

## Responding to Transgenderism

A position paper from the Elders of Quail Lakes Baptist Church

### I. What this Paper is...

This paper is written to seek to guide the family of Quail Lakes Baptist Church and all who might read it toward an explanation of what God has said in his Word about the issue of transgenderism, transsexualism (which is now called gender dysphoria by psychologists), and how God's people should respond to this issue.

Our commitment is to faithfully interpret and apply the Scriptures in an attitude of humility and reverence for what God has told us about himself and his intention for humans as we are created in his image. We are committed to lovingly minister to all the areas of human need which have come about due to the reality of sin in our collective experience.

### II. Background information – our societal situation

“Transgender” and “transsexual” are synonyms that refer to a rare psychological condition where a person sexually identifies within him or herself differently from their birth assigned masculine or feminine physiology. Transgender persons often report that they feel trapped in the wrong body type. The condition manifests itself in various degrees ranging from unexpressed discomfort feelings, to occasional cross-dressing, habitual cross-dressing and, most profoundly, to persons who desire and/or seek hormonal and surgical modification and legally change their name and gender. The condition generally carries a “strong desire to be another sex and a persistent distress and discontent with one’s natural body.” (A Wesleyan View of Gender Identity and Expression)

The psychological community regards transsexualism as a disorder known as “gender dysphoria,” which emphasizes the degree of discomfort and anxiety the person feels regarding the issue of feeling sexually misidentified.

The pastoral and theological task that is before us is to distinguish what element of gender dysphoria is brokenness that may be associated with a disability, and which aspects of the behavior associated with this concern constitute rebellion against the design of God and therefore disobedience and sin.

It is the job of the church to extend the compassion and care of Christ to those who struggle with sexual identity. Our pastoral care for transsexual persons communicates the eternal worth of all persons. God loves transsexual persons just as he loves all other persons who are in need of his mercy and grace.

As Russel Moore notes,

“Ultimately the transgender question is about more than just sex. It is about what it means to be human... that is the question at the heart of the transgender controversy. Are we created as both the Hebrew Scriptures and Jesus put it, “male and female”...or are these categories arbitrary and self-willed? Do our bodies and our sexes represent something of who we were designed to be, and thus imply limits on our ability to recreate ourselves?” (What Transgenderism Means for the Church)

### III. Biblical Data – What does the Bible say?

Christian doctrine and lifestyle must be driven by biblical teachings and values, and not by the shifting debates and ideas of society. The Bible describes gender in binary terms. We are either male or female. Regardless of our feelings about the sexual anatomy that we are assigned, all human beings have the same responsibility to steward the gift of our bodies in ways that honor God's creative role and his intention for us as males and females. (1 Corinthians 6:20)

What do we affirm from the Word of God?

1. In the beginning God created human beings male and female; thus, gender differentiation is sacred. These two sexes distinctly, yet together, bear God's image, and are the basis for marriage and family as well as society. Maleness and femaleness are universal human categories.
2. We are to honor the fact of biological sexual assignment as a primary aspect of identity (male/female) because it has its origination in the explicit creative work of God. Thus, gender identity reflects the sovereignty of God. It is God who assigns individuals their fundamental human identity and gender. Submission to God's creative intention is essential to peace and well-being.
3. Every person since Adam and Eve is fallen (except Jesus) and the corruption extends to the expression and understanding of sexuality.
4. The body matters to God. He created us as embodied persons; thus, the essence of one's sex (who you really are as male or female) is rooted in the physical body God gives each person.
5. Since God created his image bearers as both male and female, a large part of how we are to live the Christian life depends on our maleness and our femaleness. If we rebel against that innate calling and responsibility we are in sin. Society, without looking to God, may feel itself at liberty to legitimize any behavior that it chooses by renaming and reclassifying it; however, Christ followers are to adhere to biblical guidelines and boundaries.

What are the relevant verses and how do we interpret them?

Genesis 1:27

27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (NIV)

Genesis 5:1-2

"When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. 2 He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them 'man.'" (NIV)

Human sexuality and differentiation between males and females was a part of the original creation of God and part of the image of God that is found in humans. These verses assume only two sexes as does the entire Bible. From the beginning, the Bible understands

that both men and women display the image of God in ways that are different but complimentary. Thus, gender differentiation is sacred.

Genesis 2:23-24

23 The man said,  
"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

24 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." (NIV)

God performed the first surgery and created the woman out of the man. The bone used is from the side (the ribs) of the man to indicate equality and partnership, a complimentary function between male and female.

Deuteronomy 22:5

5 "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God." (NKJV)

While Christians are not legally bound by the Mosaic Law, the principles that are embedded in that law are necessary and instructive for godly living. Thus, the concepts behind this verse still apply today. The essential truth here is that every person needs to let their gender expression align with their body's biological sex. We need, therefore, to guard against gender confusion in dress, where we could be wrongly perceived by others as the sex opposite to our biological assignment.

The motivation for obedience to this principle is lest we become an "abomination to the Lord." That tells us that biological assignment and the proper expression of such are part of the eternal will of God and need to be respected.

Jason S, DeRouchie comments,

"...God's law against transgender expression sought to maintain divinely created biological and gender distinction within the community. The goal of this pursuit was to nurture an environment that properly displays the supremacy of God and the ever present head-helper distinction between God and the people he had created for himself... the Creator is corporately magnified in the lives of males and females when our gender identity and gender expression align perfectly with our God ordained biological sex." (Confronting the Transgenderism Storm: A Sermon on Deuteronomy 22:5, Jason S. DeRouchie, PhD)

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

18 "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. 19 Do you not know that your body is a temple 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 body." (NIV)

In the context, Paul is warning against sexual sin, particularly that of visiting prostitutes for sex. However, the larger principle shows us that our bodies and what we do with and to them matter to God. "We are not our own." The body of the Christ-follower is the Temple

of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, we are called to “honor God” with our bodies. It would seem that respecting God’s biological sexual assignment would be part of this “honor.” Thus, actions of gender nonconformity are a violation of the will of God. Even in those rare cases when it can be proven from a physiological or hormonal perspective that an individual is a victim of a gender assignment related to birth defect, we note that gender re-assignment does not guarantee the end of the individual’s unhappiness, and may indeed cause a new set of physical, psychological, legal and relational problems. Here we wish to rely on the wisdom of 1 Timothy 6:6, “...godliness with contentment is great gain.”

#### IV. Pastoral response – what should we do?

As was stated prior, the church of Jesus Christ must extend the love of Christ to those who are struggling with sexual identity just as we would extend the love of Christ to any person. In so doing, it is unavoidable that certain questions are raised.

##### Q. Can transgender persons participate at Quail Lakes Baptist Church?

Ministry means welcoming the transsexual as a congregant with full access to pastoral care, corporate worship and discipleship instruction. But this ministry of Gospel compassion does not mean approval of nonconforming gender behavior. While we understand that some may misinterpret such acceptance, we feel that we must follow the words of the Apostle Paul when he says,

Gal 6:1-2

2 “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” (NIV)

However, activities that fall into the category of gender non-conformity, both of married and non-married persons, who struggle with transgenderism, may fall into the category of sinful rebellion against God’s design and may be grounds for counsel and possible church discipline.

##### Q. What about children?

Children who exhibit transgender issues and their parents need the strong support of the church and professional help that honors biblical teachings. Since there is evidence that most children outgrow signs of gender confusion by the time of puberty, we discourage parental over-reaction or any early exploration of transsexual transitional surgery.

Proverbs 22:6

6 “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” (NIV)

It may be that transgenderism is to be considered as a birth defect for which we would seek medical or therapeutic remedy. However, this classification does not give a clear path forward in our discussion in that the essential question of where the “defect” is present remains. If the “defect” is in the genitals then the correction would be re-assignment surgery. However, if the “defect” is in the perception of sexuality and, therefore, in the mind, a different approach would need to be taken. This is the very kind of question that should cause us to pause, discuss and understand prior to taking “corrective” action.

Q. What about serving in the church?

Generally speaking, we must not allow the psychological needs and struggle of one person (or a small number) to dominate the attention and energies of the entire congregation or distract us from the mission that God has given us in the world. Therefore, leadership and teaching roles would be restricted for those persons who are openly struggling with gender identity issues.

Q. What about church membership?

We encourage the members of Quail Lakes Baptist Church to conduct themselves in such a way that there never will be any question as to their gender identification as biological males or biological females. Therefore, we will not grant church membership to an individual who manifests a rebellion regarding their God-given biological sexual identity in dress or activity. The individual who, even though struggling in this area, is faithfully seeking to maintain and manifest God's birth assigned sexual identity would be welcome into church membership.

V. Implications and conclusion

We should never belittle those suffering from transgenderism; they are people for whom Christ died, and our neighbors who are to be loved and cared for. In a fallen world, all of us are alienated in some sense from what we were meant to be, and that reality manifests itself differently from person to person.

While continuing to extend love and compassion to those who struggle with the inner turmoil of transgenderism, we must oppose efforts of these individuals to alter their bodies or appearance to seek to conform to a self-perception that is at variance with their biological birth gender. This includes gender-reassignment surgery, some forms of hormone therapy which are designed to change the sexual appearance, as well as cross-dressing. All human desires must function in alignment with biblical teaching even if doing so will be difficult.

We realize that this will mean a continued element of distress for those who suffer; however, we trust that God will provide the strength needed to live as fully human and righteously Christian even with such distress.

We also oppose any cultural efforts to validate and advance transgenderism and a "fluid" approach to human sexuality as normalized for society. We grieve that human fallenness has resulted in such manifestations; however, knowing that this is not God's will or design we must not adopt these approaches as valid.

We feel that the principles explained in Paul's letter to the Corinthians still are applicable. They are,

1 Corinthians 7:17-24

“...each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. 18 Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. 20 Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. 21 Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you-although if you can gain your freedom, do so. 22 For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. 24 Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.” (NIV)

This paper has made no attempt to follow academic protocol when using material derived from sources except when quoting such material verbatim. The following sources were consulted in the development of this paper...

Confronting the Transgender Storm – A Sermon on Deuteronomy 22:5, Jason S. DeRouchie, PHD.

On Transgender Identity, Southern Baptist Convention, Baltimore MD, 2014

Gender Dysphoria- A Pastoral Letter, Steve Froelich.

A Wesleyan View of Gender Identity and Expression. The Disciple, 2016, Revised 2017.

Understanding the Transgender Phenomenon, Mark Yarhouse, Christianity Today, 2015.

What the Transgender Debate Means for the Church, Russel Moore. [www.russelmoore.com](http://www.russelmoore.com), 2017.

Transgender Activity in the Church, Matt Brannaugh, 2013

The Biblical Ethics of Transgender Operations, George C. Scipione, Journal of Biblical Ethics in Medicine, Vol. 5 No. 2