

A BETTER STORY

GOD, SEX AND HUMAN FLOURISHING

Embodied: Jesus, Gender, and the Trans Community*

(Session 8)

Key Terms¹

Trans: An abbreviated version of transgender that functions as an umbrella term for various ways people express their gender identity when it does not correspond to their birth sex.

Transition: The term most trans* people prefer for what is sometimes called 'sex change.' *Transition* can include three different levels: social, hormonal, and surgery. A person who transitions socially will typically dress and act like the sex they identify with and they might take on a new name and pronouns that match their gender identity rather than their biological sex. Transitioning at the hormonal level means taking high levels of hormones typically produced by the opposite biological sex. This hormonal intervention is called 'cross-sex hormone therapy' (DHT) or 'hormone replacement therapy' (HRT or HT). Surgical transition goes by various names: 'gender confirmation surgery' (GCS), 'sex reassignment surgery' (SRS), and a few others. Each term carries its own ideological assumptions.

Transman or trans man: A biological female who identifies as male may use this identity label. Some individuals prefer trans man as it emphasizes that trans is an adjective modifying man.

Transsexual: Describes those who seek to change or who have changed their primary and/or secondary sex characteristics through feminizing or masculinizing medical interventions (hormones and/or surgery). Transsexual persons typically adopt a full-time cross-gender identity. The term is understood to have originated in 1949. It is more common in medical discourses and in Europe. Many American transgender people consider the word distasteful or offensive as it has been associated with psychopathology.

Transvestite: A word used to describe those for whom cross-dressing is motivated by sexual pleasure, among other possible motivations. Such a person may not experience gender dysphoria and may not identify as transgender. Most transgender persons do not cross-dress for arousal and see transvestism as a different phenomenon than what they experience. The term is understood to have originated in 1910 by Magnus Hirschfeld. Many transgender persons eschew this word as it has been associated with psychopathology.

Transwoman or trans woman: A biological male who identifies as female may use this identity label. Some individuals prefer trans woman as it emphasizes that trans is an adjective modifying woman.

Two-spirit: Designation used by some Native Americans to describe people believed to have experiences of both genders.

Ze/Zir: Pronouns used by some individuals who prefer gender-neutral destinations that function as alternatives to "he/his" and "she/her."

Gender: The psychological, social and cultural aspects of being male or female.

Gender identity: One's internal sense of self as male, female, both, or neither. I.e., how a person experiences themselves (or thinks of themselves) as male, female, both, or neither.

Gender role: The social and cultural expectations for maleness or femaleness, sometimes shorthand as 'masculinity' and 'femininity.' I.e., how males and females are expected to act in any given culture.

Sex or Biological Sex: The physical, biological, and anatomic dimensions of being male or female (typically with reference to chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, and internal reproductive anatomy and external genitalia).

Transgender: An umbrella term for the many different ways in which some people experience, express, or live out a gender identity different from the gender identity corresponding to their biological sex. (This term is understood to have originated in 1971 and is sometimes shortened to trans.)

Trans*: Since so many gender identity terms can overlap with each other, some people put an asterisk after the word *trans*, stylizing it as *trans**, when they want to use it as a broad umbrella term to include a whole range of identities that aren't strictly *transgender*, such as *nonbinary*, *genderqueer*, and the like. (This term is understood to have originated in 1996.)

Agender: Used when a person's internal experience of gender identity is not gendered or when a person does not have a felt sense of a particular gender identity. Sometimes referred to as *gender neutrois*.

Androgynous: Used when a person's presentation or appearances is not easily identifiable as man or woman, and their gender presentation either is a combination of masculine and feminine or is neutral.

Bigender: Used when a person's gender identity is a combination of man and woman.

Cisgender or Cis: A word to contrast with transgender. A recent term that refers to those who identify (and are comfortable) with their biological sex.

¹Adapted from Mark Yarhouse and Julia Sadusky, *Emerging Gender Identities: Understanding the Diverse Experiences of Today's Youth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bravos Press, 2020); and Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible has to Say* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2021)

Cross-dressing: Dressing in the clothing or adopting the presentation of the other sex. Motivations for cross-dressing vary significantly.

Drag king: A biological female who dresses as a male (stereotypic dress and appearance) for the purposes of entertaining others. Such a person may not experience gender dysphoria and does not tend to identify as transgender.

Drag queen: A biological male who dresses as a female (typically flamboyant dress and appearance) for the purposes of entertaining others. Such a person may not experience gender dysphoria and does not tend to identify as transgender.

Female-to-Male (FTM/F2M): Describes a transsexual person whose birth sex was female, who identifies as male, and who has pursued gender confirmation (or sex reassignment) surgeries to facilitate expression of their preferred gender identity.

Feminine-of-Center: Reflects a person's experience of themselves as more feminine than masculine, regardless of whether they adopt a gender identity as a woman.

Feminine-presenting: Not so much an identity label as a description of how a person expresses themselves (as more feminine).

Gender bending: Intentionally crossing or "bending" gender roles.

Gender creative: Typically applied to children who express or identify their gender in a range of ways that differ from societal and cultural expectations for them, when these expectations are based on biological sex.

Gender diverse: A general term for those who may not adhere to societal expectations regarding gender identity.

Gender dysphoria: A psychological term for the distress some people feel when their internal sense of self doesn't match their biological sex. It can be used as a general description of how someone feels, or more formally as a psychological diagnosis. The experience of dysphoria can range from mild to severe. It can come in waves or buzz steadily in the background of someone's life.

Gender expansive: Describes youth who express or identify in a range of ways outside the male/female binary.

Gender nonconforming: Describes persons who may not adhere to societal expectations for gender expression or models of masculinity and femininity.

Gender variant: Describes someone who does not conform to cultural expectations for gender identity or expression.

Genderfluid: Describes those who experience their gender identity as fluid shifting to some extent—and who may identify and/or present in various ways, regardless of whether these shifts adhere to or are outside of societal expectations for gender expression.

Genderqueer: An umbrella term used of a person whose gender identity is not man or woman, who exists on a continuum between genders, or who is a combination of various genders.

Intersex: A term to describe the 16 (or so) medical conditions in which a person is born with one or more atypical features in their sexual anatomy or sex chromosomes. The causes of an intersex condition can be chromosomal, gonadal or genital. Intersex is different from *transgender*. 99% of people with an intersex condition are biologically male or female (and the other 1 percent are both). In other words, *intersex* does not mean 'neither male nor female.' (Please don't use the term 'hermaphrodite,' as it is potentially offensive and quite outdated.)

Male-to-Female (MTF/M2F): Describes a transsexual person whose birth sex was male, who identifies as female, and who has pursued gender confirmation (or sex reassignment) surgeries to facilitate expression of their preferred gender identity.

Masculine-of-Center: Reflects a person's experience of themselves as more masculine than feminine, regardless of whether they adopt a gender identity as a man.

Masculine-presenting: Not so much an identity label as a description of how a person expresses themselves (as more masculine).

Nonbinary: For some people transgender is used to refer to a biological female who identifies as a male (or vice versa), while *nonbinary* refers to a person who identifies as neither male nor female.

Pangender: Describes those who draw from many of the possible gender expressions to establish their own gender identity.

Primary sex characteristics: Features that are directly part of the reproductive system, such as testes, penis and scrotum in males, and ovaries, uterus and vagina in females.

Secondary sex characteristics: Have no direct reproductive function, for example, facial hair in males and enlarged breasts in females.

Stealth: Describes when someone who is transgender is considered cisgender (or not transgender) by others.

They/Them: Pronouns that can be and have sometimes historically been singular that can be used by people who are seeking a nonbinary singular pronoun more familiar than "ze/zir."

Third sex or third gender: Describes a gender identity other than male or female. This could reference an intermediate state or another sex or gender or having qualities of both man/woman in oneself.