

CBC Teaching Series – Tough Topics

Gender Identity

Sunday, 29 January 2017

“There’s a gender in your brain and a gender in your body. For 99% of people, those things are in alignment. For transgender people, they’re mismatched. That’s all it is. It’s not complicated, it’s not a neurosis. It’s a mix-up. It’s a birth defect, like a cleft palate.” Chaz Bono

“We’re human beings, and this is a human life. This is reality for us, and all we ask for is acceptance and validation for what we say that we are. It’s a basic human right.” Andreja Pejic, Transgender model

“When we no longer ask “boy or girl?” in order to start gendering an infant, when the information is as irrelevant as the colour of a child’s eyes... only then will men and women be socially interchangeable and really equal. And when that happens there will no longer be any need for gender at all.” Judith Lorber, quoted by Sharon James in “*Are We all ‘Omnigender’ Now?*” at affinity.org.uk

“There is no agreement on what causes gender dysphoria. Some argue that nature makes the most significant contribution. They promote, for example, the brain-sex theory, according to which transgender people have a male-type brain in a female body, or vice versa. The evidence for this view is far from conclusive. Others believe that nurture—psychological environment in childhood—is the dominant factor. After a thorough survey of the arguments on both sides, one author honestly admits: “We don’t know what causes gender dysphoria”. Given the breadth of the transgender experience, it seems likely that the contributing factors vary from person to person and may include elements of both nature and nurture. In all the uncertainty, however, one thing is clear: those who experience gender dysphoria certainly do not simply choose to do so.” Vaughan Roberts, *Transgender*, pp. 18-19

“We are indeed alienated from our true selves. In that sense, those who are struggling with the transgender issues, they aren’t wrong. They’re just being incredibly honest... According to the Bible, the world is not separated between those who are fully, wonderfully integrated selves, and those who are broken. No: The Bible says we are all broken.” Al Mohler, quoted by Emma Green in *The Atlantic*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/hating-queerness-without-hating-the-queer/413587/>

“If the church must be anything, she must be a safe place for the gender confused and the sexually broken. If she is not safe for that, then we do not believe our own message. We are all broken, all in need of salvation, all in need of grace, and to take a particular struggle and put it outside the bounds reveals we don’t quite understand what it is we believe.” Matt Chandler, Pastor of The Village Church in Dallas, TX

I. Our World and Gender

A. Definitions and Terms Regarding Gender

Definitions taken from dictionary.com, stonewall.org.uk, or wikipedia.org.

1. Gender

- a. Either the male or female division of a species, especially as differentiated by social and cultural roles and behavior.

- b. A similar category of human beings that is outside the male/female binary classification and is based on the individual's personal awareness or identity.
- 2. Gender Identity
 - a. A person's internal sense of their own gender, whether male, female, or something else.
- 3. Gender Dysphoria
 - a. The dysphoria or distress a person experiences as a result of the sex and gender they were assigned at birth.
 - b. Used to describe when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mis-match between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who doesn't feel comfortable with the gender they were assigned at birth.
- 4. Cisgender
 - a. Noting or relating to a person whose gender identity corresponds with that person's biological sex assigned at birth.
 - b. Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. "Non-trans" is also used by some people.
- 5. Transgender
 - a. Noting or relating to a person whose gender identity does not correspond to that person's biological sex assigned at birth.
 - b. Noting or relating to a person who does not conform to societal gender norms or roles.
 - c. An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, cross-dresser, non-binary, genderqueer (GQ).
- 6. Gender Reassignment
 - a. Another way of describing a person's transition. To undergo gender reassignment usually means to undergo some sort of medical intervention, but it can also mean changing names, pronouns, dressing differently and living in their self-identified gender. Gender reassignment is a characteristic that is protected by the Equality Act of 2010.
- 7. Transgender Man
 - a. A term used to describe someone who is assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a man. This may be shortened to trans man, or FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male.
- 8. Transgender Woman
 - a. A term used to describe someone who is assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman. This may be shortened to trans woman, or MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female.
- 9. Transsexual
 - a. This was used in the past as a more medical term (similarly to homosexual) to refer to someone who transitioned to live in the "opposite" gender to the

one assigned at birth. This term is still used by some although many people prefer the term trans or transgender.

10. Transitioning

- a. The steps a trans person may take to live in the gender with which they identify. Each person's transition will involve different things. For some this involves medical intervention, such as hormone therapy and surgeries, but not all trans people want or are able to have this. Transitioning also might involve things such as telling friends and family, dressing differently and changing official documents.

11. Agender

- a. Noting or relating to a person who does not have a specific gender identity or recognizable gender expression.

12. Androgynous

- a. Being both male and female; hermaphroditic.
- b. Having both masculine and feminine characteristics.
- c. Having an ambiguous sexual identity.
- d. Neither clearly masculine nor clearly feminine in appearance.

13. Queer

- a. (Potentially offensive) A term used to refer to a person who is gay or lesbian.
- b. A person whose sexual orientation or gender identity falls outside the heterosexual mainstream of the gender binary.
- c. In the past a derogatory term for LGBT individuals. The term has now been reclaimed by LGBT young people in particular who don't identify with traditional categories around gender identity and sexual orientation but is still viewed as derogatory by some.

14. Gender Fluid

- a. A person whose gender identity varies over time. A gender fluid person may at times identify as male, female, neutrois, or any other non-binary identity, or some combination of identities. Their gender can also vary at random or vary in response to different circumstances.

15. Intersex

- a. An individual having reproductive organs or external sexual characteristics of both male and female.
- b. A term used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female. Intersex people can identify as male, female, or non-binary.
- c. "Up to about 1% of people are born with conditions in which their chromosomes or their sexual or reproductive anatomy does not fit what is typical for men or women."¹ About 1 in 5,000 births (.02%) is affected such that the sex at birth is ambiguous, making it difficult or impossible to determine their sex by their genitalia.
- d. Assigning gender in this situation may be very difficult. Many believe it wise to raise the child according to their genetic sex, and in some cases it may be necessary or wise to later alter the sex from what was assigned at birth.

¹ Vaughan Roberts, *Transgender*, p. 48

These biological challenges are categorically distinct from gender dysphoria.

16. Non-Binary

- a. An umbrella term for a person who does not identify as male or female.

17. Ze/zie/zhe

- a. Genderless pronoun used in place of the definite masculine *he* or the definite feminine *she*. (Similarly: *zhim*, *zhers*, *zhimself*, etc.)

18. Social Constructivism

- a. The idea that societies construct a standard view of the sexes, but these constructions owe more to myth than reality. Males are male, and females are female, because we raise them to fit into socially constructed molds of male and female.

19. Gender Essentialism

- a. The idea that sexes are different in meaningful ways.

B. How We Got Here

1. “The roots of the profound individualism that marks our culture go back to the period of the Enlightenment 300 years ago, when intellectuals began to assert the primacy of human reason over divine revelation...

The Enlightenment began with great confidence that reason could lead us to the truth, but that optimism gradually disappeared. Even the greatest human thinkers can’t agree on fundamental issues. And so, having rejected revelation and lacking confidence in reason, our culture has now largely rejected the concept of objective truth, at least when it comes to big issues, such as meaning and morality.

So where does that leave us? With ourselves as individuals. If we think that truth is objective, then we certainly won’t let any external authority tell us what to think or how to behave—whether it’s the government, a religion, or our family. It’s up to us to draw our own conclusions and live our own lives.”²

2. “Modern authenticity encourages us to create 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 to conform to some moral code that is imposed on us from the outside—by society, our parents, the church, or whoever else. It is deemed to be self-evident that any such imposition would undermine our unique identity... The authentic self believes that personal meaning must be found within ourselves or must resonate with our one-of-a-kind personality.”³
3. “We may have rejected the concept of objective truth as a culture, but we still expect everyone to hold to certain fundamental convictions—and one of them is the absolute right of each individual to define themselves as they wish. Any perceived challenge to that right is regarded as heresy and is strongly resisted, no matter what it’s based on.”⁴
4. “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” Judges 21:25

² Vaughan Roberts, *Transgender*, pp. 25-26

³ Jonathan Grant, *Divine Sex*, p. 30

⁴ Vaughan Roberts, *Transgender*, p. 33

C. Potential Dangers of the World's Current View of Gender

1. Physiological (and psychological) damage to minors.
 - a. "We live at a time in which social agendas often bias the results of research and lead to the development of false medical standards. Those who honorably speak out against this are chastised. Young children are being permanently sterilized and surgically maimed under the guise of treating a condition that would otherwise resolve in over 80% of them. This is criminal."⁵ (This refers to the finding that many children are undergoing life-altering procedures for gender dysphoria, a condition that disappears completely during adolescence for 70-80% of those who experience it.⁶)
2. Psychological distress untreated or worsened.
 - a. Dr. Paul McHugh, former Psychiatrist in Chief at Johns Hopkins Hospital, now opposes gender reassignment surgery, after his hospital found that those who received the surgery experienced no benefit in psychosocial adjustment.
 - b. In short, gender dysphoria has not been successfully treated by surgical gender reassignment procedures.
 - c. "I concluded that to provide a surgical alteration to the body of these unfortunate people was to collaborate with a mental disorder rather than to treat it."⁷
3. A worldview contrary to Scripture and the hope of the Gospel (see below).

II. The Bible and Gender

A. Genesis 1:26-31

1. God creates all people in His image. This is the most fundamental thing about us. More than our feelings, more than our proclivities, more than our aspirations, what is most fundamentally true about us is that we are creations of the living God, bearing His image. This is who we are, and true freedom and satisfaction is found in being God's children, in loving relationship with Him.
2. Because all are made in the image of God, all people are beautiful, glorious, precious, and valuable. God's creating hand makes life valuable. Even those people that seem strange to us are valuable and beautiful in the eyes of God.
3. Humans, as creatures made by God, owe their very lives to Him. This establishes God's fundamental lordship, and we do not have the moral freedom to live and act contrary to our Lord.
4. God creates male and female; two complementary and non-interchangeable versions of humanity. Male and female have both a sameness (humanity and image-bearing) and a dissimilarity (gender). One gender was not sufficient in the eyes of God. Gender is not accidental or incidental in the eyes of God, but part of the essential fabric of His design in creation.

⁵ From the American College of Pediatricians, acped.org/normalizing-gender-dysphoria-is-dangerous-and-unethical

⁶ As reported by Dr. Paul McHugh, *Wall Street Journal*, June 12, 2014

⁷ Dr. Paul McHugh, www.firstthings.com/article/2004/11/surgical-sex

5. The first command given to this pair is to be fruitful and multiply, filling the earth with God's image. Reproduction, which requires two complementary genders, is a basic command from God for humanity.
6. God gave both male and female the responsibility of stewarding creation. Human and global flourishing occurs when the two genders work together in complement.
7. God called this creation, as male and female, very good.

B. Genesis 2:7

1. Mankind is created both body and soul, "from the dirt and with the breath of life from God." The real "us" is who we are both body and soul, material and immaterial, biology and psychology. Both are essential to our identity, and when humans are healthy, body and soul operate together in harmony.

C. Genesis 2:15-25

1. Man was incomplete on his own. So, woman is created as a complement to man. One gender is not sufficient in God's plan for humanity, and both genders are necessary for a healthy and good humanity. Neither can be diminished or denied.
2. The two genders, equal in value and image-bearing, are intentionally differentiated. The Bible makes no mention of fluidity in gender, additional categories of humanity, or fuzziness of boundaries between man and woman.
3. This gender distinction is fundamental to God's good design for humanity, and ought to be celebrated by humanity. We fail and rebel when we call into question the good design of the Lord who gave us life and the world. Human prospering will inevitably be hindered by the rejection of God's plan of genders. To reject God's design regarding gender is a matter of worship. We either submit to God as Lord in this matter, or we do not.
4. The two sexes are designed not to compete with one another, but to cooperate with one another. This is the only way humanity flourishes.

D. Genesis 3

1. The tree represents the fact that God alone has the authority to define good and evil (to eat of the tree is evil, to abstain from the tree and enjoy all the other trees is good). Humanity rebelled against this authority by wanting to place itself in the position of determining good and evil, instead of God. The first sin of humanity was trying to take God's place of authority over what is right and wrong.
2. This first sin is emblematic and predictive of all sin. Humanity is convinced that freedom and fulfillment is found not in submission to God, but in throwing off the shackles of God's authority and determining for ourselves who are and who we ought to be.
3. The fall brought a curse upon humanity. Death entered, and humanity was broken in both body and soul. This explains the existence of gender dysphoria. We are pervasively broken by the fall. Therefore, any real and lasting solution for gender dysphoria must address this fundamental brokenness; it must be a solution that addresses the heart of the whole human condition.
4. Satan's promise of freedom and fulfillment resulted not in us becoming like God, but in us becoming less human; broken biologically, psychologically, spiritually,

emotionally, etc. Satan is a liar and deceiver from the beginning, and actively propagates lies that infect God's image-bearers.

5. In part because of this holistic brokenness, it can be difficult to determine the cause of any gender dysphoria. It may be a result of personal and volitional sin/rebellion, or it may simply be a byproduct of the curse in general and the brokenness we are born into. Therefore, we must be very hesitant to attribute gender dysphoria to willful sin or fault/guilt.
6. So, we may not have chosen the type of brokenness we are born into, or the nurture and nature that shapes who we are individually. We may not willfully choose to experience gender dysphoria, or some internal conflict of gender. However, we are all responsible for how we respond to the brokenness manifested in us. As God's creatures we are called to obedience to Him in the midst of our brokenness.

E. Deuteronomy 22:5

1. Cross-dressing, an outward manifestation of blurring gender lines, is forbidden by God. While we are not under the laws of the Old Covenant, this law does reveal God's attitude toward blurring the lines of gender, a distinction that is established ultimately not in the Mosaic Law but in creation itself.

F. Jeremiah 17:19

1. Our hearts are deceitful. What we feel is often not a reliable measure of truth or reality.

G. Matthew 19:4-5

1. Jesus affirms that God created us with two genders, male and female. The union of two complementary genders is not inconsequential to God or Jesus.

H. Ephesians 5:22-33

1. The genders of male and female are integral to understanding the Gospel. God created us as male and female complements so that, in the loving union of the two distinct genders, we might have a picture of the loving relationship of Christ and His Bride, the Church.
2. For this reason—that marriage of man and woman is a God-ordained living illustration of the Gospel—gender is not an irrelevant, inconsequential, or take-it-or-leave-it matter to God.

I. 1 Corinthians 6:13,15

1. Our bodies belong to God before they belong to us. We don't have the right to do with our bodies what is contrary to God and His Word.

J. 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

1. Our broken and fallen selves, body and soul, will be restored in the future resurrection made possible by Jesus Christ. For eternity, we will not live as ethereal spirits, but as ensouled bodies (and embodied souls). This restoration of integrated body and soul, true wholeness, is only made available through faith in Jesus Christ.
2. While the Gospel does and can bring holistic healing in this life, we should not demand or anticipate full healing before the bodily resurrection and new creation.

K. Galatians 3:26-29

1. This passage says that in Christ there is neither male nor female; we are one in Jesus.
2. This does not imply that all means of human classification are ended, as if gender or nationality/ethnicity no longer exist.
3. The point is, rather, that in the community of Christ, all have equal access to God and life in Him. This is because Christ's salvation is freely offered to all people.
4. Note that in Revelation, the worship in heaven features people from every tribe, nation, etc. National/ethnic distinctions are not eliminated, but unified (and celebrated) in heaven. This tells us that in some sense, there is still "Jew and Greek" in heaven. So, this passage in Galatians cannot mean that all distinctions of ethnicity are eliminated in Christ, and it likewise cannot mean that gender is eliminated.

L. What the Bible Does Not Say

1. The Bible does not provide a long and clear definition of what manhood and womanhood look like in practice. We will get more into the roles of men and women next month. But for now we must be careful to not push the Bible to say more than what it does actually say about what it means to be a man or a woman. We must recognize that expressions of masculinity and femininity are at least partially culturally formed, and thus some expressions of masculinity and femininity are fluid, even if gender itself is not.
2. "Often cultures will develop inflexible social codes that limit what is deemed to be masculine or feminine. But these go way beyond what the Bible says, and can lead to real tension and difficulty for those who don't quite fit those patterns. So the boy who loves dolls and prefers ballet to football may be branded as "gay" or "girly". And the girl who prefers Action Man to Barbie and likes to climb trees is labelled a tomboy. Scripture nowhere gives a clear, narrow set of rules as to what a man or woman should be like, or a boy or a girl."⁸
3. When Christians criticize or mock those who don't conform to gender stereotypes that are culturally conditioned, we should not be surprised when those criticized or mocked turn to a different community that will provide a more welcoming and affirming environment, and with it an alternate worldview and prescription for fulfillment and wholeness.

III. The Gospel and Identity

A. Matthew 11:28

1. We find rest from our struggles not in ourselves, or fully expressing all that we feel and desire. Rather, true rest for the weary is found outside of ourselves in Christ.

B. Mark 2:13-17, Matthew 9:10-13

1. Jesus eats with sinners and tax collectors. He welcomes sinners in His presence.
2. The church must also welcome all kinds of sinners into its presence. Christ calls broken people to Him, not those who are convinced they have no need of Him. If the church didn't welcome sinners, the church would be empty. That said, we

⁸ Vaughan Roberts, *Transgender*, p. 43

must always remember also that while Jesus welcomes all sinners, Jesus also rescues and transforms sinners, which is the whole hope of the Gospel.

C. John 1:12

1. Those who know Christ are true children of God, restored to our most fundamental and glorious creation identity as God's children.

D. John 10:10

1. True, abundant, and eternal life is found in Jesus, not in any other 'gospel'. True life is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, found in life and peace with God. No other hope, such as a hope wrapped up in self-expression, actualization, or realization, will ultimately satisfy or free us.

E. Romans 3:28

1. We are saved not by works but by faith. This means that a transgender person need only have faith in Christ to be saved, just as anyone else. Sanctification, growing into conformity to Christ and His Word, etc., follows after salvation. So we need not fix ourselves, or others, before becoming genuinely Christian. Just the opposite, we cannot grow in Christ until after Christ has granted us life in Him through the Spirit. Then the Spirit changes us. In short, we don't try to fix people before introducing them to Jesus. Mercy, compassion, and the Gospel come first.

F. Romans 6:5-11

1. In Christ we are dead to sin and our old selves, and alive in Christ with God. The Gospel mandates fundamental change and death to the old self. It promises a new life and source of life.
2. "True freedom is found in embracing and being *who we are*. A fish that decides to make a bid for freedom by jumping out of the water will not be free—because it is created to live in the environment of water. And as soon as we try and become what we are not, far from enjoying freedom, we can't expect to flourish."⁹

G. Galatians 1:8-9

1. We do not preach another gospel; that there is true happiness found in a life contrary to the true Gospel and Word of God. Any other gospel or story of fulfillment and/or salvation is a false hope. And to perpetuate another, false hope is a damaging evil.

H. Romans 12:1-3

1. To follow Christ means to sacrifice ourselves, to put to death inclinations that counter God (see Mark 8:34). Putting ourselves to death as living sacrifices is never easy.
2. Self-denial is an essential aspect of Christian discipleship.
3. As Christians, we are not to be conformed to the way this world thinks.
4. Our minds can be and are renewed in Christ. This may or may not take away feelings of gender dysphoria. We can trust that God is able to change our feelings, and pray that He will, but we should be cautious in presuming He will in this life, or demanding that He does. But the Gospel does require us to at least think

⁹ Vaughan Roberts, *Transgender*, p. 36

differently *about* all of life, including matters of sex and sexuality. We must grow in affirming what God in His Word affirms, even if we struggle to live the practical implications.

5. God's will (revealed in His Word) is perfect and wonderful. Ultimately, your view on gender will be determined by whether you truly believe God's Word and Gospel.

"The way in which God works to grow us in Christian maturity is rarely by removing the obstacles of our disordered bodies and minds. Very often, God allows them to continue. And amazingly, through the ongoing struggle with our disordered bodies and minds God renews the inner person, so that we become more and more like Christ." Vaughan Roberts, *Transgender*, p. 60

"We are broken physically, broken psychologically, broken in our hearts—but if we have trusted in Christ, God has begun that transformation in us which will continue until completion, when at last we'll be put back together—body and soul perfectly integrated for the glory of God." Vaughan Roberts, *Transgender*, p. 74

IV. For Further Study

A. Books

1. *Transgender* by Vaughan Roberts
2. *Understanding Gender Dysphoria* by Mark Yarhouse
3. *The Grand Design* by Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock

B. Blog Posts and Articles

1. <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/kevindeyoung/2016/09/08/what-does-the-bible-say-about-transgenderism/>
2. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-christian-response-to-gender-dysphoria>
3. http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/29/us/politics/supreme-court-to-rule-in-transgender-access-case.html?_r=0
4. <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/trevinwax/2016/05/03/7-questions-transgender-theories/>
5. <http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2015/12/when-you-detach-the-earth-from-the-sun>
6. <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/hating-queerness-without-hating-the-queer/413587/>
7. <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/06/15108/>

C. Audio

1. <https://go.efca.org/theology-conference-resources>
-scroll down to "Post Conference- The Ministry of the Gospel and Gender Dysphoria"
2. http://www.thespurgeonfellowship.org/media_portland.htm
"Hot Button Theological Issues Part 1" –under:
-2016-2017 Meetings →January 19-21, 2016 →Todd Miles
-Worthy listen; but forgive the inaudible interruptions and poor audio quality!