

Transgender

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 November 2019

Preacher: Greg Hendrickson

[0:00] Why don't we begin with prayer. Father, thank you for gathering us here this morning, and thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to come together as believers on Sundays, primarily because of your resurrection from the dead and the way that that gives us hope and joy and perseverance.

And we thank you, Lord, that because you are risen, we know that your work on the cross was complete. And we thank you for the empowerment of your Holy Spirit that can help us face whatever we are walking through right now.

We pray for our time together this morning as we consider the question of transgender identity and what your word has to say to that and how to interact fruitfully with one another and with our neighbors about these questions.

We pray that this would be a fruitful conversation together and that you would be at work among us and in us. Be shaping us into the people who you have called us to be that we may reflect Christ in our world today.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. All right. So we are in the middle of our class on gender and sexuality, and today we are looking at the question of transgender identity.

[1:27] So we began this class looking at how we're all beautiful because we're made in the image of God and broken because of sin and its effects. We looked at sort of two positive visions the Bible gives us about how our gender and sexuality can be sort of a witness to Christ's redemption, namely through Christ-centered marriage and through consecrated Christian singleness.

We looked at how we need both of those expressions in the church to bear witness to the fullness of who Christ is. And now we're looking at sort of a series of challenging issues that are sort of both things that our culture is talking a lot about, as well as things that I think as a church we need to sort of think through together.

So today we are looking at the question of transgender. So let me just introduce this, a few statistics. I've listed some things here.

There's a growing prominence of transgender individuals in our culture. So according to a survey from 2016, about 1.4 million adults in the U.S. identify as transgender.

The total population of the U.S. is 330 million, but that includes adults and children. So if you include adults, about 230 million adults. So that's about 0.6% of the adult population.

[2:49] That's about double the percentage that a similar survey found 10 years prior. So particularly I think since the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in 2015, sort of the transgender questions have gained a growing prominence.

They're sort of the focus of most political debates about gender and sexuality is now sort of focused on this area. So, for example, should there have been laws passed on both sides in some states saying public bathrooms are based on your biological sex and other states say public bathrooms, you can go into whatever public bathroom you want based on your sort of self-conception of your own gender identity.

There's been debates about public school curricula, transgender athletes. So in Connecticut, the winner of the women's track and field, one of the track and field competitions in the last couple of years has been a biological male who transitioned to living as a female.

And so there's been debates about is this fair? And all kinds of complicated questions. Whether transgender individuals have the right to serve in all branches of the military and what accommodations must be made for them.

And that one's sort of still hanging, whether the Supreme Court is about to consider whether gender identity is protected under discrimination laws in the same way that race is. Medicare now does cover what is – there's a bunch of names for this.

[4:27] It used to be called a sex change operation. Now I think the sort of preferred name is a gender-affirming surgery, but gender reassignment surgery, sex reassignment surgery, there's all kinds of these names.

But basically surgical treatments and hormone treatments for people who want to sort of change from one gender to another. Now I think many people may look at these things and say, wow, like everything's sort of going in this direction.

But at the same point, if you look at the statistics, transgender individuals are still – are personally often very vulnerable. So 40 percent, according to one – it's more than one survey that's found this, but 40 percent of transgender individuals in the United States have attempted suicide during their lifetime, compared to about 5 percent of the general population.

A survey conducted in Sweden, and Sweden's a country that has had sort of very progressive, sort of pro-transgender laws for a longer time.

But a recent survey said those diagnosed with gender incongruence were about six times as likely to have had a health care visit due to a mood or anxiety disorder, sort of anxiety or depression of some kind usually, more than six times as likely to have been hospitalized after a suicide attempt.

[5:51] So that's just a little bit of where we are culturally. I want to sort of not immediately try to weigh in on that, but I want to step back a little bit and start by looking at the larger biblical story and its implications, and then how do we as Christians sort of understand these things.

So first couple of terms, just how terms are currently used. Sex is usually used to refer to a person's biological status, right? Your genitals or your, you know, XX or XY chromosomes.

Gender is used often to refer to sort of cultural attitudes, feelings, behaviors that a culture associates with, you know, being male or being female.

And then what are sometimes called intersex conditions. So these are called disorders of sex development. So this is when a person's biological sex from birth is not clearly male or female.

Now this is very rare, but it does happen. And in fact, a year or two ago I was talking with a pastor in the Boston area who there's a child born to a couple in his congregation who had one of these conditions.

[7:01] And the parents were trying to discern what do we do here. So one of the questions is do you do an early sort of surgical intervention? But there's a variety of these conditions.

Some are more serious than others, but often there's some kind of an abnormality between the sex chromosomes, sort of XX or XY, or occasionally there's sort of a, there's like an XXY, I think, one.

Sometimes there's a bit of a mismatch or an ambiguity in sort of the body of a child when they're born. So there's controversy within the medical community about should we try to sort of fix this now, or should we just let it be and let it develop as it may, and different conditions, you know, sometimes lean one way or the other.

So this is a complicated, just sort of a biological condition that some people are born with. The other thing that we're talking about, which is different, is gender dysphoria or gender incongruence.

So this is when someone's deeply felt gender identity does not correspond to their biological sex. So, for example, a person who was born as a boy may feel and act like a girl, right?

[8 : 28] People with gender dysphoria desire to live as a member of the opposite sex and often dress and use mannerisms associated with the other gender. Now, epidemiologists estimate about 5%, perhaps up to 5%, of kids without an intersex condition, without a biological condition, sort of frequently or sometimes wish to be the opposite sex.

Now, for the vast majority of children, somewhere between 80% and 90% who feel this way during childhood or during early adolescence, these feelings resolve as they grow up into adulthood and don't continue in the majority of cases.

And people wonder why does this happen, and the causes are debated and they're uncertain. And sort of a prominent theory is often sort of explained in a simplified way like this.

For most people, the shape of their brain corresponds to their biological sex. So there's actually studies about how women's brains and men's brains actually just in various parts of the brain are actually shaped differently and sort of interact with the world differently.

But one theory is that for some people, there's sort of a mismatch and your body is one way, but your brain is sort of oriented the other way. And so that's why some people identify as transgender.

[9 : 53] But now, this theory is not proven. And again, brain studies are very difficult because how do you study the brain of a living person? Well, there's some limitations, right? You can't take it out, right?

And you can't sort of handle it directly. So all brain studies are challenging in just how to do that.

And anyway, that's an open question. So there may be a biological component to that. There may be other factors involved.

You know, there's obviously cultural factors involved at the level of whether people are sort of encouraged to sort of pursue or identify this way.

So in various cultures throughout history, there are occasional examples of people who are born as males but live much of their life sort of as females or vice versa. The sort of first widely publicized person to go through a sex reassignment surgery was a World War II veteran who was a biological male who had surgery and identified as a female by the name of Christine Jorgensen.

[11 : 13] There was a couple earlier examples in Europe in the 1930s. There was one person who died in the course of surgery attempting to do this. Anyway, that's just a little bit of the sort of terms and history.

So what's the biblical framework? How do we begin to sort of understand and interact with these questions? Well, as we've looked at in this class, sort of God's intention for us in making us, we're made in God's image.

Every person is made in God's image. And God's made us male and female in the beginning. And that's sort of God's a good thing that God has made us as men or as women.

And this whole idea of sort of the male-female, the communion between male and female, both at a sort of broad level sort of in the human race as well as particularly in marriage, is sort of an echo of the divine human communion.

That phrase comes from actually Pope John Paul II, who wrote a long, had a long series of addresses called the theology of the body, which are actually quite insightful.

[12:17] Many of them are just sort of detailed expositions of Genesis and Ephesians and some other things. But there's actually some quite, you know, I wouldn't go with him on every conclusion, but there's a lot of good stuff in there.

And then in the fall, right, but we don't, but none of us experience life as God, fully as God originally intended it, right? The fall touches every part of us, including our bodies, our sense of who we are in our gender, our sort of sexual desires and expressions.

You know, the fall sort of, there's no part of us that is free from the effects of the fall. So our minds, you know, our self-perceptions and self-concepts, the assumptions we make about other people.

I mean, how many assumptions do we make about other people that are later proven wrong, right? Think about that, right? That's evidence of we live in a fallen world. We have trouble communicating.

We have trouble understanding each other. We have trouble sort of relating to each other. You know, we all experience this in some way or other. Now, I think for many of us who feel comfortable in our own bodies and comfortable in our own biological sex, it's particularly hard to empathize or understand what it would be like to have gender dysphoria.

[13:42] I think that for many people, it's easier to think about, you know, if, say, let's say you are a heterosexual male or female, right? It's probably easier for most people to think about what it would be like to have same-sex attractions than to wish that you were the completely opposite gender.

Sort of, it's sort of a leap further, and I think some people particularly feel, that's why this issue can be particularly challenging because people are like, well, why would, why would I, why would anyone want to be, you know, you're a male.

Like, why would you want to be a female, or you're a female. Like, why would you want to be a male. But I think stepping back and realizing that we live in a fallen world, right?

And the fall affects all of us. There's, so the fact that some people experience sort of biological conditions, intersex conditions, or gender dysphoria, sort of a deep sense that I feel like I'm trapped in the wrong body.

There's something, I feel like there's something fundamentally wrong with the body that I was given or that needs to be changed in order to sort of become who I really am. Now, if we think about that more broadly, that shouldn't be a surprise, living in a fallen world.

[15:01] And even if it's sort of hard to initially relate to for some of us, I think if we sort of think a little deeper, you know, how many of us have some, have experienced some aspect of our body that we feel like just where we have felt either deeply hurt or violated or shameful or something that we feel like just is broken or frustrating, you know, maybe a condition that you can't change like, you know, blindness or whatever, right?

Something you've had since birth or something that develops as you grow, right? You know, if we think in that way, I think we can sort of begin to, this doesn't feel as sort of alien or unusual, right?

We live in a broken, frustrating world. All of us are alienated from who we're designed to be, and we await the final redemption of our bodies. So I think part of what I want to say is, you know, if this feels initially just very difficult to identify with someone who identifies as transgender, let's not just stay there, but let's try to, like, part of loving someone is trying to understand them and trying to sort of understand and learn about what it's like to be them and what they're walking through.

So I think we shouldn't just stay in a sort of, like, that's weird, and I will never really understand that, and I'm just going to try to avoid that. Now, that's not really a Christian posture of love, right?

So we want to try to go beyond that. But we see in the coming of Christ, God's redemption being extended to all kinds of sinners and all kinds of brokenness. Now, okay, in light of this biblical story, how do we understand and respond to people who experience gender dysphoria or who identify as transgender?

[16:54] So a few books on this topic. So this is a small little book, and it is where I would recommend any Christian begin if you're trying to think through this issue.

So it's by Vaughn Roberts, who's a British pastor, and there's copies of this on the bookstall. Well, another book is by a Christian psychologist named Mark Yarhouse.

So this gets into more sort of clinical, psychological details. He's counseled people with gender dysphoria. There's a few areas where I wish he would be a little more clear on some of the boundaries of sort of what is and isn't appropriate for Christians.

I think he leaves a few questions a little more open than I would want to, but on the whole, I think there's a lot of good stuff in here. And a third book is Andrew Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate, What Does the Bible Actually Say About Gender Identity?*

And that covers sort of a broad variety of things. But Yarhouse sort of outlines three common frameworks for understanding gender dysphoria. And I think his frameworks are helpful, so I want to use this as a frame for this lesson.

[18:05] So the first framework is the integrity framework, and that sort of emphasizes God's design in creation, right? Emphasizes sort of the first part of the biblical story. The sacredness of humanity as created male and female.

And so in this framework, God made you male or female, and so the encouragement is live into that. Live according to that. Express yourself in a way that's consistent with that.

I think there is biblical support for this view in both the Old and New Testaments. God instructs the nation of Israel in the Old Testament and the Christian church in the New Testament to preserve and reflect the goodness of the creation order, including male and female distinctions.

So the Old Testament specifically prohibited cross-dressing, sort of intentionally appearing as the opposite sex, and also genital mutilation, which happens at some times in the ancient world.

So men were occasionally castrated because of a ritual of dedication to a pagan god or because they had a special official position, that of a eunuch in the king's service, and God wanted such practices to have no place among his people, and he did not want that to become an accepted or common practice among the people of Israel.

[19:24] So the New Testament reaffirms male-female distinctions, even as it speaks powerfully to the unity and equal value and interdependence of men and women in Christ.

So Galatians 3.28 talks about how we share a common salvation. Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female are all one in Christ. Now some people will quote that verse, Genesis 3.28, and attempt to argue that Christians can get rid of or transcend, sort of rise above, the male-female binary.

And so Christians can embrace, you know, and fully approve of sort of a transgender identity, and that should have an important place in the church, and that's just part of the whole spectrum.

But that's not Paul's intention in the verse. And I think it's not consistent with sort of the encouragement that Scripture places that being male or being female is a gift from God.

The New Testament de-emphasizes boundaries and distinctions based on race and class, but in several places it affirms the abiding goodness of humanity as male and female. So there's various passages that could be pointed to.

[20:38] 1 Corinthians 11 is sort of a sticky, thorny passage about head coverings. But whatever the passage is teaching, it's encouraging people to sort of receive their maleness or femaleness as a gift from God and to sort of express that sort of in appropriate signs.

So however you interpret the details of that, I think it supports the point. There's other passages I've listed. And most clearly, Jesus himself reaffirmed God's design of humanity as male and female.

It's not just Paul's teaching. Jesus did too. But there's a second framework, not only the integrity framework, but second, the disability framework.

So this is another approach to gender dysphoria, and it sees it as analogous to other forms of impairment that aren't voluntarily chosen, right? Some people are born blind, are developed blindness over the course of their life.

Some people struggle with depression or other things. And this view emphasizes we live in a fallen world, and because we are all fallen, we should respond compassionately to people who experience gender dysphoria and to seek to alleviate some of the misery and pain that they experience.

[21:48] I think, again, we find biblical support for this view throughout the Bible. So I've listed some verses particularly about eunuchs, right? So eunuchs were people were most often, sometimes the word is used more broadly to just defer to any official in the king's service, but usually it was referred to a male who had been castrated for the sake of sort of, so he would not have, so he could not get married, would not get married, and could not produce children, and would not have any descendants, and would be loyal only to the king and not to his sort of progeny.

And we saw how in the Old Testament, you know, God said, no, don't practice castration. That is not what God's people should be doing. But in Isaiah we saw God promised that there would be a place in his house even for eunuchs who choose what pleases me and hold fast my covenant.

But in the Old Covenant, that really was only a future hope. It wasn't really a present reality. And interestingly, Jesus refers to eunuchs in Matthew 19, 11, and 12.

Now, he's using the eunuch as a figure. So what he said, now, but, you know, in Jesus' Jewish culture, eunuchs were basically like, they were like lepers, like stay away from them.

Their, you know, their bodies do not reflect God's creational design. They've been damaged, and so keep your distance. They don't belong.

[23:20] So I've included a quotation from Josephus and a Roman official, right? So eunuchs, described eunuchs as, exiles from the society of the human race, belonging neither to one sex nor the other.

And I think many people today who have an intersexual condition biologically or who experience gender dysphoria and really feel like they're somehow trapped in the wrong body have felt a similarly sort of deep and persistent sense of alienation and rejection and not belonging.

And I think their experience today may have some parallels to how a castrated eunuch might have felt in the time of Jesus. And in this context, I think Jesus' words are perhaps a bit surprising.

So first, Jesus says, there are eunuchs who have been so from birth. Now, that certainly would include people born with an intersex condition. So interestingly, you know, that is a rough one, right?

You know, imagine being born, and your genitals are sort of not typically male or female, or just there's a sort of a, you know, there's a birth defect in that regard, right?

[24 : 29] Anyway, these conditions are rare, but isn't it some comfort that the Lord himself acknowledges the reality and the pain of an unwanted and unchosen condition? Jesus continues, there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men.

Everybody knew that happened sometimes, and eunuchs were generally despised for that reason. And then Jesus says, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Now, Jesus isn't, again, Jesus isn't promoted.

Jesus is not using this as a literal thing. He's not saying people should castrate themselves for the kingdom. But he's pointing to the eunuch as a figure of Christian discipleship. So there's a redemptive thrust here.

The eunuch wasn't just someone whose body was defective, whose body had been mutilated, and therefore was excluded and undesirable and not redeemable. No, the figure of the eunuch also embodied undivided devotion to the king, and a eunuch's condition, though tragic and regrettable, could be redeemed through Christ.

And we see this in an actual person, not just in a figure of speech, in the book of Acts, right? The Ethiopian eunuch is fully accepted into God's family through the saving work of Christ, and he finds great joy when he's baptized along the road.

[25 : 41] And so the gospel promise extends to individuals with an intersex condition and individuals with gender dysphoria. Whoever surrenders to Christ belongs to him now and forever, and even our bodily defects and weaknesses.

When we surrender them to Christ and seek to live in accordance with his will, can be redeemed and turned for God's good and wise purposes. So I think this is an important sort of redemptive hope that Scripture extends to all people, including people with an intersex condition or with gender dysphoria.

Now the third framework that Yarhouse talks about, that I think increasingly, so the first framework is integrity, emphasizing God's creational intention. Second framework, disability, that emphasizes sort of we live in a fallen world, so we should be compassionate.

Third framework is diversity. And sort of this is the dominant framework through which our society understands gender dysphoria and transgender identity.

And really what it is, is it's a narrative of redemption, but it's an alternative, non-biblical, sort of secular, sort of narrative of redemption. So basically, it says that being transgender is one among many beautiful and individual expressions of gender.

[27 : 04] It's important to affirm people in whatever their deeply felt gender identity may be, in order to participate in their liberation from stigma, shame, and oppression.

Some of the results of that would be people should have access to medical treatment covered by insurance, whether it's counseling or hormones or surgery, people should have the legal right to work at any job, regardless of gender identity or expression, the ability to easily change the gender listed on their IDs, and sort of broad social affirmation and approval of a transgender self-concept.

So that's the most common sort of, well, the most common view in, at least in large sectors of our society today. Not everywhere. But probably here in New Haven.

So how do we biblically evaluate this view? Sort of, well, take note that in this view, the most sacred principle is the autonomy of the individual and whatever an individual most deeply feels about themselves.

Now this is sometimes called expressive individualism. So it's the idea that your truest identity is not connected, your truest identity is deep inside yourself.

[28 : 19] So it's not inherently connected to your parents or your friends or the society that you live in or the role that you find yourself in, or even the body that you find yourself in.

Your deepest identity is something that only you can define, and it's sort of only yours. Sort of apart from everything else. And there's a book by Charles Taylor called *A Secular Age*, and he calls this the buffered self.

But it basically means yourself, your true self, is sort of like, sort of, well, sort of protected from everything else.

Right? It's deep down inside yourself. Right? Now this is a very prominent view. So one study found the following. Eighty-four percent of Americans believe that enjoying yourself is the highest goal of life.

Eighty-six percent indicate that to enjoy yourself, you must pursue the things you desire most. And ninety-one percent say that to find yourself, you should look within yourself. And for American Christians, the numbers are sixty-six percent, seventy-two percent, and seventy-six percent.

[29 : 32] So seventy-six percent of American Christians say that to find yourself, look within yourself. Right? So this is this view.

Right? Which has become very widespread in our society long before the last ten years when a sort of transgender identity has become a big public thing. Right?

So this is a much bigger cultural phenomenon. So the problem is, that framework is deeply unbiblical. Not simply because it affirms non-biblical gender identity, but more fundamentally because it idolizes the individual and our internal self-concept as the source of our truest identity.

So I think we need to step back and sort of say, how do we engage with this broader assumption that has just become, like, even more widely accepted than being transgender?

Right? This assumption is far more widely, is even more widely accepted than the specific issue we're talking about. And how do we examine ourselves to see whether we have bought into this at some level or other?

[30 : 40] And what's the alternative? Biblically, right? So many people embrace this idea of sort of expressive individualism or sort of your true self is only deep inside yourself because they're reacting to negative experiences or perceptions of more traditional sources of identity.

So in traditional societies, your identity does not come from deep within yourself. Your identity comes from your family or your society, your position in a hierarchical society, and your role, your social role.

And so many people look at that and they're like, that's oppressive, or I've experienced that as oppressive. Some, in many societies, those roles can be very rigid, especially roles about gender and family.

You know, many people, even in our society today, have been sexually abused, right? So that's just one example where people sort of would say, that's a violation of who I am, and so, you know, who am I really?

Well, it can't be determined by sort of what other people have done to me or other people around me. Now, Christians should share these concerns, right?

[31:48] And the Bible is not actually promoting sort of these sort of traditional sources of identity as the end-all, be-all, right? And the Bible actually affirms the value of the individual as an image-bearer of God.

So the Bible actually, you know, in traditional societies, you know, particularly Jesus, Jesus says to his disciples, you know, you have to be willing to leave mother and father to follow me.

In a traditional society, that's heresy. That's like, what? Like, you know, that's leaving your true identity to follow Jesus. And, right, so, you know, we can agree, right, sometimes traditional sort of identity can fail to honor how God has made each particular person.

But, I think there's also a problem with the modern idea that your true self is sort of hidden deep with inside yourself and only you can access that and only you can define that and only you can discern what that is.

because what do we find when we look deep inside ourselves? Well, we find our desires are constantly competing. Okay, obvious example, I want to be healthy and in shape and I really like ice cream.

[33:04] I could eat ice cream every night. You know, like, sometimes after my kids go to bed, I don't have anybody who's going to be clamoring to share it with me and, man, I enjoy that.

Chocolate, whatever, right? Those are competing desires. Or, I want to have integrity and character but I also want to succeed in this world and sometimes there's going to be a tension there, right?

Which one of those do I prioritize? I want to, I have impulses toward being aggressive and I have impulses toward being sensitive. We also find that our desires are constantly changing, right?

Why do people stress out about decisions often because we don't even know what we want, right? And our desires are constantly changing. We don't know what we really want to prioritize. You know, it's not just that decisions are hard to sort of work through logistically.

Sometimes we just don't even know what we want. And then how we do, how we prioritize our constantly competing and changing desires is affected by our society. So, take the impulses toward aggression and toward sensitivity, okay?

[34:10] I have some Scandinavian heritage, so I like to imagine that I have some Viking ancestors. I don't know whether I really do, but say one of my Viking ancestors, he would feel like, ah, the aggression is me.

Of course, that's how, you know, I'm going to embrace that impulse toward aggression and resist the impulse toward sensitivity, okay? If you're a young professional dude today, you will be taught to resist that impulse toward aggression and maybe go to therapy for anger management, right?

And embrace your sensitive side, relational side, right? Like, these things are very socially sort of influenced. And so, currently, our social context is increasingly encouraging people to define their own gender and sexual identity based on how they feel internally, apart from any external guiding principles, except for not violating someone else, someone else's ability to do that, and even apart from the given structure of their physical body.

So, again, this is evidenced by how many different names there are, and sort of constantly developing names for sort of gender and sexual identities. Facebook got to 71 gender options and then they just added a fill-in-the-blank option.

But this can be deeply confusing and anxiety-producing. I mean, we live in a society with the highest rates of anxiety, probably in the history of the world, even though the level of physical dangers in our society is much lower than in many other parts of the world and many places in history.

[35 : 48] So, I think there's a lot of anxiety and a burden that we place on ourselves when we feel like our true identity is something that only we can define within ourselves because deep within ourselves we don't truly find ourselves.

one author who I don't think is a Christian wrote, my sense of self comes from myself, that can't be right.

Right? And especially if you're trying to find out who you are and then you feel, I'm trying to find out who I am, but I have to look deeper into myself to find out who I am, but within myself I don't really know who I am, doesn't that become an endless cycle?

Right? Or whenever we attach ourselves to some idea of who we are, then that might change down the road. And so this is the world that we're living in. And it can be a big burden because if nothing else can give us our self worth, if nobody else can sort of bestow that upon us, then we have to achieve that all alone.

And that can be a crushing burden if we really think about how do I convince myself that I am deeply worth something without anyone else who can truly sort of give me that verdict that I'm longing for.

[37 : 13] So I think as Christians we need to realize the, recognize what attracts people to sort of this framework, right? There's a hunger for identity, who am I?

Right? That's a question every human being is dealing with. And community, where do I belong? And redemption, is there meaning to my suffering? Is there meaning to my pain? Those are questions that everybody's wrestling with.

And I think as Christians we need to both be seeking Christ and how he speaks to those deepest needs and desires and presenting Christ to people who are struggling with those questions.

Right? We find our truest selves, not only within ourselves, not only from our society, but in being known and loved by God. And then through the means that God has provided, through God's people and God's family around us, and through his word and through just sort of who God has made us to be.

All right, let me do this next section. I'm going to skip the end for next week. How ought we to approach a Christian who has an intersex condition, who has an experience gender dysphoria? Now next week we'll talk more about how we relate to our neighbors who identify as LGBT or intersex or other identities.

[38 : 32] But let me just speak briefly. How do we approach a Christian who might have one of these conditions? So first, we shouldn't withdraw even if it's hard to understand or empathize with their experience. People who are bearing difficult burdens will need extra care and love from the body of Christ, not less.

Second, we should affirm and encourage the goodness of how God has made them as male or female, especially in ways that they can receive. you know, I think it's best to sort of start with what somebody can sort of receive and accept and sort of affirming their maleness or femaleness in that way.

We should resist. I think sometimes there are sort of very rigid stereotypes of what it means to be male or female that sort of actually reinforce this idea that, well, I'm not really in the right body.

And so I think in the church we need to be careful not to sort of add unbiblical stereotypes to what the Bible actually says about the gift of being male and female.

We should care for the whole person and not fixate only on their gender identity, right? Maybe somebody is, you know, especially if somebody's suicidal, right? Maybe the, maybe, maybe, well, okay, let's talk about it's God has a purpose for you to live.

[39 : 56] You know, maybe there's, you need to just sort of put the conversation about gender identity on the shelf and there's another more pressing concern.

And then what if a transgender identifying individual comes to faith in Christ? That will likely be a complicated process, but there are people who have.

So one man's name is Walt Heyer. So he went through a transgender surgery. He was initially very excited about it, sort of, and identifying as a woman.

A few years later, regretted it. And eight years later, ended up going back to his birth sex identity as a male. He's written some books. If you Google him, you can find references to some articles he's written about his experience.

So let me open it up for questions since, as usual, I'm running late. But we've got seven minutes. Peter.

[40 : 56] When you were writing up that section on the statistics about how people embrace embrace the idea that individuality is sort of the highest calling and the thing that we should reach for, it immediately resonated with me in regard to Satan's sort of manipulation of Adam and Eve, what they promised them.

And then it was kind of making correlations with how we as Christians understand what it means that right now he's the prince of the power of the air. And also thinking about the church of Satan, which obviously is small and we like to think fairly insignificant, but still the main thing that they preach is not a literal hell, literal God and the devil, but worship of self.

Do you see a thread running through all those things and do you think that that should kind of inform us as we kind of form our attitudes towards how we're going to be thinking about this issue?

Yeah. Yeah. Well, I mean, worship of self is, I mean, where is it? Second Timothy, Paul says in the last days there will be people who will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, it goes on, long list, of all kinds of qualities that you can see a lot, you can see pretty much all of those in our society today.

But yeah, like self worship, I mean, I mean, that's pretty rampant, right? And again, when we don't worship God, we long to worship something else.

[42 : 27] So whether it's sort of explicitly worshiping ourself or worshiping some other created thing, it's often a good thing, right? And again, yourself, like, yes, God made you, like, he loves you, you know, there's, you're bearing the image of God, and yet, yeah, so yes, was it part of the devil's lie to Adam and Eve to sort of worship themselves?

Yeah, right, what was Eve being, what was, what did the serpent sort of tempt Eve to do? Rely on her, sort of, her own perception became determinative, right?

She looked at the tree, looks good, looks beautiful, looks tasty, I'll take it. And in the process, explicitly rejecting sort of God's command, and also not trusting that God's command is good, not trusting that God is for us, right?

Isn't that what, what Satan sometimes wants to tempt us to think, is that God isn't really for me. And so I can't really trust what he says, because I, I can't, I can't rely on him as being on my side, ultimately.

Right? And of course, isn't that, and isn't that, I mean, when we look to the cross, isn't that what Christ is hanging there and saying? Like, I'm for you, and not against you, and I'm willing to go to this, for that sake.

[43 : 53] And yes, following Christ might be painful, he talks about taking up our own cross and following him, but we have one who is, who is for us. And denying ourselves.

And so we can deny ourselves for the sake of the one who is ultimately for us. Right. Ben. So, so Peter Kreeft talks about the possibility of gendered souls as well as bodies, because we're not just bodily or spiritual, but there's this connection.

And suggests the possibility that there could be a mismatch. And so in such a case, that would be a candidate for a sex change operation, whether of body or soul, whether earthly or heavenly.

So the question I have is, the thrust you seem to have is the soul or what have you should ideally shift to switch to match the body.

And why, why that direction and not the other direction? Yeah, why that direction and not the other direction? Well, so I think, I mean, I don't see any, I mean, I think the idea of gendered souls, so the idea is that your gendered body is sort of separate from your gendered soul.

[45 : 28] Right? Or is he saying, like, that's a result of the fall that there's... The mismatch would be a result of the fall. Yeah. But because we are...

These aren't, you know, we're gendered beings kind of through and through. It's not just our bodies. Yeah. Yes. So I think we can... I think one thing that we can positively sort of affirm in people who experience gendered dysphoria is this longing for wholeness or sort of congruence or sort of, like, something that seems to fit together.

Right? Yes. Like, that's something we can sort of affirm and say, yeah, like, it is... That is a good thing to want.

Right? And, I mean, yes, so it's true that both our bodies and our souls are affected by the fall.

So I guess I would say I don't see the idea of gendered souls. I mean, I need to think more about that. I don't see that clearly taught anywhere in scripture. Right?

[46 : 46] And then how do you identify that your gendered soul is, you know, different than your body? I can't... I think that might end up becoming a very subjective perception, right, based on your idea of what a gendered soul is.

I don't even know whether... Yeah, I mean... Greg, can I make a quick comment on that? Oh, sure. John, just please help me. What's the question?

It's hard to hear all of us. So, wait a minute. The notion is that there are souls and our souls are gendered. And our bodies are gendered. And maybe there's a mismatch.

And if there is a mismatch, why should we think redemption might not be, well, let's just get the body to match the soul, my perception of what the soul is. And then if we can anticipate redemption, ultimately, then that would lead to maybe an interventionist type thing now to adjust our bodies to what we perceive our soul gender to be.

So that seems to be probably. Yeah. Close enough. Chris getting that from Quinas. Yes. Quinas thinks that the soul is just the spirit of the body.

[48 : 08] So there's a deeper connection between those things. Those are not going to be differential. But leaving Quinas to the side, it seems like maybe a place to go in Scripture would be 1 Corinthians 15, where it's talking about resurrection and saying that God actually chooses the body that he has, that God actually chooses the body for us.

And it talks about the body and on that basis, he is going to work the final redemption in accordance with the body that he has chosen for us.

So that does seem like the redemptive trajectory there. Well, first of all, that our deep identity reflected in the body is God's choice.

And then, and he is, it's going to be something that even though there might be all kinds of dysphoria in the in-between time, there is a redemptive, there is a redemptive trajectory and that seems to be based on the original choice that he gave us in terms of our, of our body.

So that would seem like, um, it, it, it is connected. There, there is a redemptive significance that, that predicts the horizon, give in the body that we have given.

[49:27] At least based on 1 Corinthians 15. I mean, that would be probably the place that I would go to say, uh, it's going to fall in the body. Now, if the body's ambiguous and a couple of rare, who, who knows those situations?

I don't know, but that seems to suggest that, that, that the body that we have given, that, that is a choice of God and that's indicative of how he's going to redeem who we are.

Yeah. I wonder if Psalm 139 might be relevant about God knitting us together in our mother's womb as well, sort of, you know, yes, we don't experience our bodies in the sort of pure goodness of God's original creation.

Yes, they're all sort of affected by the fall, but yet there is still that sense, you know, even David can say, even though David in another Psalm says, behold, I was conceived in sin and iniquity, he still says, you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Sort of our, our bodies are, um, our good, good gifts from God and, and meant to guide us sort of in how we, how we honor, how do we offer them to God and honor God with them.

[50:31] All right. Well, uh, I've got to end there, but we will come back next week. Thank you for being here and, uh, we'll look forward to next week. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.