

A Theological Framework of Sex and Gender

We live in an age experiencing the disastrous effects of the sexual revolution. Confusion over basic concepts such as man, woman, and marriage are but the latest divergence between a culture committed to radical individual autonomy and a church committed to Scripture's teaching. Local congregations daily face questions of gender dysphoria, same-sex unions, and on basic concepts of what it means to be a man or woman. The ERLC seeks to equip pastors and ministry leaders to answer those questions in light of Scripture's clear teachings with resources like these and future projects.



God created you.

At its most basic level, the fact that we are created by God means that we are limited by the design that God has given us (Gen. 1). Recognizing that we are created by God means accepting that we do not have absolute control over our bodies and how they are to be used (Is. 29:16). They are to be used in accordance with God's design and purpose. When we attempt to usurp God's design, we repeat the sin of Adam and Eve who desired to be more than just "like God" but rather to become God (Gen. 3:5). Remembering that we are created and therefore finite grounds our theology of the body and gender (1 Pet. 1:24).



God created you with a body.

Contrary to popular understanding, our bodies are inseparable from who we are. We are not souls trapped in a body (1 Cor. 6:12-20). The Christian church has long understood and upheld the worth of the body, looking at both the creation account of Genesis where God declares the world good and the Incarnation of Christ where a perfect and holy God took on flesh and blood (John 1). As Christians, we must not fall for the lie of culture that our bodies are to be changed to meet our self-perception (2 Cor. 10:5).



God created humans male and female.

In the opening pages of Genesis, the author tells us that humanity was created in God's image and created male and female (Gen. 1:26-27). We often focus on the former, but the latter declaration is just as important. The author's description is an acknowledgement of distinction and difference between the two. Men are not women, and women are not men. Yet, we should not overlay these differences in an unbiblical way because, as the next chapter reminds us, there is nothing more like man than woman (Gen. 2). Still, those differences are there and part of God's design. Neither is more important or carries more of the image of God, and both are necessary to fulfill the command given to steward creation and multiply. As Christians, we recognize the ways that God has designed both men and women as distinct, yet equal expressions of humanity.





God created male and female to complement one another.

The opening pages of Scripture remind us that we are made in God's image, and that men and women are to complement one another (Gen. 1:26-27). At its most basic level, this complementarity is revealed in biology: both man and woman are needed for sexual reproduction. It also reveals itself in a range of social and relational aspects (Eph. 5:21-33). At its core, complementarity glorifies God and is a reminder that we are created, finite beings who are unable to live in existence without others (Gen. 2:18). Though our current context seeks to blur the distinctions between men and women to the point that they are interchangeable, Christians recognize that each gender has something that is distinct and special. Neither can exist without the other (1 Cor. 11:11-12).



The Fall affects how we perceive our bodies.

The effects of sin have broken every part of creation. This includes our own self-perception and understanding (1 Pet. 1:14). The presence of disorders such as gender dysphoria (when a person's perception of a mismatch between their gender and their body causes distress) is one example of the way sin has warped our understanding. Christians must recognize that sin is able to powerfully deceive, even to the point of thinking that bodily mutilation is the way toward happiness (Eph. 4:22). In contrast, Christians must offer a word of hope and a reminder that our bodies are good gifts given to us by God, not obstacles to be overcome.



God meets those broken by the sexual revolution with compassion and grace.

We are repeatedly reminded that God has compassion for those who have been broken by sin. The pages of Scripture are filled with the story of a God who cares for those who have been deceived, abused, and mistreated by society and culture (John 4; John 11). Christians must recognize that the sexual revolution will break and that there will be a flood of refugees looking for hope and answers: those who were deceived to think that casual sex was meaningless, our bodies could be changed as we saw fit, and that their gender was unimportant to who they were. The response of the church is to be the same as the response of Christ: "a bruised reed he will not break" (Matt. 12:20). We offer the same grace and compassion given to us and seek to restore those who have been broken by the lies of sin.

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