



Lesson 8 – A Man Trapped in a Woman’s Body?

The Transgender Question

The statement “I am a man trapped in a woman’s body” is a statement we have come to hear so often we run the danger of forgetting how absurd it is. But what would have been seen as ridiculous fifty years ago is no laughing matter. In fact, to deny this “truth” to someone is now seen by many as not only unkind, but outright violence and a denial of their existence. Perhaps you’ve discovered extreme anger and vitriol over the seemingly innocent opinion that men are men and women are women. How in the world did this happen, what does Scripture say, and how should believers respond?

Why do you think our culture has shifted so quickly on these issues?

How should believers respond to the crazy world in which we find ourselves living?

In this lesson, we will seek to do two things. First, we want to both unpack what it is that the transgender movement is really thinking and what the Bible says in response. Secondly, we want to provide help for believers trying to navigate a world gone mad. Some of these thoughts will overlap with a future lesson specifically on gay marriage, but the main focus of this lesson will be on the question of transgenderism and why some people find themselves rebelling against the very sex/gender¹ God created them.

Our Identity

If we are going to answer this question, we must dive into the whole question of “identity.” In this lesson, we’ll start with some observations about the modern obsession with identity, and then we’ll see what God’s Word has to say about our identity in creation and what our identity is once we are saved and are “in Christ.”

The Quest for Identity

The modern, western way of understanding meaning has centered on the question of identity: who am I? If I want to have a happy and fulfilled life, the key to unlocking this is to know “who I really am.” People will talk about “discovering themselves” or going on long trips to “figure out who they really are.” Part of

¹ As mentioned in a previous lesson, it is popular now to make a distinction between sex and gender, where sex is a biological category and gender is a psychological category. This study does not see a distinction between these categories, and the two words will basically be used interchangeably.

this focus it the result of a long line of thinkers whose ideas slowly yet surely seeped into the public thinking.² Part of this is the blessing and the curse of the great wealth and leisure we now have (agrarian farmers living in the Judean desert spent less time pondering who they really were and more time trying not to starve to death). But regardless of the reason, this is the question on everyone's mind, and so it is a question which we must seek to answer from God's Word. "What determines our identity?"

Can you think of ways which this idea that a person must "find themselves" shows up in our culture's way of thinking?

Sadly, most people have decided to try to find their identity in whatever they feel or think. Rather than looking to God and asking Him what He thinks of us, people buy into the lie that whatever feels right is right. This is dangerous because our identity cannot be subjective – what seems true to us. Rather it must be objective – what reality says that it is. And reality is not defined by our perspective, but by God's.

What is the danger of people thinking that they determine what their identity is?

The result of this way of thinking is that people have come to believe whatever someone decides is true about themselves must be true. If a man wishes to be a woman, he must actually be a woman. If a woman finds that she would really much rather be a man, she must actually be a man. And once we've decided they are right about who they are, we must also respect that identity or risk being unkind or worse yet driving them to despair, depression and suicide. But we can't look to our own feelings to determine who we are. We must look to God's Word.

Why do you think it is that only certain "identities" are welcomed? Why can people not identify as someone of a different race, for example?

Our Identity in Creation

When people suggest that they are "a man trapped in a woman's body" or "a woman trapped in a man's body," they are ultimately arguing that God made them wrong. God may have given them a male body or a female body, but they feel so strongly that they are the opposite gender that their body must have been a mistake. In answer, the Bible teaches 1) God is our Creator 2) God was personally involved in the Creation of every person 3) Our differences are the result of our Creator, not an accident.

1. God is our Creator – Matter matters.

One of the things we must push back against is the idea that matter doesn't matter. God created matter, He created it good, and when we argue that our bodies are "wrong" we are questioning our Creator (Genesis 1:31). Although creation has been damaged by the fall, the goodness of what God made remains (1 Timothy 4:3-4). When God made us, He didn't make souls that are trapped

² For a detailed explanation of how this came to be, see Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution*. Trueman has written a shorter account of these issues in the book *Strange New World*.

in arbitrary prisons we call “bodies,” rather He made us with bodies, and we will one day get new, resurrection bodies that we will take into eternity (1 Corinthians 15:42-44; 1 Corinthians 6:13-14).
Why do you think many Christians argue that the body doesn’t really matter?

2. God was personally involved in your creation – nothing about you is random.

Not only has God created bodies, He has created you! Psalm 139 makes it very clear, God was personally involved with the creation of David in the womb (Psalm 139:13-16). These verses clearly teach that even before birth, God was intimately involved in the development of a baby.

Opponents might argue that now that we understand genetics, we don’t need to take David’s simplistic and poetic description of God’s understanding of us. What is wrong with this line of reasoning?

Although we may understand better *how* it is that God causes life to be formed in the womb, that should not take away from the fact that God is the one doing it. God works through miracles, doing things that break the laws of nature, but God also works through providence, using the laws of nature.

How will viewing God as personally concerned with me at every stage of my development impact how I think about myself?

3. God made us different – differences are not accidents.

When dealing with the squabbling Corinthians, Paul asked a very convicting question: “Who maketh thee to differ from *one another*?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). The answer is obvious: God does. Paul is talking specifically about gifts and abilities in the church, but his principle can be applied more broadly. God gave one person curly hair and another person straight hair. He gave one person freckles and another person no freckles. He picked out hair color, dispositions, gifts, personalities. And God made male and female. God made us different on purpose and He didn’t make mistakes.

What about genetic conditions, especially those that result in ambiguity over one’s sex?

Now, we need to be honest at this point that genetically speaking, there are such things as “accidents.” Genetic abnormalities happen, and some conditions even complicate the question of whether someone is male or female. The fall has damaged everything, even our bodies. But two things need to be kept in mind:

- 1) We should not argue from the results of the fall back to what the creational design should be. In other words, the existence of people with biological challenges does not give us the right to question the gender of people without such ambiguities.
- 2) We learn from John 9:1-3 that disabilities are an opportunity for God’s glory to be displayed. While this won’t always be through a miraculous healing as in John 9, those who have been affected by the fall on a genetic level can live for God’s glory in unique ways.

Our Identity in Christ

Is there such a thing as a “gay Christian?” Believe it or not, some Christians say yes, *including those who believe that the Bible says homosexuality is wrong*. One such annual conference entitled “Revoice” holds to the biblical position that marriage is between a man and a woman, and “any inward cultivation or

outward expression of sexual desire apart from the one-flesh bond between husband and wife is out of accord with God’s creational intent, and therefore against his good and gracious will.” So far so good. But then they discuss the possibility of a “gay Christian” later on and say, “Whether individuals choose “gay” or “same-sex-attracted” to describe their orientation and experience is a matter of wisdom and liberty, and should not divide believers who otherwise share a commitment to historic Christian teaching about marriage and sexuality.”³

What is your reaction to the above statements? What problems do you see in this way of thinking?

Can you think of any biblical passages that would argue against this?

My feelings don’t determine my identity, and my broken desires don’t determine my identity. No one is a “gay Christian” any more than anyone is an “adulterous Christian” or a “lying Christian.” Scripture teaches that when we get saved, we become new people (2 Corinthians 5:17) and we are cleansed from what used to define us (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Like a recurring drumbeat, we read over and over again in Ephesians 1:3-14 that all that we have and all that we are is now defined by the fact that we are “in Christ.” If you were to ask Paul, “Who are you?” it’s very likely his response would be “I am in Christ.” Jesus saves us and reshapes us and gives us a new identity.

How might other Christians be tempted to define themselves according to their sin, rather than according to their new position in Christ?

Transgenderism in many takes the faults within all of us and blows them up to absurd proportions. The desire to master one’s own destiny, the tendency to listen to our emotions, a failure to understand the change that happened when we were born again. These problems aren’t limited to those struggling with homosexual desires or a desire to be the opposite gender. But when you take all of those problems and crank them up, the result is a confusing world where we are expected to say that men are women and women are men. So how should Christians respond in such a culture?

Our Response

So far, we have looked at what the Bible has to say about the question of transgenderism. On one level, probably none of this is particularly shocking for most of the people going through this study. Most likely you are thinking, “Yeah, I know this is wrong. But what do I do about it when I start bumping into people who think differently?” To answer this question, we will look at two big picture issues: spiritual warfare and compassion. Then we will discuss what to do when this issue hits the workplace and the home.

Transgenderism and Spiritual Warfare

³ <https://revoice.us/about/our-beliefs/statements-of-conviction/statement-on-sexual-ethics-and-christian-obedience/>

As we think through issues that show up regularly on national news, we should be on the lookout for the trademark of our ancient foe. Satan hates what God has created, and he will try to distort and upend it any way he can. As we see a culture pushing further and further away from God's truth, we should be reminded that Satan is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). Our battle is not against people, but against "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

How can recognizing Satan's role in this cultural battle help Christians?

Transgenderism and Compassion

One of the toughest things for many Christians is the charge from the world that to deny someone the gender that they claim is cruel and unkind. Everyone wants to be nice (or at least, most people do). The problem is that being nice to someone is not always what is best for them. Proverbs reminds us that "faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Proverbs 27:6; cf Psalm 141:5) and that rebuke is good and necessary (Proverbs 9:8). It isn't loving or kind to let someone eating poison go on eating poison because they think it makes them happy. Transgenderism is a denial of reality, and it is never compassionate to side with someone against reality. While we should be kind, we must "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

What would it look like to have compassion on someone who is questioning God's good plan for their life?

How can we both kindly and truthfully say what needs to be said in our increasingly antagonistic culture?

Transgenderism and Society

So how should believers interact with the world around them? What does it look like to be in a culture that has rejected God's Word and to exist as lights and as salt? This is an issue which is becoming a bigger and bigger deal, and as things in our world continue to shift away from a bible centered way of thinking about life these questions will only become more urgent.

How should believers navigate the issue of "statements of inclusivity" they might be required to sign? What issues would be ones where Christians could go along, and at what point should believers draw a line and suffer the consequences?

How should believers react to the issue of pronouns? Should a Christian defer to use someone else's pronouns if they don't match their gender? Why or why not?

Should a Christian volunteer their pronouns in social media, email signature, or other places? What if their work requires it?

There may not be one clearly right answer to every situation that someone faces, but as a rule we want to make sure we stand for truth in a world that is caving quickly. The world says it is loving to agree with someone on whatever they decide their identity is, but the Bible reminds us that it is never loving to play along with delusions that are destroying people. And we must realize that in doing so we might be required to pay a heavy price for our faithfulness to God's Word.

Transgenderism and Home

No one wants to imagine that a child or grandchild would ever fall prey to the idea that they should actually be a different gender, but this can and does happen. How should someone respond in such a situation? The answer to that question will look differently depending on whether we are talking about someone still living in the home under parents rules, or whether we are talking about someone who has moved out and is living on their own.

How should someone respond to a child or grandchild who is confused and seeking answers on this topic? How would you summarize the teaching given in the first half of this lesson?

But what about grown children? What about those awkward family reunions or holidays at which a “transitioning” child, sibling, parent, or extended family member is present? In situations like this, there will need to be a lot of prayer, a lot of wisdom, and a lot of grace. Such situations give the opportunity to show love and compassion, but also to share truth and conviction. What this looks like from situation to situation will be complex, but the general principle of love and truth must somehow shine through.

How can you show love and truth in family gatherings or with family members you don't see except sporadically?

What potentials danger is there in one's response to this situation? How could it go wrong?

If the goal is for someone to repent and return to the Lord, what kinds of words and actions will best help that happen?

God created us and He didn't make a mistake when He did so. We may find ourselves surrounded by a culture that has given in to the lie of Satan that a self-determined destiny is better than God's plan, but that simply isn't true no matter how many people believe it. As Christians, we are called to graciously and courageously take a stand, loving and all but warning them that God's truth stands whether we like it or not, and that to reject God's truth is to set ourselves on a collision course with nature itself and the God who created nature.