

## Gender Identity Resource Paper

Lightbearers resource papers are designed as a resource to Lightbearers staff as they interact with students and partners and are asked to provide wisdom on a variety of topics. These papers should be considered an internal resource providing clarity on a sound evangelical stance on particular issues.

Foundational to each paper is the perspective that the Gospel is primary recognizing that the Gospel impacts every corner of life (1 Corinthians 6:20); therefore, we aim to provide staff with direction that is Biblically sound and points them to view any issue through the lens of the Gospel.

***What drives this particular paper?*** *Students are living in the midst of a gender revolution that would try to put our created biological make-up and our gender identity in opposition. In the words of Albert Mohler, “the ideology of the transgender revolution claims that there is a distinction between biological sex and gender identity. And one of the things to note is that even as that distinction is deeply problematic from any biblical worldview, the implication of this, indeed the moral imperative of the revolutionaries is that the gender identity is actually more important than the biological reality.” How then can students think rightly, according to the Word of God in how to live out the created order, as an image bearer of God, and recreated identity as a redeemed believer.*

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### ***A Biblical Foundation of Gender Identity in God's Created Order***

God cares about our bodies, because he created our bodies, and ultimately controls our bodies.<sup>1</sup> While the impact of the fall on creation affects our bodies, the gospel brings redemption—ultimately in the new heavens and new earth—but also in how we think about and treat our bodies even now. David Platt, in his book *Counter Culture*, states, “the gospel’s light infuses *all* of sexuality,”<sup>2</sup> thus, [the gospel] gives us a new identity and having implications on our identity and how we treat our bodies. Paul reminds the Corinthians similarly, in 1 Corinthians 6:13, that “the body is meant for the Lord and the Lord for the body.” Our bodies, therefore, have been created *by* God (as we see in Genesis 1), but also *for* God. This is really a foundational truth that should not skip over, but seek to better understand, as we think about gender identity.

Right out of the opening pages of Scripture, we see God as the author of all creation—Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” At the pinnacle of creation, we see God creating man and woman—Genesis 1:27, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Claire Smith, author of *God’s Good Design*, says that if Genesis 1 is the Google Earth view of God’s creating of man and woman, Genesis 2 is the street view.<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1 gives a broad view, with Genesis 2, giving greater distinctions. Smith goes on to unpack the nuances of this verse, that God *created man* in his own image (man created first); *in the image of God* he created him (uniqueness to being created in God’s image, unlike the other things created in Genesis 1–2); and *male and female* he created *them*.<sup>4</sup> Smith states, “One is male and one is female, and the differences are *essential* to who they are—not coincidental.”<sup>5</sup> God in his providence recognizes that it is not good for man to be alone and so he creates a helper suitable for him. Smith highlights this point by saying,

[The] first human speech recorded in the Bible is a speech of delight about God’s good provision in the creation of woman, and the man’s recognition of their sameness and difference. His

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<sup>1</sup> This is not speaking in terms of fatalism, but more so God’s intent or purpose in creation (cf. Col. 1:16).

<sup>2</sup> David Platt, *Counter Culture: Following Christ in an Anti-Christian Age* (Carol Springs, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), 159.

<sup>3</sup> Claire Smith, *God’s Good Design: What the Bible Really Says About Men and Women* (Youngstown, Ohio: Matthias Media, 2019), 167.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

aloneness hasn't been resolved with someone identical to him (another man), or with something foreign to him (an animal), but with someone essentially like him but opposite to him. His other half, his compliment.<sup>6</sup>

We can see then, that God designs our bodies for his glory and our good—the gospel speaks even to our bodies—God loves us, is for us, and not against us. We are called then to manifest his glory and his gospel in our identity as male and female. As Sharon James, in her book, *Gender Ideology* says, “The creation account tells us that God created man and woman with equal dignity. Both were created to be made in the ‘image of God.’ The invisible God would be represented on earth in visible, human form. The fact that God created us in His image is the reason why every human life, male or female, from conception through death should be afforded dignity.”<sup>7</sup>

### ***Why Gender Identity Must Be Carried Out in Form and Function According to God's Pattern***

Distinction and differences in capacity are key in remaining in the identity and imprint for which God created us as male or female. As James writes, “Nature teaches us both the fundamental *distinction* and the necessary *complementarity* between men and women. As males or females, we have distinct and different capacity for reproduction. While appearance can be altered, this reproductive capacity cannot be adjusted.”<sup>8</sup> While there are distinctions and differences, that does not negate that fact that we are all depraved and are bent toward sexual sin in one form or another. As Platt would note, “We may all have different biological inheritances [related to sin] (Rom. 5:12–21, Ps. 51), but we all have a bent towards sexual sin. Just because [though] we have an inclination towards it doesn't mean we have to act upon it.”<sup>9</sup> A disposition towards the behavior does not justify such behavior. While sex is a gift, the way we behave in sexual activity (whether for good or for sinful purposes) is a morally chosen behavior. Platt exhorts Christians that sex is not the end all. He states, “God prohibits sexual worship—the idolization of sex and infatuation with sexual activity as a fundamental means to personal fulfillment. Sex is good, but not God . . . like anything else that becomes an idol, it will always take more than it gives while diverting the human heart away from the only One who is able to give supreme joy.”<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, the words of Paul speak more clearly to why we should honor God's with our bodies, even to the degree that we seek to fulfill the gender that God has assigned us—“for we were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (1 Cor. 6:20).”

### ***Why the Cross Should Mark Our Identity and the Gospel Mark Our Gender***

We are often fooled to think that God is only concerned with our heart, soul, and spirit and not our body. Our bodies are important to God, because Christ took on flesh for us. Platt says, “Jesus not only died for our bodies; he was born and lived with a body. We tend to minimize [the Incarnation of Jesus] . . . he didn't come as a spirit to die for our sins, but as a child who would grow up among sinners.”<sup>11</sup> He would ultimately die, giving up his body for us, and then be raised in bodily form, that we may have full redemption and reconciliation before a holy God. Our lives should now be marked by repentance—which does not mean perfection, but rather a direction of continually turning from sin and towards Christ. This should be freeing, even if you have dealt with dispositions of ‘tweaking’ your identify or been more caught up in your identity of gender than your identity as God's child. Platt reminds Christians, “The God of the universe cares for you deeply. He sees your body as an invaluable, priceless, eternal treasure of his handiwork. And when you trust in Christ, no matter what sexual sins you have committed with your body, you can be sure that God will one day raise your sin-sick body to be pure, holy, and imperishable with him forever.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>7</sup> Sharon James, *Gender Ideology: What Do Christians Need to Know?* (London: Matthias Media, 2019), 73.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>9</sup> Platt, *Counter Culture*, 166.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 176.

Our identity, therefore, as Christ-followers, is defined ultimately by God's sovereignty and grace. Consider the fact that God has "determined our appointed times and boundary places (Acts 17:26)," so we have no say in where we are born, who our parents are, what language we speak, or what socio-economic status we carry. Because we are created in God's image, bearing a God-shaped identity, it is certain that we are either male or female and nothing can tweak that. The DNA strands will state such, long after our life on this earth ends. So now, as those who have been blood-bought by Christ's sacrifice, regardless of what sin we may have committed within our biological construct or even in sexual conduct, we can be redeemed. As Ed Shaw reminds believers, "God *does* want you to be the real you. He *does* want you to be true to yourself. But the 'you' he's talking about is the 'you' that you are by grace, not by nature. The thing that defines [you] the most in life is not [your] sexuality, but [your] status—in Christ—as a son of God."<sup>13</sup>

What's more, our holiness is directly tied to our happiness or our delighting in God above all else. According to Travis Hearne, "The transgender revolution is fundamentally. A crisis of holiness and happiness . . . church history teaches us that holiness and happiness are two sides of the same coin."<sup>14</sup> The trans movement, would seek to offer a different economy, than the currency of Christlikeness the gospel offers. Hearne goes onto write, "The gospel of the trans movement promises a better life for those who 'correct' their biology. The movement, perpetuated through mainstream cultural outlets, teaches that only when you can authentically express yourself and be affirmed, can you attain happiness."<sup>15</sup>

To divorce holiness and happiness, according to Scripture, leaves us still looking and longing for answers. However, to preach both (together), we find not a temporal pleasure, but a lasting joy. As Jesus, states in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Hearne further notes, "If the fight for purity in the heart does culminate with the promise of delight in the heart, then holiness is just legalism."<sup>16</sup> The gospel offers a better way for those who struggle with gender identity—our salvation—met through sanctification. J.C. Ryle, exhorts, "Let us feel convinced, whatever others may say, that holiness is happiness, and that the man who gets through life most comfortably is the sanctified man."<sup>17</sup> Those who profess Christ, must not conform to the culture winds, but to his Word, his manifold wisdom in creation, and his call to be holy, even as he is holy.

## **Appendices:**

### ***Definition of Terms***

Based on a foundation of Genesis 1, we need to understand the terms used when considering gender identity. Sharon James provides a string of helpful definitions:

"Sex" [has] two categories— the biological sense (male and female) and the sexual sense (sexual intercourse).

"Gender" comes from the Latin term for 'kind' or 'set' . . . synonymous with the first use of the word 'sex.'

"Transgender" is anyone who feels *any* dissatisfaction with their biological sex and those who want to cross dress.

"Transsexuals" are people who are biologically normal and healthy men or women who live (or want to live) as members of the opposite sex.

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<sup>13</sup> Ed Shaw, *Same-Sex Attraction and the Church: The Surprising Plausibility of the Celibate Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 32–33.

<sup>14</sup> Travis Hearne, "The Transgender Revolution as a Happiness Crisis," *Southern Equip*, Equip.sbts.edu, <https://equip.sbts.edu/article/the-transgender-revolution-as-a-happiness-crisis/>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> J.C. Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 75.

“Trans people” may or may not have undertaken hormonal and/or surgical treatment to enable them to more convincingly appear as being a member of the opposite sex.

“Gender dysphoria” means that a person is unhappy with their biological sex. They believe they would be more truly themselves if they were able to live as members of the opposite sex.<sup>18</sup>

The need to address not only the definitions, but the difficulties facing this generation of students today is ultimately bound up in the fact that God cares about our purity. While teen pregnancy and sexual acts amongst Gen Z are lower than previous decades, according to Pew Research<sup>19</sup>, the need to address purity is no less paramount.

#### **Q&A:**

Sharon James not only provides helpful definitions, but a brief Q&A countering the false claims of gender theory:

**Is binary bad?** No! The human race is made up of male and female people. The word ‘binary’ simply means ‘relating to two.’

**Is gender theory a spectrum?** There are an infinite number of ways in which we live out our lives as male and female. We are all different! But that doesn’t mean there are seven billion different gender identities. It doesn’t negate the fundamental reality that we are either men or women.

**Are boy/girl and man/woman just social constructs?** No. They are universal, human realities, not just socially constructed identities. The social roles lived out by men and women vary from place to place and time to time. But sexual differentiation is a biological reality, not just a social construct.

**Do we all have a ‘gender identity’ that may be separate from our sex?** The way men and women live (gender roles) varies from culture to culture. This does not mean, though, that we can each claim a ‘gender identity’ that can be separated from our biological sex.<sup>20</sup>

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Why is the Teen Birth Rate Falling?” PewResearch.org. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/02/why-is-the-teen-birth-rate-falling/>.

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<sup>18</sup> James, *Gender Ideology*, 24–26.

<sup>19</sup> “Why is the Teen Birth Rate Falling?” PewResearch.org, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/02/why-is-the-teen-birth-rate-falling/>.

<sup>20</sup> James, *Gender Ideology*, 42.