

# BIBLICAL SEXUALITY AND TRANSGENDER SIN

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## INTRODUCTION

It is probably safe to surmise that the average American only pays attention to competitive swimming during the quadrennial summer Olympic games. I consider myself to be a fairly engaged sports fan, but I couldn't name the current favorites for any of the swimming world championships unless they just happen to be Americans who also won high profile races in the most recent Olympics. Aside from Katie Ledecky or Michael Phelps (who is already retired), I'm not sure most Americans could name a competitive amateur swimmer until the 2021-2022 NCAA collegiate swimming season. What was once relegated to the almost exclusive domain of the summer Olympics, discussions of competitive swimming have dominated cultural debate for the first half of 2022, and the name Lia Thomas has been at the forefront of the discussion. Thomas is a transgender male-to-female swimmer who competed in women's collegiate swimming events for the University of Pennsylvania during the 2021-2022 season after spending three years on the men's team.<sup>2</sup> Despite the fact that Thomas graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in May 2022, the debate continued to foment as FINA, the international federation that governs the sport of swimming, issued a ruling that restricts transgender male-to-female athletes from competing in elite women's aquatic events if they did not transition prior to experiencing male puberty.<sup>3</sup> If

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Sanchez, "I Am Lia: The Trans Simmer Dividing America Tells Her Story," *Sports Illustrated* (March 3, 2022); <https://www.si.com/college/2022/03/03/lia-thomas-penn-swimmer-transgender-woman-daily-cover>.

<sup>3</sup> The policy specifically states, "They are androgen sensitive but had male puberty suppressed beginning at Tanner Stage 2 or before age 12, whichever is later, and they have since continuously

anyone was not paying attention prior to Thomas' dive into women's collegiate sports, the transgender question is now front and center of the cultural moment. And many Christians are asking the question, "What does the Bible have to say about transgenderism?" This essay will attempt to answer that question and more specifically set the conversation within the context of God's design for sexuality. In doing so, this essay will conclude that transgenderism is a disordering of God's design for sexuality through the physical body that He has created.

## THE BIBLICAL DESIGN FOR SEXUALITY

Before we begin to address the matter of transgenderism, we must first explore the biblical design for sexuality that God instituted as part of His creation order. This is a necessary first step in the conversation about transgenderism because much of the confusion over this issue stems from the fact that we are talking past one another instead of with one another. Outlining terms and principles for evaluation will aid in moving the conversation in a productive direction. At the same time, we must recognize the political momentum that the transgender movement currently exhibits and the resultant roadblocks for Christians who advocate for a biblical understanding of sexuality will face in the broader culture.

There are at least three key theological principles related to the biblical design for sexuality that have direct bearing on the transgender debate. These principles set the stage for our understanding of the body and sexual expression so that we can then evaluate transgenderism from a biblical perspective. The principles are 1) God created humans as male and female, 2) God created males and females as complementary in nature, and 3) God designed marriage as the context for sexual expression.<sup>4</sup>

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maintained their testosterone levels in serum (or plasma) below 2.5 nmol/L." FINA, "Policy on Eligibility for the Men's and Women's Competition Categories," 7-8; <https://resources.fina.org/fina/document/2022/06/19/525de003-51f4-47d3-8d5a-716dac5f77c7/FINA-INCLUSION-POLICY-AND-APPENDICES-FINAL-.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to these three components, Mark Liederbach and I develop two more theological principles for biblical sexuality in a larger work. The other two principles are sexuality has a spiritual component and God intended childbearing and rearing to take place in the context of biblically defined marriage. See Mark D. Liederbach and Evan Lenow, *Ethics as Worship: The Pursuit of Moral Discipleship* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2021), 572-581.

## God Created Humans as Male and Female

Any discussion of human sexuality and transgenderism must begin with an exploration of biblical anthropology. While space restrictions limit the extent to which we can discuss anthropology, we need to begin with the creation of mankind and the key feature that God created humans as male and female as a significant component to the transgender question. At the first mention of humanity in Scripture, we find an affirmation of the first theological principle that guides our discussion:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.” So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female. (Genesis 1:26-27)<sup>5</sup>

These words in the opening chapter of Genesis make a claim that is somewhat controversial in our contemporary context. In an age where distinctions between male and female are blurred, we find the testimony of Scripture to be that God created male and female as distinct expressions of humanity.

In our discussion of male and female, we need to clarify some terms so that we are not confused. At the most basic level, the claim that mankind is created male and female refers explicitly to biological sex. Biological sex refers to the genetic and anatomical distinctions that identify one as male or female. The presence of male versus female genitalia and the chromosomal markers of XY versus XX are the most obvious biological factors that determine maleness and femaleness in biological sex.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, we find biological confirmation of what Scripture says regarding the creation of man as male and female. The binary categories of biological sex are part of God’s good creation. This is not to deny the existence of intersex conditions that blur the genetic and anatomical distinctions; rather, such conditions speak to the pervasive impact of sin on the created order that such

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<sup>5</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible.

<sup>6</sup>The connection between sex as a category and the biological reality of the body is what makes the use of the phrase “sex assigned at birth” confusing. The idea of sex as a biological category has been accepted for most of human history. To say that sex is assigned rather than observed is an oxymoron.

anomalies exist as a disordering of God's original design.<sup>7</sup>

By extension, we must now deal briefly with the question of gender. While biological sex is clearly tied to the genetic and anatomical markers of the human body, the term gender is often used to refer to the psychological and cultural components of maleness and femaleness. Distinctions in gender may often refer to attire, activities, relationships, preferences, and even parenting styles. Different cultures may attribute certain expressions as normative for each particular gender, but the key is that cultures have historically linked these gender-based norms to the expected connection between biological sex and gender.<sup>8</sup> For this reason, the terms biological sex and gender are often used synonymously in casual conversation even though they do not refer to the exact same concepts. In contemporary parlance, one's self-perception of gender is typically referred to as gender identity. This is a somewhat recent term that has been used extensively in the transgender debate, especially by those who experience dissonance between their biological sex and gender. Even though we note the differences in these terms, it is important to recognize that the traditional understanding of biological sex, gender, and gender identity is that they all align with one another—driven by the biological markers—and the terms male and female function as descriptors for all three terms.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, our first theological principle related to the transgender debate is that God created humans as male and female. This is an anthropological assertion that focuses our attention on the binary categories embedded in the creation order for humans. This principle helps to guide our discussion because God designed both biological sex and gender/gender identity to coordinate with one another. A denial of this reality serves as the foundation for the transgender movement. Those experiencing cognitive dissonance between their biological sex and gender/gender identity are faced with a choice to bring the mind into alignment with the

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<sup>7</sup> For a lengthier discussion of biological sex, intersex conditions, and the impact of sin on creation, see Liederbach and Lenow, *Ethics as Worship*, 564-567.

<sup>8</sup> For an extensive discussion of the differences between men and women, see chapter 3 of J. Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex* (Wilmington: ISI, 2012), 35-65.

<sup>9</sup> There is no doubt that the debate over these terms and the interaction between these ideas extends far beyond the basic statements made in the previous three paragraphs. However, for the sake of this particular essay, the traditional understanding of the relationship between biological sex, gender, and gender identity will serve as the presupposition for all subsequent arguments.

physical body or to bring the physical body into alignment with the mind. We find the latter to be the most common approach in contemporary culture while the former is more in keeping with God's statements in Scripture about his creation.

The importance of God's creation of humans as male and female to the transgender discussion lies in the fact that God created a physical universe with clear markers of biological sex. These markers extend beyond humanity to most of the animal kingdom as well. To "change" from one sex (and by extension gender) to another is to deny biological facts and to assert something about oneself that is not observable in the physical world. While this may seem like an elementary point, it is key to the entire discussion.

## **God Created Males and Females as Complementary in Nature**

The second theological principle guiding our discussion is the idea that God has created males and females to be complementary in nature. The complementarity expressed through the binary sexes falls into two categories—sexual complementarity and role complementarity. As with our previous theological principle, we will not exhaust the full extent of male-female complementarity, but we will briefly explore what it means for the transgender discussion.

Sexual complementarity first enters the biblical discussion in Genesis 1:28. Scripture reads, "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.'" With this pronouncement following on the heels of the declaration that God created humans as male and female, we rightly surmise that the process through which mankind would be fruitful and multiply was the sexual relationship that God designed to take place between a man and a woman. God's design is fleshed out more in Genesis 2, and it is also observed and affirmed throughout the pages of Scripture. Suffice it to say that God's command to be fruitful and multiply was directly tied to the complementary nature of the sexual bodies He created.

The second category of the complementary nature of humans relates to roles. God has designed men and women to express different roles as part of their biological and psychological makeup—ultimately as an expression of biblical

anthropology. J. Budziszewski writes, “Men and women aren’t just different, but different in corresponding ways. They are complementary opposites—alike in their humanity, but different in ways that make them partners. Each sex completes what the other lacks, and helps bring the other into balance.”<sup>10</sup> Without going into an exhaustive discussion of role complementarity, let me just say that God’s design for the relationship between men and women, particularly in the marriage relationship, demonstrates that we are uniformly human but distinctly different (see Ephesians 5:22-33).

So how does the complementary nature of humans affect the transgender discussion? First, sexual union is only expressed through biological distinction. It is impossible for two biological males or two biological females to “be fruitful and multiply” without the contribution of another person’s gametes. Thus, when a transgender individual attempts to participate in sexual union for the purpose of procreation, he or she must do so with someone of the opposite biological sex, no matter how one might identify oneself. Even if procreation is not in view for the particular sex act, the biological complementarity of the reproductive systems still requires individuals of the opposite sex for intercourse as God designed it. Role complementarity is also tied to biological and social differences between the sexes. Merely identifying as the opposite sex does not change the inherent role complementarity that God has created. Transgenderism assumes one can alter gender and not minimize God’s design for complementarity, but this is a false assumption.

## **God Designed Marriage as the Context for Sexual Expression**

The final theological principle that governs our understanding of biblical sexuality is that God designed marriage as the context for sexual expression. While this particular principle does not have direct reference to the transgender debate, it is so significant that we cannot have a proper understanding of biblical sexuality without it.

Marriage enters the biblical framework implicitly in Genesis 1:28, but it becomes an explicit component of God’s design for human flourishing in Genesis 2. Beginning in verse 18, we see that God sets the stage for marriage by declaring,

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<sup>10</sup> Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex*, 41.

“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.” In the following verses we read how God fashions the woman out of the man’s rib and then presents her to the man. At this point, the man affirms that she is “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (v. 23). The passage reaches its denouement with the words of v. 24—“This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.”

From these opening chapters of Genesis and the subsequent descriptions of marriage that we find throughout Scripture, we recognize that God has given marriage to mankind for very specific purposes that include companionship and marital union, sexual expression and procreation, and faithfulness and fidelity.<sup>11</sup> As a result, we can define marriage in the following way: “Marriage is designed by God to be a comprehensive, covenantal union between one man and one woman intended to endure for a lifetime and proximally directed toward the rearing of the next generation.”<sup>12</sup>

Since a biblical definition of marriage demands one man and one woman and implies that these partners will have sexual complementarity through their biological distinctives, then marriage promotes an understanding of biblical sexuality in keeping with the theological principles already discussed. To affirm biblical marriage is to uphold the biological distinctions between men and women and the complementary nature of both their biological and psychological makeup.

Transgenderism promotes a disordering of marriage in one of two ways. First, it assumes there is no necessary distinction between men and women if a man who identifies as a woman (or vice versa) attempts to marry someone who holds the opposite gender identity while being the same biological sex. Such relationships cannot fulfill the sexual complementarity found in marriage. Second transgenderism denies long held gender distinctions when it comes to childbearing by promoting the idea that a man can give birth.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali* (“On the Good of Marriage”), in *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, translated by Charles T. Wilcox, vol. 27 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1955) for further discussion on the purposes of marriage.

<sup>12</sup> Liederbach and Lenow, *Ethics as Worship*, 615.

<sup>13</sup> Simon Hattenstone, “The dad who gave birth: ‘Being pregnant doesn’t change me being a trans man,’” *The Guardian* (April 20, 2019); <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/apr/20/the-dad-who-gave-birth-pregnant-trans-freddy-mcconnell>.

As we can see from these three theological principles, Scripture sets parameters around what we can accept as an appropriate expression of biblical sexuality. Transgenderism distorts these guidelines and moves beyond the God-given design for sexual expression. It simply cannot affirm the clear biblical teaching on sexuality. With that in mind, we still need to consider what the Bible says directly about transgenderism.

## **THE BIBLICAL INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING TRANSGENDERISM**

Specific biblical instructions regarding transgenderism are very limited. We have already seen how Genesis 1-2 addresses matters of biological sex and gender, but neither of those chapters directly speak about transgenderism. In fact, a case could be made that the context into which Scripture was given would limit the need to even mention a topic that was completely foreign to them. That being said, we find at least one passage that touches on the issue even if it is to a limited extent. That passage is Deuteronomy 22:5, and it specifically speaks to cross-dressing. Moses writes, “A woman is not to wear male clothing, and a man is not to put on a woman’s garment, for everyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord your God.”

Even though the transgender movement stretches beyond simply wearing clothes that make one appear as the opposite gender,<sup>14</sup> there is a significant application of this verse to the contemporary question of transgenderism. Commenting on Deuteronomy 22:5, Jason DeRouchie notes:

Within Israelite culture, then, there were certain styles of dress, ornaments, or items that distinguished men and women. As such, two things appear to be at stake in this law:

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<sup>14</sup> The transgender movement includes many different expressions. Dressing in a fashion that presents oneself as the opposite gender is sometimes an entry point for “testing the waters” of a new gender identity. However, some expressions of dressing as the opposite gender, such as dressing in drag, may not be a reflection of a desire to identify as another gender. In addition, dressing as the opposite gender or moving between gender expressions may move beyond the realm of transgenderism and into gender fluidity and non-binary expressions.



1. Everyone needed to let their gender expression align with their biological sex, and
2. Everyone needed to guard against gender confusion, wherein others could wrongly perceive a man to be a woman and a woman to be a man based on dress.<sup>15</sup>

The takeaway from this verse is that one ought to present himself or herself in such a way that affirms one's biological sex. This will likely include cultural expressions of gender consistent with the norms of a society.

It is interesting to note the force with which Moses records this instruction. Verse 5 ends with a declaration that to express one's gender in a manner that conceals one's biological sex "is detestable to the Lord your God." The Hebrew term used here is *toebah* and describes something that is an abomination. The same term is often used to describe idolatry, wickedness, sexual sins, and other egregious violations against God's laws and standards. God has employed perhaps the most strident of condemnations against this practice because it violates the God-ordered connection between biological sex and gender expression. Thus, the Lord takes very seriously that the humans He created are to express themselves in keeping with how He made them biologically.

## THE BODY AS GOOD

Now that we have explored the biblical design for sexuality and the biblical instructions regarding transgenderism, we move to what may be the most important component in the discussion—the idea of the physical body as good. At the very heart of the transgender debate is the disconnect between mind and body as it relates to gender. As noted earlier, the most common solution to this sense of dysphoria in our culture is to bring the body into alignment with the mind rather than bringing the mind into alignment with the body. In doing so, a chasm develops between the value of the body and the mind.<sup>16</sup> However, a proper

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<sup>15</sup> Jason S. DeRouchie, "Confronting the Transgender Storm: New Covenant Reflections on Deuteronomy 22:5," *JBMW* 21:1 (Spring 2016): 63.

<sup>16</sup> Nancy Pearcey describes this chasm as a two-story worldview, which she developed from the work of Francis Schaeffer. In this perspective, the lower story is the body and physical expression of being human while the upper story is the person as expressed through "the ability to make

understanding of anthropology views the body as an important piece of God's good creation.

Returning once again to the creation narrative of Genesis 1, we want to focus on an important but sometimes forgotten reality of creation. As we read of God's handiwork across the six days of creation, we find the declaration of the goodness of creation. On days three, four, and five, and twice on day six, we read the statement, "And God saw that it was good" (vv. 12, 18, 21, 25) with the second proclamation on day six adding more emphasis by stating "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed" (v. 31). The story of creation is the story of a physical world. God created the corporeal aspects of the universe and then declared them to be good. This is not a mistake or oversimplification—what God creates is good. Of course, we recognize that Genesis 3 introduces the reality of sin and its effect on the physical world, but this does not undermine the overall goodness of God's creation, especially as we consider the creation order design as God intended. While the fall may have corrupted our physical beings, it did not do so to the point that we are unable to recognize their goodness.<sup>17</sup>

Beyond the testimony of Genesis, we find the goodness of the body reflected in David's psalm that is so often applied to the pro-life conversation. In Psalm 139:13-14, David writes, "For it was you who created my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made. Your works are wondrous, and I know this very well." The words of these verses speak to the intricate handiwork of God in the creation of human bodies. Our bodies are not random assortments of parts constructed haphazardly; instead, they are the purposeful work of the hands of God. Therefore, they are good. As Sam Allberry notes, "It has been common among other religious (and nonreligious) belief systems to demean the body, along with our physicality—to see it as something unspiritual or in need of escaping. In contrast, the Bible sees our body as a good (if imperfect) creation of God. It is a gift."<sup>18</sup>

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decisions, exercise self-awareness, plan for the future, and so on." In essence, the lower story is the body, and the upper story is the mind. See Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 27, 32.

<sup>17</sup> Liederbach and Lenow, *Ethics as Worship*, 600.

<sup>18</sup> Sam Allberry, *What God Has to Say about Our Bodies: How the Gospel Is Good News for Our Physical Selves* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2021), 21.

Despite the biblical affirmation of the goodness of the body, many respond to the incongruence between the mind and body related to sexual expression by demeaning the body and elevating the mind. The result is that treatment for such incongruence is to bring the body into alignment with the mind through various approaches, including outward cultural expressions of gender, hormone therapy, and sex-reassignment surgery.<sup>19</sup> However, such elevation of the mind over the body results in a denial of the goodness of the physical body. This denial has been described by some as a form of Gnosticism. Andrew Walker writes, “Gnosticism says that there is an inherent tension between our true selves and the bodies we inhabit. The idea that our true self is different than the body we live in communicates that our body is something less than us, and can be used, shaped, and changed to match how we feel.”<sup>20</sup> Taking a Gnostic approach to the mind-body dissonance related to sexuality and gender will lead to more confusion over gender in our society and may ultimately result in erasing all gender distinctions. With that in mind, it is now important for us to think through how we can respond to transgender sin as both a church and culture.

## RESPONDING TO TRANSGENDER SIN

In many respects, the Christian community is already behind the curve in our response to transgenderism. While some may have seen the wave coming of

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<sup>19</sup> For example, the American Psychiatric Association advises the following when addressing emotional distress in youth who experience dissonance between biological sex and gender identity: “Due to the dynamic nature of puberty development, lack of gender-affirming interventions (i.e. social, psychological, and medical) is not a neutral decision; youth often experience worsening dysphoria and negative impact on mental health as the incongruent and unwanted puberty progresses. Trans-affirming treatment, such as the use of puberty suppression, is associated with the relief of emotional distress, and notable gains in psychosocial and emotional development, in trans and gender diverse youth.” Note that the APA calls a lack of intervention, including allowing physical development to run its natural course, is “not a neutral decision.” See American Psychological Association, “Position on Treatment of Transgender (Trans) and Gender Diverse Youth,” (2020); <https://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/About-APA/Organization-Documents-Policies/Policies/Position-Transgender-Gender-Diverse-Youth.pdf>. Even the now-common phrase “sex assigned at birth” implies a demeaning of the body by inferring that someone other than the individual assigned an identity that must either be adopted or changed. In doing so, the observable biological realities of the body are relegated to an inferior position over one’s self-identification.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew T. Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate: What Does the Bible Actually Say about Gender Identity?* 2nd ed. (Centralia: Good Book Company, 2022), 28.

individuals (especially young people) who would identify with a gender that does not correlate with their biological sex, I think most who are honest will say that we got caught a little flat-footed on this issue. Therefore, our responses have been reactive and not proactive, combative and not compassionate, defensive and not discipling. At the end of the day, we must respond in a way that moves people toward embracing the goodness of the physical body that God created as well as discipling them on a path to worshiping God who created that body.

## Embrace the Physical Body

To begin, let us consider the approach of helping people embrace their physical bodies despite the psychological dissonance they might be experiencing. Ryan Anderson identifies the crux of the issue as he states, “The central debate in treating people with gender dysphoria is whether therapies should focus primarily on the mind or on the body. How one answers this question depends not only on scientific and medical evidence, but also on philosophical judgments and worldview.”<sup>21</sup> Space limitations prevent us from exploring the scientific and medical evidence,<sup>22</sup> but the philosophical and worldview judgments are worth exploring briefly since we have already laid the foundation for such judgments in the preceding pages.

Teaching about the goodness of the physical world—and the body in particular—is crucial to the philosophical and worldview commitments that honor God’s creation while holding firm to the connection between biological sex and gender. We have already discussed this element at length, but there is more to it than just the goodness of the body as part of creation. Humans are not just bodies—we are embodied souls. As Mark Liederbach and I have noted elsewhere:

[H]uman beings are composed of both a material part (the body) and an immaterial part (the soul). The body and soul become integrated into a unified whole, sometimes described by theologians as a psychosomatic unity or dualistic holism. Christian ethicists normally describe the united nature of human beings with the term embodied

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<sup>21</sup> Ryan T. Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment* (New York: Encounter, 2018), 97.

<sup>22</sup> Anderson’s book is helpful in this regard to provide hard evidence as well as testimony from those who have struggled with gender dysphoria.

selves or embodied souls.<sup>23</sup>

This union of body and soul describes the complex nature of humanity, but it is a complexity that God has designed to function in unity. Seeing the essence of humanity as an embodied soul helps us maintain a philosophical commitment to the goodness of both the material and immaterial parts of humanity.

While embracing the goodness of the physical body, we must also be careful not to undermine the immaterial component of humanity. Gnosticism elevates the immaterial—in this case the mind—over the material, but the pendulum can swing too far in the opposite direction. We cannot go so far as to adopt a type of metaphysical materialism whereby only the physical world matters with no value placed upon the immaterial. In one sense, this is the classic Plato vs. Aristotle question depicted by Raphael's *School of Athens*, in which Plato is pointing to the heavens while Aristotle is pointing to the ground. Instead, we need the balance of both the material and the immaterial, the body and the mind. When it comes to biological sex and gender, God's design is that they are a unified whole affirming one another.

When the cognitive dissonance of gender confusion appears, the counselor needs to begin by asking the question of what is causing this dissonance. In some cases, it might be as simple as seeking attention or acting upon a perceived cultural expression of sexuality that is popular in the moment. For others, the root causes may be much deeper. We must not take these matters lightly; instead, we must walk alongside these individuals as they seek to bring their psychological understanding of who they are in line with the physical reality of who God made them. All along the way, it is important to affirm the goodness of the body while not ignoring the importance of the soul.

## **Worshipful Discipleship**

The other element of our response to transgenderism is perhaps the most important. The goal of ethics and moral discipleship is not mere obedience to a list of rules that make one look holy on the outside. Unfortunately, this could be an easy approach to working with people who struggle with their gender.

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<sup>23</sup>Liederbach and Lenow, *Ethics as Worship*, 38.

We could impose a list of commands for “proper gender expression” that leads to socially acceptable behavior without heart change. These commands could include dressing in a gender-specific fashion, wearing a gender-specific hairstyle, pursuing gender-specific activities, etc. However, if this is our only approach to addressing transgenderism, then we are training people to be nothing more than the “whitewashed tombs” that Jesus accused the Pharisees of being in Matthew 23:27-28:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of the bones of the dead and every kind of impurity. In the same way, on the outside you seem righteous to people, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Rather than taking a simple, rule-based approach, we should desire to shepherd those who struggle with gender identity into a worshipful discipleship. Of course, this begins with an acknowledgement of sin, repentance, and confession that Jesus is Lord (Romans 3:23; 6:23; 10:9-10; Ephesians 2:8-9). Beyond this, we guide people into worshipful discipleship that focuses our full attention and devotion upon the One who created us. We no longer worship the creature, but worship the Creator (Romans 1:25). Every aspect of our lives is focused on bringing glory to God (1 Corinthians 10:31). When we start down this road of discipleship, we will then find that obedience to God’s commands and expectations for all things, including gender, will be an expression of love not merely an act of duty (John 14:15, 21).

The beauty of worshipful discipleship is that it leads to a complete change of who we are. Scripture is clear that all of us have fallen to the influence of sin. Even if we do not struggle with transgenderism, our personal struggles are real, and they could define us. However, all believers can have confidence that Christ has redeemed us from the power of sin. After listing a group of egregious sins, including sins of a sexual nature, Paul provides us with hope as he writes, “And some of you used to be like this. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). We no longer have to be identified by our sinful struggles. This does not mean that our struggles disappear. It means that we have victory over them.

## CONCLUSION

Transgenderism is the topic *du jour* in our American culture, and it does not seem to be going away anytime soon. The Christian community cannot simply sit back and pray that our people will not be swept into this movement. I dare say that many in our midst have already turned to the transgender lifestyle as a possible answer to their struggles. Therefore, we must speak up and address transgenderism on both theological and philosophical levels.

By identifying the theological and philosophical commitments that drive our anthropology, we will find that transgenderism is a disordering of God's design for sexuality through the physical body that he has created. But we must not stop at the level of theological and philosophical commitments. Those commitments must drive us to action in the church, in our discipleship, and in our culture. In the church, we must commit to teaching on the beauty and goodness of God's creation and the unified whole of the embodied soul. In our discipleship, we must commit to walking alongside people who struggle with their gender identity to see that their Creator loves them and that He has a creation-order design for their lives. In our culture, we must stand on our commitments to support those who create laws and policies that affirm God's design for gender and sexuality. The task before us is significant, but we cannot lose hope.