

Gospel Blueprints: Sexuality and Gender, 10/31/21

2014 Time Magazine Article: **The Transgender Tipping Point**. It's question at that time was whether America was ready to fully embrace trans* persons into society, with all the complexity that it brings. Just months later Bruce Jenner came out with Diane Sawyer as Caitlyn Jenner. **Title Slide** Here we are in 2021, it is safe to say we are well passed the tipping point. The last few years we have seen warp-speed normalization and exponential increase of individuals coming out as Trans or non-binary, among teens a 329% generational increase. The social phenomenon, primarily among teenage girls, called "Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria" where in some cases whole peer groups are coming out as non-binary. If I asked our teens if they know peers who identify as trans my guess is most would raise their hands. Schools grapple with name changes, pronoun preferences, inclusive bathroom policies, how and when to use the new **gender-breadperson** increasingly being used in schools to teach children gender fluidity. **Blank Slide** The rocket-fueled momentum of the trans* phenomenon has left many in the mental health and medical community scrambling to catch up. When it came to gender dysphoria, there used to be a "wait and see approach." 80% of children that experience gender dysphoria revert back to their birth gender when they finish puberty. But this is increasingly being abandoned to favor the approach that whatever a child says should be listened too and considered authoritative. Many doctors now prescribing puberty blocking and cross hormone therapy on children and teens. **"Today the accepted treatment is not to help persons change their inner feelings of gender identity to match their body but they change their body to match their feelings. In other words when a person senses a dissonance between body and feelings the feelings win and the body is dismissed as irrelevant."** -Nancy Pearcey. Certainly, for the church this is no longer just a theological question, but we grapple with how to pastor those who struggle with gender questions and families of trans* persons. I became Lead Pastor in 2015, at the time I thought, at some point I probably need to research and preach a message on Gender...6 years later, the reality is we are late to the scene.

Define Terms: **Sex: We are talking biology as either male or female.** Today **Gender is separated from sexual biology, it is the psychological/cultural/and emotional experience of being male/female or other.** **Trans* an umbrella term for a multitude of non-cisgender identifications:** non-binary, asexual, polygender, pangender- as my cousin has just identified as on coming out day on social media. **Gender Dysphoria is the psychological/emotional/physiological experience of incongruity or dissatisfied with one's biological sex.** May be diagnosed or self-declared. Some describe the feeling like there is a creepy serum in their bones or a feeling of perpetual nausea. Others it is as benign as curiosity and enjoyment of "otherness." What causes Gender Dysphoria, non-binary experience? Is it Neuroplasticity of the brain, chemical and hormone development, environmental issues, dietary, parental attachment in early childhood, cultural norms and influences, abuse, personal preference, spiritual, none? All? Yes. Beyond the scope of the message.

Two faulty approaches in the church today when it comes to sexuality and gender. **Conviction without compassion**- Christians whose only interest is to disprove the LGBT+ ideologies, who are easily angered by it, dismissive, demonizing, mocking, becoming a keyboard culture-warrior.

Who elevate these struggles or sins above those they deem more acceptable. Who feel a deep satisfaction with winning an argument as you live vicariously through their favorite political, social or Christian pundit. Who look only through the lens of issues and not the lens of people. Maybe it is this fear that has kept some of you from being honest about your struggle in the church.

Preston Sprinkle- Embodied “Lesli who was born female but from the time Leslie was four years old she experienced life as a boy and all the stereotypes that come with it. Leslie also remembers loving Jesus wholeheartedly from a very young age. As she came into her teen years she says, “I started to keenly feel a distance between myself and other girls. I could not relate to their emerging womanhood. They were spending hours putting on make-up, styling their hair, and talking about boys. None of this interested me in the least. I lived this charade until high school rolled around becoming increasingly desponding and suicidal.” Finally, Leslie summoned the courage to go to the pastor for help. Leslie explained her situation to him, hoping for some pastoral guidance. She says, “Instead of offering guidance my pastor escorted me out the back door of his office and told me never to come back again. And I didn’t. I didn’t step foot in a church for the next 18 years. I hated Christian and especially pastors from that point on.” Now, personally I don’t know a single pastor who would respond that way, but maybe you do.

The other approach is **compassion without conviction**. Christians who, often as a counter-reaction to the first group are open, welcoming, accepting, and unquestioning. Quick to love and never to judge, but also never challenging...lack critical thinking, a biblical worldview, or attempt to force a permissive interpretation into Scripture. They may be quick to point out that Jesus didn’t judge the woman caught in adultery and protected her from the self-righteous pharisees. But neglect the part that Jesus also called her to leave her former life behind.

Conviction or compassion are the easy way. **Gospel Approach: Full conviction and full compassion** is the way of Jesus. In all the activism today it’s hard to have meaningful, thoughtful conversation about this...many fighting political/theological battles on social media, neglecting the reality that there are real people in our lives, families, churches struggling with this. We want to move toward the pastoral and practical reality for those struggling. But first we need to start by framing worldviews as we have done in each of these messages so that we understand how we got here, what modern secularism says, and consider a Gospel approach.

Modern Secularism:

Gender is not only fluid, but binary gender is an oppressive social tool that needs to be deconstructed. How did we get here? It might feel like it was overnight, but as we have learned throughout this series, it has much deeper roots. **Modern Secularism’s Gender Ideology= Dualism+Expressive Individualism+Power Theory.** Oldest of which is Dualism which can be traced back to mid-5th century BC but popularized by the Greek philosophy. Body and Soul separation. The truest self is really the spiritual self, connected to God, and the body is the lower self, just a shell. Soul is important, body is just material, a wet machine, nothing sacred about it, to do with it whatever we wish. This is where we get modern ideas like- you can give

away your body sexually but not your heart, you can watch porn and treat your body like a playground and it doesn't affect who you really are, you can eat, drink, abuse it however you want...you can block chemicals, cross chemicals, change parts, remove parts as you deem fit and it doesn't affect your authentic self. Expressive Individualism: In the enlightenment the idea of morality and sacred order was replaced with the primacy of individual expression (sexual). Percy Bysshe Shelley, the famed 19th century poet, said that morality is only useful to the degree it produces personal happiness, therapeutic wellbeing. This is where we get the modern mantras: You do you, do whatever makes you happy, morality is defined in terms of experiencing your own authentic self- primarily described in terms of sexual preference and gender identity. Professor Jonathan Grant writing about Gender Identity "Modern authenticity grants us the right over our own beliefs and morality, the only rule being that they must resonate with who we feel we really are. The worst thing we can do is conform to a moral code that is imposed on us from outside, from society, parents, the church or whoever else. The authentic self believes that personal meaning must come from ourselves or must resonate with our one-of-a-kind personality."

[Next Slide] Marx's Power Theory: Michel Foucault, Judith Butler during the sexual revolution of the 70s were some of the first to take Marxist power theory from the world of economics and apply it sex and gender norms: Gender binaries are oppressive power tool, social constructs used by traditional societies and religious elites to control the population. Preventing or not supporting someone from living out authentic sexual/gender expression is abusive and oppressive. Judith Butler- "I long for the days when gender distinctives finally disappear. This information is as irrelevant as the color of a child's eyes, only then will men and women be socially interchangeable and really equal."

Gospel Approach: Gender is not a social construct but is Designed to Display the Glory of God.

#1 The Body is Binary by design, created in the Image of God.

Genesis 1:27 *So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.* The word "image" is used in Scripture to describe the physical copy/representation of a nonphysical being. Marc Cortez- "a declaration that God intended to create human persons to be the physical means through which he would manifest his own divine presence in the world." This means our binary, sexed (male and female) bodies are a key part of what makes us image-bearers. And male and female bodies both uniquely bear the image of God and are called very good. Jesus affirms a high view of the body in Matthew 19:4-5 when he cites Gen. 1:27 affirms the binary, image bearing status of male and female.

#2 Our Bodies are Sacred and interconnected with our Soul.

In Paul's day, dualism was creeping into the church from the culture. Some began to believe that they were free to do whatever they wanted with their bodies because the soul is what really matters. Eat, drink, indulge your sexual desires- it's just flesh. Paul corrected their false beliefs about the body in 1 Corinthians 6. ¹² "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³ You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy

them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

¹⁹ Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Paul elevates the sacredness of the body, especially for Christ followers. What we do with our bodies affects our souls and relationship to Christ. This is why gluttony, deprivation and self-harm, sex outside of marriage, pornography aren't just sinful behaviors but will hinder your walk with the Lord- our bodies and souls work together. Our bodies aren't for us to do whatever we wish with it. Our bodies have a divine owner who has designed them for his glory and his purposes. When we are immodest with our bodies or hate our bodies, we dishonor God. When we manipulate, suppress, transition our bodies- we are acting as if we are sovereign over them, that we know better than God. How we treat our bodies is an act of worship to the one who created them.

#3 Gender Dysphoria (and Sex Disorders) have roots in the Fall.

The original sin Genesis 3 when mankind rebelled against the sacred order, they experience for the first time disharmony and alienation. Sam Allberry- "Sin causes profound alienation, first and foremost from God. And we are alienated from ourselves. What was meant to be whole and integrated--our mind, body, and spirit--is now deeply fractured. We don't feel aligned in ourselves." We live in the reverberation of a fallen nature and fallen nurture. Your personal sin may not have caused your feelings of disharmony with your body in the same way that Jesus said that it wasn't the blind man's sins or his parents that caused his blindness.

In Matthew 19 in Jesus' teaching on the binaries of man and woman in marriage, he hints at the reality of exceptions in a fallen world. ¹¹ Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹² For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven." Eunuchs were men that in some way became infertile, castrated, deemed unmasculine and "other" by society...they were considered non-binary in many ways. Jesus understands more than we do the reality of Genesis 3.

#4 God can redeem Gender Dysphoria (and sex disorders) for His glory.

Matthew 19:12 *There are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.* Notice Jesus says regardless of how the status of "eunuch" came about, genetic birth issue, trauma, abuse, personal choice- If we place our condition in the hands of God, He can redeem it for His glorious purposes both now and the kingdom to come. Jon Tyson "Gen. 3 world with a Gen. 1 blueprint that's moving toward a Revelation 21 eternity"

Pastoral: How do we respond in love to those who genuinely experience gender dysphoria, who are living as another gender? First to those who don't know Christ our first inclination should be

come encounter Jesus! experience the unconditional love, grace and security in a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. You are welcome here. God is not most concerned with your gender or sexuality, in the same way that he's not foremost concerned with whether you struggle with greed or pride or materialism. His goal is that you find new life in Jesus. When Jesus spoke to the woman at the well, he wasn't primarily concerned with the fact that she was sexually promiscuous. It wasn't a barrier to meeting Jesus it was an opportunity! He said "I can give you living water that will never run dry." That's our invitation- come to the well and encounter Jesus. But you say, "Christianity's restrictions on my sexuality or gender are too narrow for me." Tim Keller- uses the illustration, you don't taste-test medicines to determine whether you should take them. You take it based on whether it will treat your ailment. It is just as silly to taste-test Christianity based on its sexual ethic. "The real question is, 'Is Jesus really the Son of God?' Is he really who he said he is—the Way, Truth, and Life? Has he really died for you because you are a sinner? If He is and has, who cares what He asks you to do or not to do? You should do it! In a sense, the gospel does not let you talk about anything else first. It says, 'I won't talk to you about sexuality or gender roles or suffering or anything else until you determine what you will do with Him. Who He is determines everything else.'" When I encountered Christ I was a sexually promiscuous porn addict who had little interest in stopping. Coming to Christ in a relationship began to change me from the inside out, not just modify my external behaviors. We invite you to discover that in a safe space among us. You do not need to conform to our sex ethic in order be welcome here.

For the Christian- **Bring your struggle to Jesus and His Community.** Your pain is real, and your struggle does not make you a leper, it doesn't cast you out. We are all strugglers and if we all went around and shared our deepest desires and most shameful thoughts we would all see just how true that is. You are loved, it is OK to not be OK and to be in process. We want to create a space that is so secure that people can wrestle with this honestly and openly and do so with people who truly love them, who are not there to judge or use them. With Full Compassion...But also with Full Conviction. You are not wrestling with flesh and blood. Spiritual battle. **Colossians 2:8-10⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.**

We have to be aware of the ideologies that are trying to shape us. The Satan, the flesh and the world conspire against you. Satan primarily works through deception- he is the father of lies. And he plays his lies directly to our greatest vulnerabilities and disordered desires, which are normalized in our society.

Modern secularism's gender discipleship process:

- 1- Detach your body from the authentic you.
- 2- Identify authentic self based on your feelings.
- 3- Believe that changing identity will solve your problems.
- 4- Socially transition your identity through appearance, name and pronouns.
5. Disassociate from anyone who does not embrace your new identity.

- 6- Utilize Cross hormone therapy to take on the appearance and feelings of desired gender.
- 7- Complete your transition through Sex reassignment surgery

But **discipleship to Christ follows** Him on the narrow way.

1. Believe that your body is sacred and made in the image of God
2. Identify your authentic self in Christ.
3. Work toward alignment of mind, body, soul according to design not desire.
4. Seek help in honest community and counseling with other Christ followers.
5. Offer your body to Christ as an act of worship.

Whose authority will you submit to? Who do you trust? Whose knowledge are you willing to listen to?

If you are struggling with sexuality or gender challenges, or if you are a parent of someone who may be struggling- start a place of support. Text line- (302) 217-6594 confidential, I will be the only one who has access to it.

Resources Cited or Used for this Message:

Nancy Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*

Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied*

Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*

Mark Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*

John Mark Comer, *Live No Lies*

Jon Tyson Preaching Series, <https://bridgetown.church/teaching/god-sexuality>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-christian-response-to-gender-dysphoria>