results in the first parent-child conversation being corrective. You don't want early conversations about sexuality to be prompted by a guilt-provoking event.

Second, in any uncomfortable conversation with children, tone and body language say as much as our words. Be conversational. Don't use big words. Have a relaxed smile. Kids interpret awkward conversations as if they've done something wrong. We don't want our discomfort speaking to begin an association between guilt and sexuality.

Third, when we talk to our children, we need to be thinking about what helps them navigate *their* social world, not all the theological, political, and social debates we are

facing as adults. If we talk above what our children need to understand, our children learn that they don't want to talk to their parents about sexuality.

When we talk to our children about sex and sexuality, we need to be thinking about what helps them navigate their social world, not all the debates we are facing as adults.

[CLICK TO TWEET](#)

An example of talking to your children to help them navigate their social world might sound like this with your older elementary school student: [Since I have sons, I'll role play talking to a boy.]

"Hey, bud. I want to give you a quick heads up on something your friends may begin talking about at school. You're at that age where kids start to understand more about the differences between boys and girls. They'll start learning the name for different body parts. You know the names for your body parts, but it's probably good to learn the names for girls. Your friends may ask you, 'Do you have a vagina?' or 'Are you a virgin?' If you don't know what they're asking, you'll feel embarrassed. If you guess wrong, they'll give you a hard time and you'll be more embarrassed. Let's talk about the names for body parts. [Discussion].

God made boys and girls differently. Both are good. If you hear somebody using names for body parts that seem crude, don't use those. Even if you still think girls are weird (remember, they think you're weird too), we always want to treat girls with honor. It's okay if you still think girls have cooties. That will change. But no rush. The main thing I want you to know right now is that if you hear something that confuses you or just have questions, you can ask me. Any questions? [Pause] Great, go back to playing."

Fourth, the "win" in a conversation about sexuality is not primarily education but openness to future conversations. The most important conversations are not the ones we initiate as parents, but the ones our son or daughter feels comfortable initiating because we broke the ice in a way that made the subject approachable.

As parents talking to our children, the "win" in a conversation about sexuality is not primarily education but openness to future conversations.

Fifth, if you have multiple children you will likely talk to the younger siblings at an earlier age than the older ones. You don't want to trust your oldest child to be the "translator" of information. Kids are wonderful, but they say the darnedest things; not always accurate, but never in doubt. Initial conversations about sexuality should not be left to a game of adolescent grape vine as one sibling talks to another.

With those things in mind, let's talk about what to say. I will mention six conversations. We will move from early conversations to later ones. You can choose when to have these conversations based on the "you want to talk first" principle and your child's social setting.

First, teach your children appropriate names for their body parts. Let them know which ones are private; meaning no one else should see them or touch them. Let them know if someone does ask to see or touch those parts, it's okay for them to say "no" even if that person is an adult and that they should tell you so you can make sure they are safe.

Second, teach your children appropriate names for the opposite gender's body parts. Begin this conversation before peer groups begin using slang or crude language to name these parts. Use this as an opportunity to reinforce the importance of treating people with honor, which includes how we talk about them.

Third, avoid teasing your children about infatuation. Periodically mention this as a natural change that will happen and something you're available to talk about when it does.

Fourth, teach your children about common experiences related to sexuality before they are likely to experience them – first menstrual cycle or having a wet dream. These are opportunities to win trust with your child as they mature and come to know you as someone with the foresight to prepare them for things they didn't know to ask about. When a young person's body does new things, it can be unsettling. A little advanced warning from someone they can trust to talk about is more comforting to them than it is uncomfortable to you.

Fifth, talk about sex as a good gift from God given to couples for marriage. Here is an imperfect (although hopefully helpful) metaphor, sex is like driving. It is good at the right time. It is not good if engaged in too soon. No one wants 12-year olds driving cars on the interstate; not even 12 year olds. That doesn't mean it's bad for 12-year olds to like the idea of driving. It is loving to the 12 year old and every other driver on the road for them to wait.

When talking about the importance of waiting, emphasize honor more than fear-based motivations. It is appropriate to talk about STD's and the implications of teenage pregnancy. But, especially in early conversations about sex, the focus should be on honoring God's design for sex (which involves waiting until marriage) and honoring other people.

Sixth, talk about common subjects that will emerge in their social spheres: either peer groups or school discussions. These subjects include contraception, pornography, homosexuality, and transgenderism. Remember your goal in these conversations is to invite future conversations and help your child navigate their social world. Unless your child is nearing 18 they don't need to understand the role of sexuality on policy making in Washington DC. Political conversations will likely transform you into Charlie Brown's teacher... "Wa-Wa-Wa."

The questions your child is likely more interested in, because it has more ramifications for their day-to-day life, are, "What do I do if someone gives me a condom or shows me nude pictures on their phone? How do I respond if someone starts texting me about sex?" As much as you give them a protocol of response (i.e., talk to us as your parents), this is a prime opportunity to have a conversation (not monologue) about how easy it is for a bad situation to snowball because we're afraid we'll get in trouble so we start to keep a secret. The experience of fear and the power of a secret is what your son or daughter is going to feel in that moment. That's what they have to navigate to make wise choices. So let that be your primary focus.

Other questions include, "How do I respond if one of my friends says they're gay? What should I do if one of my classmates is getting picked on for dressing in the opposite gender's clothes?" These conversations are pivotal points of discipleship in our day. Many young people leave the faith because they are told a friend they trust is a "dangerous person" because their friend gay or confused about their gender.

The day and age when we can avoid these conversations and pretend our children can avoid these conversations is over. We are naïve and reveal ourselves to be out-of-touch to our children's world if this is our approach. We need to be able to teach our children how to compassionately and authentically engage with people whose lifestyle doesn't adhere to our beliefs.

We don't have to compromise our beliefs to be nice, to help someone who is being bullied, or to be compassionate towards someone who is confused. We need to help our children understand the difference between being nice to someone and allowing them to impose their beliefs on us. These are life skills that our children will need for the rest of their lives. We need to value the opportunity to have these conversations rather than dread the discomfort of them.

This is where we realize it is the conversations that are uncomfortable, which are the ones where essential life skills are developed. We realize that we may have to grow alongside our children and model how to engage things we don't understand while honoring our faith. As our children mature towards adulthood and engage with more real-life issues, this is what our relationship with them ought to look like.

I know we began this video by answering questions and ended it with raising questions. That is what parenting is like as we move from the pre-school years towards high school and college. In the early years, we teach our children "what" to think. In the latter years, we teach them "how" to think and begin to talk with them more as mentors than teachers. We've covered that span in this video.

That's why along with this video I've included several resources that I hope will be helpful to you in getting a head start on some of the more difficult parenting conversations about sexuality ahead of you. But remember, the "win" is the next conversation with your child; each conversation should leave the open door and welcoming to the next conversation.

Resources:

- **#ManTrip6: Reflections on a Smoky Mountain Adventure** (talking about sex in elementary years)
- **The Pre-Sex Talks with Adolescents**
- **Talking to My Boys after the Transgender Talk at Their Public School**
- **Parent Equip: Talking to Your Children about Purity**(with Pastor J.D. Greear)
- **Do Ask, Do Tell, Let's Talk: Why and How Christians Should Have Gay Friends** by Brad Hambrick

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Necessary Conversations About Sexuality and Gender

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My boys attend a local public school in North Carolina where legislation around transgender issues and public restrooms was a national issue in 2016. Their school ran a CNN Kids news program (<https://www.cnn.com/2016/05/09/studentnews/sn-content-tues/index.html>) on the transgender debate. They came home and said with confusion, "Did you know sometimes girls want to come into the boy's bathroom?" I asked how that came up, and they mentioned the transgender news story. I did a web search for the video transcript (<http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/160510/sn.01.html>).

This incident led me to think about how to have these kind of conversations with our kids. I came up with five principles and four key objectives.

Principle One: Don't over-react to a conversation prompt; your initial response to a conversation prompt signals to your child whether the conversation is safe or alarming.

Principle Two: Do research and get what information you can about the subject before engaging the larger discussion; it is better if your child doesn't feel like an "informant."

Here are a few preliminary thoughts I had going into the subsequent conversation.

Principle Three: When we speak to our children we need to discuss the things that help our children navigate their current social world.

My boys were 9 and 11 years old; 3rd and 5th grade. I wanted to keep in mind their social and cognitive development as we talked. This was not our first conversation (<http://bradhambrick.com/mantrip6/>) about sex and sexuality. If, as parents, we only talk about the subject of sex and ethics reactively, it will distort the message our children hear. Jesus will come across as a defensive guy. The duration of the conversation was about 20 minutes over dinner, a time when we often talk about things that happened at school.

Principle Four: Listen. The most important thing we offer in awkward conversations is comfortable, open-ended questions and silence.

With those things being said, there were four key objectives I had going into the conversation with my boys. I will share the fifth principle at the end.

1. I wanted to know what they think as much as teach them what I think.

The most important part of this conversation is what I learned from them, not what they learned from me. That's not to downplay my influence as a parent, but the most important information transferred was my awareness of how my boys were processing the information they received.

The biggest long-term impact I will have on my boys is shaping how they think as much as what they think. Conversations like these are times when I get a litmus test for how they respond to awkward-controversial subjects, how perceptive they are about moral dilemmas, the degree of impact authority figures (like teachers) have on them, and what kind of logic they use to support their beliefs.

2. I wanted them to be BOTH biblically informed AND personally compassionate.

I wanted my boys to be both thoroughly versed in God's original design and increasingly equipped to care for others in a broken world. My boys love biology, so we talked about how gender is ingrained in every cell of our body as either an XX (female) or XY (male) chromosome. They love to ask, "Whose nose do I have? Whose eyes do I have?" Tying the conversation to something they were familiar with and enjoy was an important way of making it less awkward.

We talked about gender being part of God's design (Genesis 1:27) and that God's design was good. I wanted them to know they should enjoy being boys and strive to grow into mature men who care for and lead their families well. I also wanted to communicate that it's okay if they think girls have cooties right now [attempt at humor], but they should always respect women and treat them with honor.

Don't over-react to a conversation prompt; your initial response to a conversation prompt signals to your child whether the conversation is safe or alarming.

We talked about how, because of the Fall (Genesis 3), we live in a broken world where many things don't work the way they're supposed to and everything falls apart. One result of this is that some people don't feel comfortable in their own bodies; some people feel fat even when they're very skinny, some people feel scared when there is no threat, and some people feel like they should be a boy when their body is a girl or vice versa.

I tried to make clear that it is important not to profile (<http://bradhambrick.com/conservative-christians-and-debates-over-public-restrooms/>) those who experience gender dysphoria as sexual predators. We talked about how it's not the person who is confused about their gender that would take advantage of this law. Instead, the concern is that people who want to abuse children would take advantage of these laws.

We emphasized that we should never make fun of someone who is suffering. We should never call people names that make them feel embarrassed or ashamed. Whenever we hear people doing these kinds of things to others, we step in and help the person who is being picked on. This was the primary application of what it meant to love God and love others (Matthew 22:37-40) well in their current social context.

We don't have to agree with someone or understand their experience to love them. We believe that everyone is made in the image of God and deserves our honor and respect. If they're hurting, we try to represent God's compassion. If they're sinning, we let them know of God's forgiveness through the gospel. If we're not sure, we listen and ask questions.

3. I wanted them to learn how to honor authorities with whom they disagree.

I want my boys to be well-versed in the art of disagreement – the ability to be skeptical or disagree while showing honor to the person with whom they disagree. I affirmed how they handled themselves in the classroom, listening respectfully and bringing their questions to my wife and me. Even when they were uncertain, they made wise choices about how to respond.

We talked about how there was a great deal of debate on this topic in our country, so that is why this was a topic discussed at school. We talked about the good values of those that want open bathrooms are standing for, that no one should be discriminated against for things they did not choose.

We talked about how one of the challenges of government is balancing personal freedom (i.e., choice of restroom) with the collective good (i.e., privacy and safety in public restrooms). I was surprised how much they were interested in and followed this point.

The main point here was that just because someone has a different view from us, it doesn't mean they're bad. It also doesn't mean we're bad if we disagree with them. It is important to know what you believe and why. It is important to be able to articulate and defend what you believe. It is equally important to listen well to those with whom you disagree and honor their leadership when God has placed them in that role.

4. I wanted them to be sympathetic to the reality that even good legislation can have unintended consequences.

Our conversation may have had as much to do with politics as sexuality. It is easy for kids (and adults) to begin to think that good rules would make a good world, that the problem with the world is that we just haven't figured out what the best rules should be. We talked about how often laws have unintended consequences.

We talked about why we don't need better rules as much as we need a Redeemer. Jesus wasn't just a teacher (although he was the best teacher). Jesus came as our Savior. He knew we needed a new heart, not just better thoughts.

At the end of the conversation, when my boys asked me, "So, what should be done about the bathroom thing?" my best answer was, "I don't know. I know that God's design of men and women is good. I know there is a lot of pain and brokenness in our world. I know I want to love well anyone God gives me the chance to befriend and that it's not mean to think about safety in private places like restrooms. But when it comes to this law and its possible unintended consequences, I'm not sure."

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Principle Five: Our children need to hear us say that sometimes the best answer is "I don't know" because they need to have the freedom and courage to say "I don't know" when they're uncertain. It also makes the things we are sure about seem more solid, if we are willing to admit our uncertainty on things that are less clear.

This was the gist of our conversation and the intentions for the various points of emphasis. I hope it's helpful for other families as you consider how to have similar conversations.

This blog post also appears in our Fall 2018 harvestusa magazine (<https://harvestusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HarvestUSA-Fall-2018-website.pdf>), along with other articles for parents and families.

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About The Author

Brad Hambrick serves as the Pastor of Counseling at The Summit Church in Durham, NC. He Also serves as Instructor of Biblical Counseling at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC, a council member of the Biblical Counseling Coalition, and has authored several books including 'Do Ask, Do Tell, Let's Talk: Why and How Christians Should Have Gay Friends' and 'God's Attributes: Rest for Life's Struggles.'

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*"Know that the LORD Himself is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves..."*
-Psalm 100:3

Preamble

Evangelical Christians at the dawn of the twenty-first century find themselves living in a period of historic transition. As Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian, it has embarked upon a massive revision of what it means to be a human being. By and large the spirit of our age no longer discerns or delights in the beauty of God's design for human life. Many deny that God created human beings for his glory, and that his good purposes for us include our personal and physical design as male and female. It is common to think that human identity as male and female is not part of God's beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an individual's autonomous preferences. The pathway to full and lasting joy through God's good design for his creatures is thus replaced by the path of shortsighted alternatives that, sooner or later, ruin human life and dishonor God.

This secular spirit of our age presents a great challenge to the Christian church. Will the church of the Lord Jesus Christ lose her biblical conviction, clarity, and courage, and blend into the spirit of the age? Or will she hold fast to the word of life, draw courage from Jesus, and unashamedly proclaim his way as the way of life? Will she maintain her clear, counter-cultural witness to a world that seems bent on ruin?

We are persuaded that faithfulness in our generation means declaring once again the true story of the world and of our place in it—particularly as male and female. Christian Scripture teaches that there is but one God who alone is Creator and Lord of all. To him alone, every person owes glad-hearted thanksgiving, heart-felt praise, and total allegiance. This is the path not only of glorifying God, but of knowing ourselves. To forget our Creator is to forget who we are, for he made us for himself. And we cannot know ourselves truly without truly knowing him who made us. We did not make ourselves. We are not our own. Our true identity, as male and female persons, is given by God. It is not only foolish, but hopeless, to try to make ourselves what God did not create us to be.

We believe that God's design for his creation and his way of salvation serve to bring him the greatest glory and bring us the greatest good. God's good plan provides us with the greatest freedom. Jesus said he came that we might have life and have it in overflowing measure. He is for us and not against us. Therefore, in the hope of serving Christ's church and witnessing publicly to the good purposes of God for human sexuality revealed in Christian Scripture, we offer the following affirmations and denials.

Article 1

WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church.

WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.

Article 2

WE AFFIRM that God's revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage.

WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.

Article 3

WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female.

WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

Article 4

WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God's original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing.

WE DENY that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.

Article 5

WE AFFIRM that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God's design for self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.

Article 6

WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about "eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb." With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.

WE DENY that ambiguities related to a person's biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ.

Article 7

WE AFFIRM that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God's holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture.

WE DENY that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God's holy purposes in creation and redemption.

Article 8

WE AFFIRM that people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God through faith in Jesus Christ, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life.

WE DENY that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God's original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.

Article 9

WE AFFIRM that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality— a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality.

WE DENY that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behavior.

Article 10

WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

WE DENY that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

Article 11

WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female.

WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God's design of his image-bearers as male and female.

Article 12

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.

Article 13

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender self-conceptions and by divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ sanctions self-conceptions that are at odds with God's revealed will.

Article 14

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ's death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Savior, Lord, and supreme treasure.

WE DENY that the Lord's arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.