

Week 7

Respect, Honesty, Truth and Love for Those Facing Gender Dysphoria and Transgenderism

At Hope we often talk about **matter** and **manner** - this is where we're looking for unity, not uniformity of thought during these small group discussions. We should expect a range of thoughts on various topics, because our personality, experience, friends & family, upbringing, etc. all come into play as we shape our thoughts. Let's remember we all need Jesus and his grace is sufficient to cover each of us and our struggles, past or present.

How can we have a conversation that can honor God, the bible and each other?
Can we challenge ourselves to use this time to learn, listen and grow together?

? Any favorite childhood games?

Have you ever played the pool game (not billiards) Marco Polo?

A kid shouting, "Marco?" Then others replying, "Polo!" And so it goes on, "Marco? Polo!" While one person, with their eyes closed tightly, tries to tag anyone else in the water, so then they'd take over as the sightless seeker. Sometimes kids snuck out of the pool and the player seeking the others would sense it, warranting a cry of, "Fish out of water!" If a player was indeed out of the water, they would become the seeker.



That's how an increasing number of people feel when discussing gender. And that's what we're looking at in this study.

Gender dysphoria is defined as the feeling of discomfort or distress that might occur in people whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth or sex-related physical characteristics. ([More info from Mayo Clinic](#))

Transgender is an umbrella term used to capture the spectrum of gender identity and gender-expression diversity. Gender identity is the internal sense of being male, female, neither or both. Gender expression — often an extension of gender identity — involves the expression of a person's gender identity through social roles, appearance and behaviors. ([More info from Mayo Clinic](#))

Leader's Note: Historically-speaking, this is a very new topic. So do not put pressure on yourself to know or say the correct thing at all times. There is grace enough for all of us.

With that said, we can speak with a degree of confidence that God created them male and female. And though gender dysphoria is a reality, even for a segment of us in the church, culture's proposed solutions to this many times don't match God's creational intent.

This week we will lean into God's beautiful design and challenge ourselves to approach conversations and actions through the lens of the gospel.

Back to the Beginning

Genesis 1:1-31

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

⁶ And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

⁹ And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." ²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." ²³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

²⁹ Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

? In the beginning, God created them male and female. Consider and list all the other pairs of creation in chapter 1. What, if anything, do you make of God creating these various realities in advance of the creation of male and female?

Possible answers: light/darkness; day/night; land/seas; sun/moon. These realities do speak of polarity or binary. Similarly, the binary of male and female is communicated quite clearly in v. 27.

? What were your first understandings of gender and sexuality? What are your first memories of thinking “I’m a boy” or “I’m a girl”? And who gave a significant definition for you of what boys and girls are like?

Possible answers: share examples

? The concept of total depravity does not mean that everything is as bad as it could possibly be, but rather that every single thing is impacted by sin. So it stands to reason that even the connection between one’s biological sex and gender would be detrimentally impacted. Girls and boys may not see themselves fitting into the mold of women and men, respectively, that they’re being shown. How have you observed the Church, your local church, or Hope define manhood or womanhood whether explicitly or implicitly? Have you ever felt like you didn’t perfectly fit the mold that was expected?

Possible answers: share examples

More to Consider

Galatians 3:28 (again, note the binary examples)

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Mark 10:1-8

Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them.

² Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”

³ “What did Moses command you?” he replied.

⁴ They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.”

⁵ “It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied. ⁶ “But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ⁷ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸ and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh.

? What do you believe the church should communicate and demonstrate in relationship to those who experience gender dysphoria? To those who identify as transgender?

Possible answers: Gender dysphoria: God loves you. We love you. Who are you talking to about this?

What's been difficult? What's been helpful? Where did you first experience dysphoria? What were your examples of manhood or womanhood?

The majority of Christians hold to a view that feelings of dysphoria are comparable to the person saying, "I don't feel like I fit." This feeling of "I don't fit" is a universal human experience at some point in some area of life. So it shouldn't come as a surprise when that happens in the area of gender/sex.

The big difference between the world and the church is concerning responses. "How should we respond to such feelings of dysphoria?" That's where the world's value system often says, "Give in to those feelings." And the church would hold to an approach of examining such feelings while upholding the dignity of the person's (God-given) biological sex.

Transgender: God loves you. We love you. How much of the Christian message gets shared beyond these two will remain to be seen. They may not care to hear what you, or the bible, or the church, or God thinks. We might consider the value of trying to make clear God's truth over and even to the exclusion of making clear God's love and forgiveness and kindness and compassion.

Real Life Scenario

Imagine you're a parent of a teenager. That teen informs you that they're transgender and you are surprised by this seemingly sudden declaration. What types of questions would you ask? What messages would you want to communicate in that moment or in the weeks following?

Possible answers: Questions to ask: Can you tell us more about how you've come to this place? Who have you been talking with on this journey? What have you heard them say in response? What about this journey has been difficult? What's been helpful to you? Is there anything that you would ask/expect of me as your parent?

Messages to communicate: You are loved. You are not alone. We hear you. We see you. We care about you. We're not going anywhere. We're here for you.

Christian parents have had conflicting opinions about when is the time/place to make clear that this decision doesn't square with their belief system. Some believe it is unnecessary due to previous conversations. As the person is their child, many believe it's impossible for them not to know the belief system of their parents. Others think it's still important to make clear that this decision doesn't square with their belief system.

For Discussion and Accountability

? In all honesty, what is your natural reaction to a transgender person? How could the good news of Jesus affect our words and actions as we interact?

? How would you like this group to hold you accountable to growing in this area?

Additional Resources

- *Embodied* by Preston Sprinkle