

Male and Female. He made them.

Transgenderism and the Gospel

Genesis 1:27 (ESV)

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

Sermon Intro

Russell Moore is president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, the moral and public policy agency of the nation's largest Protestant denomination. He was, not too long ago, the Dean of the School of Theology and Senior Vice-President for Academic Administration at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Every year at the conclusion of Christian ethics class at Southern Seminary, Dr. Moore would give his students a final ethical situation to consider for their final examination. They were graded not on their conclusion, but on how they arrived there. Here is a recent exam ethical dilemma he gave to his students:

This question takes place sometime in the future, in your ministry.

Joan is a fifty year-old woman who has been visiting your church for a little over a year. She sits on the third row from the back, and usually exits during the closing hymn, often with tears in her eyes. Joan approaches you after the service on Sunday to tell you that she wants to follow Jesus as her Lord.

You ask Joan a series of diagnostic questions about her faith, and it is clear she understands the gospel. She still seems distressed though. When you ask if she's repented of her sin, she starts to cry and grit her teeth.

"I don't know," she says. "I don't know how...I don't know where to start...Can I meet with you privately?"

You, Joan, and a godly Titus 2-type women's ministry leader in your church meet in your office right away, and Joan tells you her story.

Joan says she may have repented for her sin in the past but she still feels like she needs to be forgiven.

She wasn't born Joan. She was born John. From early on in John's life, though, he felt as though he was "a woman trapped in a man's body." Joan says, "I don't mean to repeat that old shopworn cliché, but it really is what I felt like."

Joan tells you that when she was twenty she began the process of "transitioning" from life as a man to life as a woman. She underwent extensive hormone therapy, followed by extensive plastic surgery-including so-called "gender reassignment surgery." She has lived for the past thirty years-physically and socially-as a woman.

"I want to do whatever it takes to follow Jesus," Joan tells you. "I want to repent...I just, I don't know how to do it."

"I am surgically now a woman. I've taken hormones that give me the appearance and physical makeup of a woman," she says. "Even if I were to put on a suit and tie right now, I'd just look like a woman with a suit and tie. Not to mention the fact that, well, I am physically...a woman."

"To complicate matters further," Joan says through tears, "I adopted my daughter, Clarissa, when she was eight months old and she's ten years old now. She doesn't know about my past life as...as a man. She just knows me as her Mom."

"I know the sex change surgery was wrong. I know that my life is twisted. I'm willing to do whatever Jesus would have me to do to make it right," she says. "But what would Jesus have me to do?"

Joan asks you, "Am I too messed up to repent and be saved? If not, what does it mean for me to repent and live my life as a follower of Jesus? What is right for me to do?"

Show me, step-by-step, what you would say to Joan. Show me what you would tell her to do, short-term and long-term, and show me why in terms of a Christian ethic. Use Scripture, Christian theology, and wisdom to demonstrate not just your final decisions, but how you arrived at them.

You may use any resource that would be available to you in a real life pastoral situation. This includes Holy Scripture, books, articles, and the seeking of outside counsel from others.

Furthermore, show me how you would lead the rest of your congregation to think through and act in this situation with the mind of Christ.

10 years ago this may have seemed far fetched...genderless birth certificate

Introduction to Transgenderism

- don't need a doctor, physician, psychologist, psychiatrist

- In regards to this issue, there is a need for intelligent, compassionate, Biblically-informed interaction; we are dealing with men and women, created in God's image, who need godly men and women to share the gospel with them, and should they profess faith, walk with them through their sanctification.
- This message is a starting point with that goal in mind
- *Transgender* by Vaughn Roberts
- What is transgender?
 - about how someone feels inside + what they think about those feelings
 - not sexuality or sexual orientation
 - their feelings about who they are do not align with their biological sex
- Transgender covers a wide range of experiences
 - some feel they are opposite the gender they were assigned at birth
 - some feel they are both male and female
 - some feel they are neither and perhaps are some other gender (many genders are recognized now)
- for majority of children who feel these emotions strongly, the feelings disappear
- This sense of disharmony = gender dysphoria
- There are a variety of different feelings and, as with all things that involve humans, there are a variety of personal different responses to these feelings → some live within norms, some cross dress, some ask people to change what they are called, some undergo treatment with hormones or surgery
- People experience gender dysphoria when there is a marked incongruence between ones' experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender, of at least 6 months duration → little agreement on what causes this
- gender dysphoria is not a simple choice

Responding to Transgenderism

There are two equally inappropriate responses to transgenderism:

1. Unquestioning "YES"
 - a. Immediate affirmation. "That's great! Just be yourself!"
2. Unrestrained "Yuk"
 - a. disgust is usually a knee-jerk reaction, an emotional response without thinking things through

Neither of these responses is appropriate. As stated, we are looking for a compassionate, Biblically-informed response that does not retreat from our convictions but does not lack grace!

Let us look to the Bible, and specifically, let us look to the center of the Bible, and consider transgenderism in light of the gospel.

Transgenderism and the Gospel

One of the simple, straight-forward ways of articulating the gospel is arrived at using the following four words: **Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration**

GOD MAN CHRIST

CREATION-Genesis 1:27

- **Genesis 1:27 (ESV)** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
- We were created by an all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving God
- We were created as men and as women - **Psalms 139:13-16 (ESV)** - *intentional and meticulous so*
 For you formed my inward parts;
 you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
 Wonderful are your works;
 my soul knows it very well.
 My frame was not hidden from you,
 when I was being made in secret,
 intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
 Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
 in your book were written, every one of them,
 the days that were formed for me,
 when as yet there was none of them.

Vance
Roberts
↳ TRANSGENDER

- Human flourishing is not achieved through trying to be who we're not made to be. "True freedom, according to Scripture, is found not in asserting our radical independence and trying to be who we're not made to be. True freedom is found in embracing and being who we are."
- If we were created by chance, than who we are-the structure of our body, the formulation of our DNA- is not inherently valuable and there is no problem with changing our identity. If, however, we were designed with purpose and intentionality, who we are, including our DNA and body structure, is not something we should mess with. That is, we are the work of a divine artist and our identity is not fluid and should not be altered – Note difference btw RESTORE and ALTER
- Our identity is given to us by our wise, loving, powerful creator who has made us in his image
- God has not just created bodies. Neither has he just created us as souls. We are embodied souls. Furthermore, we are sexual embodied souls. We are created as men and women; that is who we are. And that is important!
- Nothing points to the importance of our manhood and womanhood like the connection the Bible makes between our biological sex and the gospel in **Ephesians 5:31-32 (ESV)** "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.
- The union of man and woman paints to God's desired union with us
- **Submission to our Creator means accepting our bodies and our biological sex as good gifts. In Matthew 19:4 Jesus affirms this position.**
 - Reminder: There are few rigid rules about what it means to be man/woman. Pastor Nathanael shared the following quote which addresses just that idea: "there are fundamental differences between men and women, but there are also many differences between men and men, and women and women. We're not to push the Bible beyond where it goes. But the basic message of creation is this: each person's biologically-determined sex is a good gift of God's creation. We should accept it and live within it."

Tools

FALL- Genesis 3

- We read of sin's entrance into the human race: **Genesis 3:6-7 (ESV)** So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.
 - In taking the fruit, ^{the first humans said} humanity said, "I will determine right and wrong and I will do as I please. I will be God."
 - This is sin and it has infected and affected us all through Adam
 - As a result of sin, on many different levels, we as humans are broken
1. Disordered bodies
 - 1 % born with conditions in which their chromosomes and/or their anatomy does not fit what was typical for men and women
 - intersex-ambiguous at birth
 2. Disordered minds
 - gender dysphoria is feeling/thinking one is alienated from their body
 - gender dysphoria not necessarily because of personal sin
 - people may not be blamable for their struggles and temptations, but people are responsible for response
 3. Disordered hearts
 - **Romans 1:21-25 (ESV)** For 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. ... Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.
 - We have hearts that lust after that which is contrary to God; we want to sin, our desires are disordered.

- “We show our rebellion against God in a particularly obvious way when we refuse to go along with the way in which he has made the world, such as in the division of the sexes.”

The first two aspects of the gospel, creation and the fall, help us to think properly-biblically-about the issue of transgenderism and those who struggle with this. This gives us clarity to see the issue through the lens of man’s rebellion against God and the brokenness that we all live in as a result. Vaughn Roberts, again, summarizes these first two facets of the gospel and how they apply to transgenderism in a helpful manner:

“So as we think about those who struggle with transgender issues (or as we wrestle with them ourselves) we will see them differently as we look at them with the biblical perspectives of creation and fall in our minds. We will never give in to a “yuk” reaction, because they are beautiful and precious creatures made in God’s image. But neither will we give way to the false notion that “they were made that way”. We are created but fallen. We are made but marred. And those who experience gender dysphoria, along with all of us, are both victims of the fall, and therefore to be sympathised with, and also, to some degree, sinners with disordered hearts who need to be both forgiven and rescued.”

The gospel doesn't end with the fall, with broken and disordered people alienated from their creator

REDEMPTION

- Sin has ruined things, in fact, it has ruined everything including us; we need to be rescued! Sin has broken us; we need to be fixed.
- Adam, in wanting to become God, lead us all into a misery of brokenness and dis-orderedness. But Jesus, who was God, wanted to become human in order that he might save us. **Philippians 2:5-8 (ESV)** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- Jesus lived a perfectly obedient life which resulted in his death on the cross where he died for sinful humanity

- God gave us an identity at creation which we marred and mangled; however, we find in Christ a new identity that is offered to all equally - **Galatians 3:26-28 (ESV)** for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
- As those who have been adopted by God, we are no longer under slavery to sin...it does not have dominion over us. We have been given new hearts with new desires and are called to struggle against that which is contrary to God
- This is what we needed. This is how we were rescued. This is what we offer to those who need rescue. We offer Christ who is received when we trust ourselves to him and his work and treasure him above all else.
- For those struggling with gender dysphoria, to those who have been living out their transgenderism, to those considering going down that road, we offer the same thing that was offered to us: Jesus Christ and him crucified, giving a reason for the hope within us, with gentleness and respect. And here is the hope we have:

Restoration

- **Philippians 3:20-21 (ESV)** But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.
- **1 John 3:1-3 (ESV)** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

APPLICATION

From *Transgender*:

1. How should we respond personally?
2. How should a church respond?
3. How should a parent respond?
4. How should a friend respond?
5. How should an acquaintance respond?
6. How do we respond to our culture?

Owen Strachan in an article titled "Gender Dysphoria in Biblical Perspective":

When people feel like they have the "gender identity" of the opposite sex but not the body, what kind of counsel do we provide them?¹²¹

Or, to sharpen the question: does the church of Jesus Christ have anything unique, anything distinctive, anything worth saying, in the modern conversation over gender dysphoria? Are we to sit quietly in the corner as this conversation transpires, offering little but affirmation?

For my part, I believe that the church has something to say on this matter. More than this, we have the wisdom our world desperately needs but utterly lacks. We are staked upon Scripture, the very power of God unto salvation, and Scripture norms our understanding of all of life. The Bible does not merely give us the discrete spiritual formula by which we may be saved. The Bible sets humanity in proper light. It tells us who made us, what we were made for, and how we are to live as enchanted but fallen creatures under the rule of God. This has great import for the conversation surrounding gender dysphoria, gender identity, and transgenderism. My view is not merely that the church has some helpful words on these convulsive matters, but that the church has the *fundamental* and *most important* testimony to offer here.

↳ WE MUST RESPOND

How should a church respond?

1. If a transgender man or woman, or someone with gender dysphoria, walks through that door looking for help, I pray that God-by his Spirit-would help us to genuinely love them because we know that ultimately, the only help for any soul is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ of which we are ambassadors.
2. If there is a Christian who struggles ^{with} gender dysphoria, or there is a transgender man or woman who comes to faith in Christ, trusting in him and his work for their rescue, I pray that we will commit in genuine love to walk with them as they endeavour to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel.

Our response is neither an unquestioning "YES" nor is it an unrestrained "YUK" ... our response is to act in a way that corresponds with love and speak in a way that corresponds with "repent and believe!"