



A RESOURCE OF  
THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS  
LIBERTY COMMISSION

# God's Good Design

*A Practical Guide for  
Answering Gender Confusion*

EDITED BY ALEX WARD



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A RESOURCE OF THE ERLC

# FOREWORD

OVER 30 YEARS AGO, JUDITH BUTLER published her book *Gender Trouble* arguing that all conceptions of gender were performative rather than rooted in an actual or real identity. In the intervening decades, the fruit of work like Butler's and others', which undermined gender distinctions and definitions, has led to a society unable to answer the basic questions "What is a man?" and "What is a woman?" Increasingly, answers are either retreats into hyper-realized stereotypes or a shrug of the shoulders, as if to say, "What does it matter?"

The rate of teenagers who identify as transgender has doubled in the United States according to one estimate. Nearly one-third of Generation Z (the youngest generation for which we have statistics) identify on the LGBT spectrum. It may have (arguably) taken longer for the sexual revolution to reach our churches, but the time is long gone when we could assume it would pass us by completely.

That is why the ERLC gathered together a group of experts in theology, ethics, public policy, and law to think through how best to respond to this moment. Working together, they created a framework grounded in Scripture and shaped by theological categories faithful to the *Baptist Faith & Message 2000*.

We know that this is not just a thought experiment, so the ERLC also gathered pastors and ministry leaders who helped apply the framework to situations on the ground. Most of us will not face a question about our theological anthropology and how it defines our understanding of the categories of male and female. But, we may meet an individual who has adopted a new identity and has preferred pronouns. So these pastors, ministry leaders, and subject-matter experts considered what to do in a number of scenarios drawn directly from questions posed to actual churches and pastors.

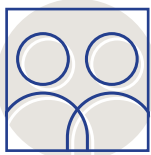
It is our hope that this theological framework and the practical scenarios will start (or continue) the conversation in your churches about how to serve those broken by the sexual revolution with the hope of the gospel. There will inevitably be questions you face that are not contained here, but this will give you a place to begin a

conversation with your staff; not out of fear or a need to protect ourselves, but rather to ensure that we are ready to offer others an answer for the hope that is within us (1 Pet. 3:15), pointing them to the one who promises that there is a day when the brokenness of our body, our sense of self, and our own failed attempts to be God will be made right.

*F. Brent Leatherwood*

*President, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission*

# A THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER AND SEXUALITY



## **God created humanity.**

As the “special creation of God, made in His own image,” humanity possesses intrinsic dignity and value as the “crowning work of His creation” (*BF&M 2000*). The truth that we are created by God means that we flourish when living according to the design that God has given us. Recognizing our created nature means accepting that we do not have absolute authority over our bodies and how they are to be used. We use them 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. Remembering that God is our Creator and we are his creatures grounds our theology of the body and gender.

*Scriptural References:* Genesis 1; Isaiah 29:16; Genesis 3:5; 1 Peter 1:24



## **God intentionally created humanity with physical bodies.**

Christians have affirmed the goodness of the body, both in God’s good creation of humanity as embodied beings and in the promise of glorified/resurrected bodies. Contrary to popular understanding, our bodies are inseparable from who we are. We are not souls trapped in a body, nor are we simply bodies without a soul. The Christian Church has long understood and upheld the worth of the body. The creation account of Genesis where God declares the material world good, the Incarnation of Christ where a perfect and

holy God took on a complete human body, the ongoing embodied nature of our risen Savior, and the promise that our resurrected bodies will be like his testify to this truth. Therefore, our bodies cannot be changed without doing grave damage to God's good design for them.<sup>1</sup>

*Scriptural References:* 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; Genesis 1-2; John 1; Romans 6:5; 2 Corinthians 10:5; 1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 3; Revelation 20:5



### **God's good design for bodies is sexed: male and female.**

Genesis 1:27 teaches God created human bodies male and female. Contemporary culture divides biological sex and gender as separate fundamental categories. The contemporary culture's division facilitates the ability for someone to identify as a gender separate from one's biological sex. Doing so erases sexual difference and collapses biological realities. When the *Baptist Faith & Message* (2000) says, "Gender is part of the goodness of God's creation," we understand this as a synonym for biological sex. The expression of one's biological sex should be consistent with God's design.

*Scriptural References:* Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 2



### **God created men and women to complement one another.**

In addition to being made in God's image, men and women are to complement one another. At its most basic level, this complementarity is revealed biologically and relationally. Complementarity glorifies God and is a reminder that we are created, finite beings who are unable to live in existence without others. Though our current cultural context seeks to blur the distinctions between men and women to the point that they are interchangeable, Christians recognize both sexes are special. The sexual and biological distinction between males

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1 The presence of intersex conditions should not be understood as evidence of multiple sexes. Intersex conditions are more akin to abnormalities of physical development than a third sex. Intersex conditions are, in many instances, the result of genetic abnormalities. Thus, medical intervention on behalf of intersex conditions is about restoring as much as possible the proper functioning of the body, rather than changing it to accord with an incorrect self-perception.

and females is part of God's good design for human flourishing and fulfilling the Great Commission.

*Scriptural References:* Genesis 1:26-27; Ephesians 5:21-33; Genesis 2:18; 1 Corinthians 11:11-12



### **The Fall affects how we see our body and sexuality.**

The effects of sin have broken every part of creation. This includes our own self-perception. Christians must recognize that sin is able to powerfully deceive, including thinking of oneself as the opposite sex, adopting the use of alternate pronouns, and even going to the extreme of bodily mutilation as an attempt to achieve happiness and fulfillment. 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 or recreated.

*Scriptural References:* 1 Peter 1:14; Ephesians 4:22; Romans 12; James 1



### **God meets the refugees of transgender ideology.**

Because contemporary gender ideology is inconsistent with Scripture, people will be damaged by deviating from God's design. Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins so that he might rescue us from the present age and offers forgiveness and hope to the refugees harmed by the transgender movement. 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. Christians must recognize that the freedoms contemporary gender ideology promises are hollow and toxic and that there will be a flood of refugees looking for hope and answers: those who were deceived to think that sex can be casual and meaningless, that their bodies could be changed as they see fit, and that their biological sex is unimportant to who they are. The response of the Church is to be the same as the response of Christ: "a bruised reed he will not break." We offer the same grace and compassion given to us and seek to restore those who have been broken by the lies of sin.

*Scriptural References:* John 4; John 11; Isaiah 42:3; Matthew 12:20; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 1:4



### **The Church compassionately proclaims God's design for gender and the body.**

As those who have been saved by Christ, Christians are called to live compassionate and holy lives in the public square that call others to consider the claims of Christ and his gospel. For the sake of the lost, Christians must not isolate their obedience to Christ from the public. The Christian faith is a public faith, which “tears down arguments and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God so that every thought is taken captive to obey Christ.” Christians are to be prepared to give an answer for the hope that they possess with gentleness and respect. Truly loving our neighbor requires that Christians call them to repentance and to love God’s law, which includes calling them to find their identity in Christ. The goal is not merely behavior modification, which follows spiritual rebirth, obedience to Christ, and ongoing discipleship.

*Scriptural References:* 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Ephesians 4:15; 1 Peter 3:15



# PRACTICAL SCENARIOS

*The information included in this guide is designed to be for educational purposes and to help your church begin to think about the topics. It should not be considered legal advice. For specific questions or legal issues related to the topic, we encourage you to contact us directly.*

**1 If you had a transgender woman (biological male) come to your church on a Sunday and it was obvious that this was really a male, how would your average church goer respond? What should church members be coached to prepare them for this?**

At the core of this scenario is the question of preparation. The ideal scenario is not to make the decision when approached, but rather that volunteers and staff have already thought through and planned how they would respond when approached.

A couple of points to emphasize with staff, volunteers, and members is that we are a people who are not afraid of visitors, especially visitors who do not know the gospel and what it requires of their life. We should welcome the idea of a visitor whose life does not yet conform to the gospel coming to our church because we hope that they will encounter Christ while there.

Additionally, just as we would encourage our greeting team or members of the congregation to be welcoming, regardless of appearance, race, or wealth, we should encourage them to not show partiality or disdain for someone who enters the building in good faith. There may be times when individuals arrive seeking to create problems, and that is a situation best managed by staff rather than volunteers, but the posture in general is one of welcome and invitation to hear what God has to say and to be

transformed by the teaching of the Word. For churches, this should encourage a regular practice of training with volunteers about how to welcome and greet any visitor, not just those who are transgender. There should be a conformity between words and practice so that volunteers are not making decisions that conflict with church policy or doctrine.

Finally, there should be a regular pattern established for volunteers to answer, “What do you do if you don’t know the answer?” We should not expect volunteers to know everything, but churches and staff should provide a clear process for what to do when there is a question. Again, preparation is crucial to ensuring that you are best serving your neighbor as you are being faithful to Scripture.

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**2 If a transgender visitor asked a Sunday volunteer if it was okay to use their preferred restroom, what would the volunteer say? What have your volunteers been taught beforehand that would inform their response? If this person went to the restroom and individuals walked out uncomfortable and asked for a pastor or deacon to speak to the person, what would that conversation entail? What would the ideal bathroom usage policy look like?**

Churches should clearly define their bathroom policy and provide volunteers with notice. That policy should do two things. First, it should clearly protect the privacy and safety of individuals in intimate spaces. These intimate spaces—bathrooms, changing areas for baptisms, etc.—should be sex-segregated, with each increasing level of intimacy meaning a higher policing of the boundary (i.e., A single person bathroom can be open to anyone, but multi-person bathrooms should be restricted to a single sex). Volunteers should know about alternatives available to individuals who feel uncomfortable using the bathroom for their biological sex. These alternatives might include a single person bathroom that is available to use (ideal) or possibly having a volunteer ensure that there is no one in the bathroom before allowing the visitor to use the multi-stall bathroom.

In the instance where a visitor uses a bathroom that does not conform to their biological sex and others are uncomfortable, the pastor or ministerial staff should address it. This conversation should be done on a one-on-one basis, not in front of others. The pastors or staff should make the policy clear to the visitor as well as the accommodations made for them such as a single-person bathroom that is available. For those preparing ahead of time, this conversation should be framed around how to provide pastoral care, both to the visitor and the member. Both are people to whom the pastor has a responsibility, and his actions, attitude, and words should reflect that.

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### **3 How would your church leadership respond to and advise a transgender individual wishing to partake in a women's Bible study who is biologically male?**

Churches must be prepared for the eventual moment when they have an individual who is biologically male (or female) and identifies as the opposite sex who wishes to join a single-sex Bible study. If the Bible study is only a female group, the leader and church staff should be coached about how to address the question. They should emphasize that there are single sex-spaces in the church, and this is one of them. At the same time, there may be instances where a women's Bible becomes co-ed. In those instances, it would be appropriate for a person who is transgender to join.

The church staff and Bible study members should adopt a posture of conversation with the individual, asking, "How can we help you to feel comfortable joining us without compromising what we believe about sex and gender?" It is unlikely that the individual would be willing to join a male-only Bible study. Thus, the church should protect female-only spaces, while intentionally thinking about how mixed group Bible studies or small groups can be a way of inviting the visitor into the life and community of the church without transgressing teachings or beliefs on sexuality and gender. In that instance, the transgender individual would be treated

as any other visitor: welcomed as one in need of Christ and offered the chance to repent of their sins and walk in obedience to biblical teaching.

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**4** **If your children's ministry had a child (age 7) visit who wished to be called a different name than the one they were given at birth (and dressed in accord with their preferred gender identity), and *the parent also desired this*, how would your children's ministry respond to the child and parent? Would the request be followed? Why or why not? What is said to the child? What is said to the parent?**

In this instance, the staff should ask for a meeting with the parents, not the child, to discuss openly the church's policies and positions on gender and sexuality. The church should emphasize to the parents that they are glad that the child and family are attending and that they feel this is a space where their child is safe. The church, however, is unable to teach or affirm the child's belief that their gender identity is different from their biological sex. The staff should be clear that this flows from a Christian belief that living in congruence with your biological sex is part of what it means to be an embodied being and that this leads to flourishing as part of God's good design.

On the question of the child's name, if you as a church staff know the original name, then you should not begin to use the new name. To do so would be a tacit endorsement of this new identity. However, there will be instances where you do not know the name. In those cases, you should use the name given, acknowledging that names are not inherently gender specific (Alex or Christian can be a name for either a boy or a girl). There is a question of knowledge in each of these cases, and as we know more or have prior relationships with the individual, that should cause us to think about how our actions are affirming the new, errant identity or affirming the truth of God's good design.

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**5** If your children's ministry had a child visit who wished to be called a different name than their birth sex (and dressed in accord with their preferred gender identity), and *the parent did not agree with the child*, how would your children's ministry respond to the child and counsel the parent? If the child regularly attended, and parents in the children's ministry knew about it, what would you communicate, and how would you communicate it?

Unlike the previous scenario, the parents do not agree with the decision of the child. This is good because it means that the parents and church staff are on the same page. In this instance, a conversation should be had with the child to make clear that the church will not go against the parent's wishes to affirm this new identity. As the *BF&M 2000* states, "Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values, and lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth." The church should affirm the role of parents as the primary disciplers of their children. In the conversation with the child, the staff and parents should ask how this is coming up with a young child and what is causing them to believe that their gender and sex are at odds.

To the question of what to communicate to other parents if the situation is known widely, there are legal questions of privacy and communication that would be state specific. Thus, the specific answer will depend on your specific location. But should information need to be shared with other parents, then it would be unwise to name the child. Rather, the information should point to the fact that some children may have questions about sex and gender. The church should then direct the parents to the policies of the church, such as the statement of belief on the topic, as well as recommended resources to help parents discuss the topic in age-appropriate ways with their children.

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**6** A couple in your church has an adult son, age 25, who is going through a gender transition. They are heartbroken but practicing "tough love" with the child and have cut off all contact. How would you counsel them?

The ability of parents to deal with the question of a child who is transitioning is different for adults rather than children because of the freedom that the child now has. However, the parental duty to love their child, be the primary disciple maker, and guide their child in light of scriptural teaching remains the same.

As a pastoral staff, you should walk through the church's policies and statements on gender and sexuality to ensure that everyone is on the same page about what biblical standards are. Next, with regards to the "tough love" component, there should be a question of what the parents hope to achieve. Upholding the Bible's teachings on gender and sexuality doesn't exempt us from the commands to be kind. The posture of the Christian parent should be that of Christ, "a bruised reed he will not break" (Isa. 42:3). The goal of any action taken by the parents and the staff is to be oriented toward repentance and redemption, not punishment.

There may be behaviors on the part of the child that warrant distance and boundaries, and those should be clearly stated. At the same time, the ministerial staff may need to communicate to parents struggling with how to love their child and be faithful, that the command to be faithful to Scripture doesn't require them to cut their child out of their lives. Finally, the pastoral staff should make clear that this is going to be a long process, and that there is grace for when they (as parents) make the wrong decision as they are discerning how to be faithful and obedient to God's Word through a messy situation.

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## **7 How would your pastoral team counsel a teen visiting the youth group that is considering undergoing a social transition to a different gender?**

The pastoral team should be clear that they love the teen and want them to continue attending. They should also acknowledge that they are grateful that the child feels comfortable telling them this information and is willing to talk to them about their decision. And just like every other teen who comes to the youth group, their desire is that this teenager would know who God is and enter a relationship with Jesus. Because of this, they will be unable to support and participate in the social transition.

They should point back to the church's policies and encourage the teenager to participate as much as they can.

Also, as they would in any counseling situation, they should ask what it is that is leading the teenager to think a social transition is necessary. It might be that the child is dealing with cultural assumptions about masculinity/femininity that are tied more to cultural stereotypes than reality (i.e., A guy who wants to be a gymnast or a girl who enjoys sports does not need to deny their biological sex because of that personal interest). In addition, they should default to not using pronouns or a new name because they do not want to tacitly endorse the notion that pronouns correspond to self-identity rather than biological realities.

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## **8 If you had a MtF (male-to-female) transgender teen visiting your youth group insistent on being called by their preferred gender, name, and pronoun—how should the youth minister respond to this request?**

Like the case above, the youth group should make clear that the individual is welcome and that they desire to see them know God and have a relationship with Christ. To the question of pronouns and names, the youth minister should clarify that as Christians we are to be truth tellers, and as such he would be unable to use their preferred pronouns. In most instances, it is possible to avoid using pronouns at all, defaulting to names, but there may be instances where the youth minister would have to use their biological pronouns. He should make clear that it is not just about the student's self-identification, but that what he is requesting of the minister is for him to affirm that identity which is fundamentally untrue by using pronouns and this new name.

Additionally, the youth minister needs to think about how he will help his students think through this topic. For students who worry that not agreeing to the request would pose actual relationship consequences, he should encourage them to be faithful to Christ. At the same time, he should help them to ask, "Am I doing this to avoid

social friction or to build a bridge for the gospel?” Given the reality that there will be people who transition and detransition (to varying degrees), students can be present in their lives and be a witness to their peers even as they don’t compromise truth.

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**9 You have a public school teacher in your school who is asking your pastoral team what to do about a situation where a child is transitioning in their classroom and wants to be called by their new name and pronoun. What advice do you give this teacher?**

Like the case above, the teacher should try to avoid pronouns where possible. In most instances, it is possible to avoid using pronouns at all, defaulting to names, but there may be instances where she would have to use their biological pronouns. She should make clear that it is not just about the student’s self-identification, but that what he or she is requesting of the teacher is for her to affirm that identity which is fundamentally untrue by using pronouns and this new name.

If the teacher is willing to accommodate on the question of a new name, then the pastoral staff should ask what is guiding that decision? Is it just a desire to avoid friction or save their job? Is it about a sincere belief that the name is not the same level as pronouns? The teacher’s motivation and intentions factor into the counseling that should be given.

There may arise situations where the teacher should consult legal counsel, based on particular policies within a given school or school district. At a basic level, there is a First Amendment right to not be compelled to speak against their sincerely held religious beliefs. If they are disciplined for this stance, then they should seek a lawyer—such as with Alliance Defending Freedom, First Liberty, or the Becket Fund—who can help provide legal recourse and advice.

Finally, the church should determine how prepared it is to meet the needs of those who are disciplined and punished for a faithful biblical stance. If the church is encouraging her to stand firm in her convictions, it should also be willing to assist her in the face of discipline and possible loss of income or even her job.



## **10** Imagine you had an unrepentant transgender individual wish to be baptized. How would the church's leadership respond?

This situation should be treated no differently than how any other unrepentant individual wishing to be baptized is treated. There is a question of what repentance looks like for transgender individuals (see questions 18 and 19 below). However, for a person who sees no need to repent, the church should withhold baptism. If the individual is unrepentant, then there are good reasons to withhold baptism because the church cannot affirm the authenticity of the baptismal candidate's faith and their obedience to Christ. Recognizing that repentance does not mean perfection, there should not be active opposition to the clear teaching of Scripture from someone submitting to baptism.

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## **11** What should a church do in the event that a social media firestorm ignites in the church's community concerning the church's doctrine on matters of gender?

The church should reach out to trusted media professionals who can help them walk through this moment. This is especially true and necessary for church-adjacent organizations such as religious day schools. Practically, they are not going to be releasing long statements. In most cases, less is more. In some cases, it is best to give no response and instead let the online vitriol dissipate.

If the church or organization does engage online, there should be clear policies for who is allowed to speak to the issue, when they are speaking in an official capacity, and when they can do so through official channels. Having a clear media policy before the crisis will help prevent a prolonging of it due to an unnecessary comment online from a well-meaning staffer.

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## **12 A church member comes to you and confides that they suffer from an intersex condition. The individual has male chromosomes but their bodily development resembles the female body more. How would you counsel them?**

The presence of intersex conditions should not be taken as proof of the ambiguity of the binary nature of the sexes as male and female. Neither should it be a medical condition that prevents individuals from feeling welcome in the church. As Christ taught, there are some who have been eunuchs since birth, and the presence of medical disorders should not exclude an individual from participation in the life of the church. Pastors should acknowledge the existence of these conditions, noting that like many other medical conditions, there may be medical interventions that are appropriate and good.

More importantly, pastors should remind the individual that part of the gospel and our theology of the resurrection is the promise that our bodies will one day no longer be marred by the effects of sin on the world and broken by such disorders. And in the present, we should seek ways to as much as possible equip the person to live in accordance with their biological sex, recognizing that the specifics will vary in many cases depending on medical guidance.

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## **13 An endocrinologist is a member at your church. She tells you, the pastor, that licensing requirements now mandate that she administer cross-sex hormones to dysphoric individuals. What advice would you give her?**

Pastorally, ministers should affirm that they are with her and willing to come alongside her and walk through this process together. They should acknowledge that her decision to stand for Christ may cost her, and in such cases, they will continue to serve her as a church body and care for her. As above (question 9), if the church is encouraging her to stand firm in her convictions, it should also be willing to assist her in the face of discipline and possible loss of income or even her job.

This is another situation where the medical professional should seek the assistance of a legal professional (see the guidance in question 9). Much of the advice for licensing and professional requirements is dependent on state, local, and professional organization rules. This is not limited to medical professionals but would include all those who need a certification or license (i.e., counselors, physicians, social workers, etc.). Legally, there are similarities to the case of a Christian physician who says, “I’m a Christian obstetrician-gynecologist, and I don’t perform abortions.” However, those protections and exemptions are stronger for the case of abortion than gender questions at present.

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## **14** **A teen in your church has confided in a youth minister that they are experiencing bouts of gender dysphoria. What action plan is in place to help this teenager?**

A person experiencing gender dysphoria is experiencing a disconnect between their body and sense of self, creating real tension and anguish. To acknowledge this sense of tension is not theologically or biblically problematic. The proper response is not to affirm the errant self-perception, but rather to help the teenager grow to see their body and gender in agreement, and to live in a way that is God-honoring and aligns with their biological sex. Part of this counsel will include affirming the goodness of God’s design of gender and sexuality, even down to the biological distinctions between men and women.

Additionally, churches must prepare beforehand for the conversation with training that prepares staff and volunteers to respond appropriately. This should be regular training that emphasizes both the core teachings of the church as well as the policies for how to handle such a situation. As these conversations become more common, churches should know how they would respond before the situation arises rather than making snap decisions in the moment, accepting that it is impossible to plan for every eventuality.

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## **15** If one of your students came to you and told you that they were dating a transgender individual, how would you respond?

A discussion of any romantic decision by a teenager should begin with a reminder of God's good design for gender and sexuality. This should be a regular theme taught to youth and children who are beginning to form romantic relationships and are increasingly met with a cultural message at odds with biblical teachings. Specific to this situation, ministry leaders should affirm God's good design of complementary sexes and that individuals are not to pursue relationships with a person of the same sex. Thus, it may be necessary to clarify to the student that the romantic partner does not get to decide their gender identity, but rather it is inseparable from their sex.

Additionally, there is the added problem of beginning or continuing a relationship with someone who is not a Christian. An individual who is actively engaged in a pattern of ongoing, unrepentant sinful behavior should be concerned because their life is not demonstrating fruits of repentance and obedience to Christ. Christian teenagers should avoid romantic relationships in such circumstances, heeding Paul's admonition to not be unequally yoked to unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-18). For both students, ministry leaders should make clear that they desire sexual purity for each because it is part of God's good design, which would entail rejecting any pattern of unrepentant sin. This is no different than how church leaders would counsel a young woman who is dating a boy who regularly watches pornography.

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## **16** What would your church's policy be if a MtF (male-to-female)/FtM (female-to-male) couple came to the church asking to be married?

A situation such as this is why it is key to have clear guidelines and policies in place before the situation arises. On the surface, this is a case where the basic facts

might be allowed by some church documents: It is a marriage between a biological male and a biological female. However, churches should clarify that their facilities are available only to those who agree to their statement of faith and teachings on biblical sexuality and gender. In so doing, it protects both the church from any ambiguity or confusion, while also clearly communicating to the outside world the standards and practices of the congregation. It is key that where these policies exist, they are followed consistently.

In addition to statements of faith or a covenant for members, the church should clearly lay out (either in the statement or a separate document) its teaching on sexuality and gender. Further, they should create a facility-use policy that lays out the requirements and obligations for anyone who wishes to use the space.

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## **17** How would your church respond to a child who wishes to go to summer camp but is a “transgender man” (a biological female who identifies as a male)? Would the student be allowed to attend? What should be communicated to the parents of the child? To the parents of other children? To other students?

Like the question of bathrooms or intimate spaces, the question of a camp situation should be one of hospitality and clear boundaries. Thus, the posture toward the student and their parents should be one that affirms that they are welcome to attend the camp, that the church wants to be a place where they feel comfortable attending, and that the child should never be harmed, bullied, or discriminated against. However, the church staff should make clear to the child and parents that there will be spaces which are not open because of biological sex.

Thus, this student (a biological female) would not be allowed to be in male intimate spaces such as bunkhouses, bathrooms and showers, or changing areas. The church should take this opportunity to clarify that this is not personal to the student, but a result of the church's policies relating to sexuality and gender. The church should also

look into alternate accommodations if those would be helpful (i.e., single-sex bathrooms on the trip, alternate housing with the student's parent, etc.). For the other parents and students, the church should notify them of the church's policy on gender and sexuality, while also stating clearly the desire to welcome individuals into the church who are in need of Christ. Students should be taught (and reminded) to treat one another as image bearers possessing intrinsic worth and dignity, and to not harm or denigrate another individual through their actions.

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## **18** Your church operates a preschool or other community organization. What steps would your church need to take if sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) categories were added to discrimination laws?

This is another scenario where the importance of governing documents is key. Church and ministry leaders should clearly spell out the statement of faith and teachings on this topic. Additionally, when they hire individuals, there should be a positive affirmation by the employee that they agree with the statement of faith and policies, and that they will not teach or contravene those documents. There should be no hiring made in conflict with the statement of belief. Further, job descriptions should espouse the religious components of the job responsibility, clarifying that every position is functioning as a minister to students through their work, even if they are not ordained or serving on pastoral staff. These are areas where a lawyer who can review the documents ahead of time would be a good decision. Preparation is key. Consistency is key. Professional review of materials is key.

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## **19** Can someone identify as a transgender Christian? A gay Christian?

The short answer to this question is no. We do not hyphenate our identities as Christians with sinful activity. However, there is a distinction between saying, “I am a Christian who suffers from gender dysphoria or same-sex attraction,” and, “I am a Christian who identifies as transgender or gay.” An ongoing identification with sinful behavior should cause any individual to prayerfully repent and question whether they have been fully obedient to Christ in laying aside their sins. For the Christian who struggles and yet is faithfully seeking to obey Christ, there should be a recognition that this ongoing work of sanctification will not be uniform in all cases and will instead be characterized by an ongoing life of repentance (as with all struggles against sinful behavior).

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## 20 What does repentance look like?

The question of repentance for transgender individuals is one that will practically look different for each individual. At a basic level, it looks like asking, “How can I live in accordance with my God-given sex in such a way that honors Christ with my body?” In some cases, there will be irreversible medical conditions that result from surgeries or long-term hormonal regimens. Questions of how to change these (and to what extent) should be had in consultation with medical professionals to ensure the safety of the individual. Ministry leaders should recognize the difficulty in these situations and extend considerable grace to individuals discerning what the process may look like and the long-term manner of its implementation. Additionally, they should remind the Christian repenting of their transgender identity that the hope of the resurrection is a body free from the brokenness of sin. Total restoration may be impossible in this life, but it is promised in our future bodies.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Books

- Ryan Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*
- Alan Branch, *Affirming God's Image: Addressing the Transgender Question from Science and Scripture*
- Abigail Favale, *The Genesis of Gender: A Christian Theory*
- Katie McCoy, *To Be a Woman: The Confusion Over Female Identity and How Christians Can Respond*
- Brian Seagraves & Hunter Leavine, *Gender: A Conversation Guide for Parents and Pastors*
- Carl Trueman, *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution*
- Andrew Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*

## Articles

- Gregg Allison, [“What is a man?”](#) and Katie McCoy, [“What is a woman?”](#)
- Jared Kennedy, [“Teaching Your Children About Gender”](#)
- Andrew Walker, [“He, She, Ze, Zir? Navigating Pronouns While Loving Your Transgender Neighbor”](#)
- Andrew Walker, [“The Hidden Hands of Caitlyn Jenner”](#)

## Podcast Episodes

- ERLC Podcast: [Series on Sexuality and Gender](#)



### **Lectures/Videos**

- Andrew Walker, [The Family and the Gender Revolution](#)
- Denny Burk, [A Gospel-Centered Assessment of Gender Identity, Transgenderism, and Polygamy](#)

### **Additional Frameworks or Statements on Gender and Sexuality**

- [Baptist Faith & Message 2000: Article XIII “The Family”](#)
- [The Danvers Statement on Complementarity](#)
- [The Nashville Statement on Gender and Sexuality](#)



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