

**Theologically Based Biblical Counsel for Believing Parents  
of Children with Gender Confusion**

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## Abstract

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Children are confused about gender. How could they *not* be with the inundation of transgenderism ideology, and when views of these issues have changed so rapidly over the past few years, shifting from a psychological disorder to a legitimate and celebrated identity? To make matters worse, the secular understanding of all vocabulary related to this issue is also everchanging. Christian parents are also confused. The task these parents face is a daunting one. Never was there a more critical time for Christian parents to cling ever-so-firmly to the unchanging Word of God, recognizing this issue has at its core an attack on God’s authority and human identity. The wise command to “keep your heart with all vigilance” (Prv 4:23) is as true for transgenderism as it is for any other worship disorder. This is an issue of idolatry where the truth of God is exchanged for the idolatrous lie (Rom 1:25).

This thesis is for Christian parents, aimed at helping them respond biblically to their child’s gender confusion, leaning into the sufficient Word of God more fully. It is also meant to provide implications for the church moving forward with this issue in mind. If there ever was a topic ready for the life-changing, hope-giving Word of God, transgenderism is it! This thesis will help me personally, as a biblical counselor within my church working primarily with teenage girls who are in the crosshairs of this ideology’s weapons. It will also help me as a middle school Bible teacher, where I am seeing increasing confusion about gender and identity. Because I work with teens and their parents on a daily basis, I need more knowledge in this area in order to serve the Lord well and provide clarity where there is so much confusion.

I hope to provide parents with a theologically biblical framework from which they can respond to their child in a God-honoring way without succumbing to their own heart idolatry. This is a battle plan. This ideology is not going away, and I believe many more families will be touched by its deception. It is my prayer that this thesis will allow parents who face this issue within the walls of their own home to gain clarity in understanding it and confidence in facing it, trusting in the ever-sufficient, and never-changing Word of God (Is 40:8).

## I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Purpose Statement:* The purpose of this thesis is to provide theologically based biblical counsel for believing parents of a child with gender confusion.

B. *Relevance and Significance*

1. I spend most of my time with teens, teaching and/or counseling them from the Bible. This inevitably involves working with parents. This thesis will help me understand the issues surrounding transgenderism more theologically, thus, leading to more biblical counsel for parents facing this issue with their child.

2. Youth are the chosen target of transgenderism ideology. According to one researcher of first-generation families raising transgender children, “We see no references to transgender children prior to the mid-1990s.”<sup>1</sup>

3. I work mostly with teenage girls, so the statistical growth in the number of teenage girls facing this issue makes this of personal significance to me.<sup>2</sup>

4. The existence of transgenderism provides an exceptional opportunity for biblical counseling to demonstrate another area in which Scripture is sufficient.

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<sup>1</sup> James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, eds., *Understanding Transgender Identities: Four Views* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2019), 34.

<sup>2</sup> “Before 2012..., there was no scientific literature on girls ages eleven to twenty-one ever having developed gender dysphoria at all. In the last decade that has changed, and dramatically.... For the first time in medical history, natal girls are not only present among those so identifying [as transgender]—they constitute the majority.... In 2016, natal females accounted for 46 percent of all sex reassignment surgeries in the United States. A year later, it was 70 percent.” Abigail Shrier, *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2021), xxvii, 33.

5. The complexities surrounding transgenderism are intensified when parents are faced with the shock of their own child falling prey to this ideology. Because emotions often run high, there is a deep need for Scriptural guidance here.<sup>3</sup>

6. “I am a girl trapped in a boy’s body.” “*Am* I a girl trapped in a boy’s body?” The first sentence is a statement of fact.<sup>4</sup> The second is a question.<sup>5</sup> Both, however, betray confusion, and an unbiblical view of one’s gender. How are parents to respond if they are faced with such a statement by their child? What does Scripture have to say for such parents?

C. *Research Methodology*. The research for this thesis will primarily be through literature concerning theological, biblical, and secular views of transgenderism, along with the implications thereof. Journal articles and online sources will also be utilized.

D. *Limitations and Scope*

1. The intended audiences for this project are believing parents of a child experiencing gender confusion, and biblical counselors.

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<sup>3</sup> Without theologically based biblical counsel, parents will often seek secular or integrationist counseling, which will ignore the root issues behind transgenderism and miss the heart of their child. Further, in the growing effort to loosely define “conversion therapy” and ban it, any counsel not biblically based is becoming more and more damning.

<sup>4</sup> This is a representative statement of a child *identifying as transgender*, but it is not the *only* statement indicating such an identification. Creating a comprehensive list of such statements is impossible. However, a few such examples could be any number of the following: “I am neither male nor female.” “I am not cisgender and believe that binary gender is a social construct.” “I can be whatever gender I want to be.” The key point to be made for the purpose and scope of this paper is that this is a *statement*. This child is *identifying as transgender*. See more on this in the section titled, “Biblical Counseling Methods.”

<sup>5</sup> See also the previous note for clear differentiation. This question is representative of a child who is *experiencing gender dysphoria* and is seeking help from his parent. For this thesis, this question is meant to provide an example of a child who is *asking* about his gender. This is a child that is struggling with transgenderism concepts (*experiencing gender dysphoria*). See more on this in the section titled, “Biblical Counseling Methods.”

2. While the implications from this thesis can be applied to the gender confused child, specific and detailed counsel for that child is beyond the scope of this thesis.

E. *Key Definitions*

1. *Theologically Based.* “Counseling is a theological discipline.”<sup>6</sup> Truly biblical counsel must revisit theological underpinnings when engaging the culture. This applies specifically to the parents of a gender confused child.

Misunderstanding is often due to neglect of the doctrines undergirding a biblical perspective of gender.

2. *Biblical Counsel.* The counsel provided in this thesis is based on a high view of Scripture (2 Pt 1:3-4, 2 Tm 3:16-17), and on God’s very good creation of male and female (Gn 1:27, 31). The guidance has at the heart of its goal the sanctification of the parents it addresses, and, above all, the glory of God.

3. *Believing Parents.* While many children in unbelieving homes are also falling prey to transgenderism ideology, the intended audience is believing parents of such a child. These parents stand on a foundational belief in the sufficiency of the Bible and seek to honor God above all. They desire a change in the heart of their child more than a change in the outward expression of his heart.

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<sup>6</sup> Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2016), 11. See also Tim Scheiderer, “Transgenderism: A Theological Perspective,” ERLC, accessed February 5, 2022, <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/transgenderism-a-theological-perspective/>.

4. *The Children.* The children referred to in this thesis are minors.

Addressing adult children's gender confusion is beyond the scope of this thesis.

5. *Gender Confusion*

The term “*transgender*” refers to a person whose sex assigned at birth (i.e. the sex assigned by a physician at birth, usually based on external genitalia) does not match their gender identity (i.e., one's psychological sense of their gender).<sup>7</sup> Some people who are transgender will experience “*gender dysphoria*,” which refers to psychological distress that results from an incongruence between one's sex assigned at birth and one's gender identity.<sup>8</sup>

—psychiatry.org (emphasis mine)

This quote provides the widespread secular view of the differences between the terms, “transgenderism” and “gender dysphoria.”<sup>9</sup> However, they are often used synonymously.<sup>10</sup> Herein lies some of the confusion. I ultimately chose to use “gender confusion” in the title because, *from a biblical perspective*, both a child who asks, “Am I a girl trapped in a boy's body?” and one who states, “I *am* a girl trapped in a boy's body,” reveal an unbiblical, *confused* view of gender. Thus, in this thesis, the title phrase, “children with gender confusion,” encompasses both those experiencing gender dysphoria and those identifying as transgender.

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<sup>7</sup> “[Gender identity is] an individual's personal sense of identity as masculine or feminine, or some combination of each.” Andrew T. Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate: What Does the Bible Actually Say About Gender Identity?* (Centralia, WA: The Good Book Company, 2017), 167.

<sup>8</sup> “Psychiatry.org - What Is Gender Dysphoria?,” accessed April 19, 2022, <https://psychiatry.org:443/patients-families/gender-dysphoria/what-is-gender-dysphoria>.

<sup>9</sup> For more thorough definitions, see the Appendix; also see Vaughan Roberts, *Transgender* (Epsom: The Good Book Company, 2017), 21, 23.

<sup>10</sup> “In informal conversation, gender dysphoria is sometimes used in a nontechnical way as a synonym for transgenderism.” J. Alan Branch, *Affirming God's Image: Addressing the Transgender Question with Science and Scripture* (Lexham Press, 2019), 28.

**II. DEFINING THE PROBLEM.** Two worldviews are at war in dealing with transgenderism ideology. The secular view is rooted in a misunderstanding of the self-conception of human beings in two specific areas—namely, that of identity and authority.

A. *Secular View of the Self-Concept of the Human Being*

1. *Identity: “Who Am I?”*

a) *Origin.* The secular belief concerning the origin of humanity, rooted in evolutionary thought, leads to the belief that there is no Divine purpose. “Man and woman... are cosmic accidents. There is no sharp differentiation between humanity and the animals, or... any life-form.”<sup>11</sup>

Because there is no divine creation of male and female, “manhood and womanhood are mere constructs.”<sup>12</sup>

b) *The Body.* The body has no spiritual value, so it must be conformed to the thinking of the mind.<sup>13</sup> There is no significance in genitalia. It is a result of random evolutionary processes. Biological sex is not determinative. The concept of gender is fluid, not fixed or binary.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Owen Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity: A Theology of Mankind* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2019), 19.

<sup>12</sup> Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Transgender Identities*, 70.

<sup>13</sup> “Sufferers of gender dysphoria can find their bodies endlessly distressing.” Shrier, *Irreversible Damage*, 163.

<sup>14</sup> During a confirmation hearing the year this thesis was written (2022), a Supreme Court nominee was asked by a senator if she could define the word, “woman,” to which the nominee responded, “No... I can’t.” See the following resources: USA TODAY, *Sen. Blackburn Asks Supreme Court Nominee to Define “woman”* | USA TODAY, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWtGzJxiONU>; Jonathan Weisman, “A Demand to Define ‘Woman’ Injects Gender Politics into Jackson’s Confirmation Hearings.,” *The New York Times*, March 23, 2022, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/23/us/politics/ketanji-brown-jackson-woman-definition.html>; “Perspective | Ketanji Brown Jackson Did Define ‘Woman’ at Her Confirmation Hearing,” *Washington Post*, accessed April 3, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2022/03/25/ketanji-brown-jackson-woman/>.

- c) *State At Birth.* Humans are born either neutral or good,<sup>15</sup> and are susceptible to the determining influence of their environment.
- d) *Goal.* The goal is happiness as defined by the person. With no divine Purpose-Giver, ultimately, “Mankind has no purpose.”<sup>16</sup>
- e) *Dynamic Identity.* The term “dynamic” means “flexible,” “fluid,” or “changeable.” The identity of humans can be whatever they want it to be and is subject to change at any moment. This is especially encouraged in America, where individualism is applauded and sought after.

2. *Authority – “Who Has the Right to Dictate How I Live?”*

- a) *Oneself.* With no Divine purpose behind the origin and existence of humans, reality is what one makes of it. Because the body has no divine beauty or purpose, it can be changed to the limits of human capability to fit one’s self-concept. Without any awareness of the sinful minds of humanity, the only enemies to one’s good come from outside influences. One must pursue his own happiness at all costs. This is the highest meaning of life... to be what the world terms his “authentic self.”<sup>17</sup>
- b) *No one else.* This is the “non-answer.” Anyone or anything that obstructs one’s view of himself is the enemy and must be cut off, either

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<sup>15</sup> The mission statement for the website “Born Perfect” states: “To end conversion therapy and to ensure that every child knows that they are born perfect.” “Born Perfect: Ending Conversion Therapy,” Born Perfect, accessed March 8, 2022, <https://bornperfect.org/home/>.

<sup>16</sup> Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 19.

<sup>17</sup> For an example of “authentic self” language, see Tavi Hawn, *The Gender Identity Guide for Parents: Compassionate Advice to Help Your Child Be Their Most Authentic Self* (Emeryville, CA: Rockridge Press, 2021).

literally or figuratively.<sup>18</sup> Any opposition to one's gender identity is seen as oppressive, inhibiting the expression of one's "authentic self." Thus, a biblical worldview founded upon a God who created male and female poses a great danger to the secular view, which believes that "humanity has no broader obligations to a Creator."<sup>19</sup>

3. *Implications – What Does This Mean for the Gender Confused?* Given the world's view of self-identification being determined by the sole authority each person possesses in himself, without any Divine input, transgenderism is no longer seen as a problem. Conversely, it is viewed as a legitimate identity to be celebrated and respected.<sup>20</sup>

#### B. *Biblical View of the Self-Concept of the Human Being*

1. *Identity: "Who Am I?"*

a) *Origin.* God made mankind in His image as male and female (Gn 1:26-27). As a result, humans have purpose, meaning, and accountability to the One who made and loves them.

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<sup>18</sup> This statement graphically demonstrates the lengths to which people will go in order to protect their own gender identity. People disown parents who disagree with their chosen transgender lifestyle, and people also remove body parts in order to attempt to align their physical bodies with their self-conception of their gender.

<sup>19</sup> Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 168.

<sup>20</sup> "Trans influencers typically promote trans as a lifestyle to celebrate, not the result of a malady they hope to cure." Shrier, *Irreversible Damage*, 44.

- b) *The Body*.<sup>21</sup> Human bodies are created by God. They are “vehicles for God-honoring worship.”<sup>22</sup> What one does with one’s body matters because rejection of one’s God-given gender is rejection of God Himself.
- c) *State At Birth*. Humans were created in the image of God but have been born in sin since Adam and Eve’s first sin led to the genetic condition of sin (Gn 3, Rom 3:10-18). Because of this, all humans cannot trust themselves to make good decisions in their own power.<sup>23</sup>
- d) *Goal*. Living to honor God is what produces true joy.<sup>24</sup> The Godward life *is* the good life because it brings happiness through obedience.<sup>25</sup> Our goal is outside ourselves, based on understanding who we are as determined by God.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Body and soul are addressed in “Theological Underpinnings and Considerations.” It is not discussed here to maintain continuity with the secular view, which does not necessarily hold to the existence of the soul.

<sup>22</sup> Owen Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 42.

<sup>23</sup> Scripture speaks consistently to the noetic effects of sin (Gn 6:5; Is 55:8; Jer 17:9; Jn 3:19; Mt 15:19; Rom 1:21; 1 Cor 2:14).

<sup>24</sup> “Man’s chief end is to glorify God [Ps 86:9; Is 60:21; Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 6:20, 10:31; Rev 4:11], and to enjoy him forever [Ps 16:5-11, 144:15; Is 12:2; Lk 2:10; Phil 4:4; Rv 21:3-4].” Presbyterian Church in America and Westminster Assembly Westminster Assembly, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms: As Adopted by the Presbyterian Church in America : With Proof Texts*. (Lawrenceville, Ga.: Christian Education & Publications Committee of the Presbyterian Church in America, 2007), 355.

<sup>25</sup> Paraphrased statement of Owen Strachan. Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock, *The Grand Design: Male and Female He Made Them* (Fearn, GB: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2016), 72.

<sup>26</sup> “Our purpose as human beings is not to exist for ourselves. Our purpose is to be living doxology, living glory to God.” Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 47.

e) *Fixed Identity*. Humans, created by an immutable God, have an unchanging structure and function.<sup>27</sup>

2. *Authority – “Who Has the Right to Dictate How I Live?”* God alone has this authority. As Creator and Sustainer (Col 1:17, Rom 11:36), He has the right to say who we are *and* how we are to live.<sup>28</sup> He made us with purpose. Our self-concept must align with the truth. In the words of one transgender individual who was converted, “[My misery] came because I did not know the Maker of the universe. Only when we serve our Creator King and give Him back the rule of our lives do we become our true selves.”<sup>29</sup>

3. *Implications – What Does This Mean for the Gender Confused?* The identity of man starts with a correct understanding of the One who has authority as his Creator.<sup>30</sup> Humans are dignified as image-bearers of the One True God. He alone possesses authority over the identities of all humans, born male or female (Gn 1:26-27). Therefore, “every core aspect of a man’s identity expresses humility, need, submission, and dependency before the Lord.”<sup>31</sup> Transgenderism,

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<sup>27</sup> “Our identities, like the Word of God, are firmly fixed in the heavens.” Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 31.

<sup>28</sup> The outline of Ephesians demonstrates this well—chapters 1-3 address the identity of Christians (indicatives), and chapters 4-6 address the actions of Christians (imperatives).

<sup>29</sup> Anonymous, “‘I Was a Transsexual Male...’: A Testimony to the Grace of God,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, no. 3 (Spring 1995): 30–35. “True selves” contrasts strongly with the “authentic self” of the secular view. Christianity is not about suppressing the truest, most authentic self. Quite the contrary! It is about opening the eyes of all to their truest selves, which can only be found in knowing the truth of one’s Creator!

<sup>30</sup> “You can only understand man if you understand God.” Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 38.

<sup>31</sup> David Powlison, “A Man’s Identity,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 34, no. 1 (2020): 81.

therefore, is a problem rooted in rejection of the man's God-given identity due to rejection of His sovereign authority over His created beings.

C. *Support from Genesis 1-3.* These chapters record the first collision of biblical and secular concepts of identity and authority as it relates to the first humans.

1. *The Biblical View in Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:18-25*

- a) *Identity.* God created humans male and female in His image (Gn 1:26-27). God stated, "It is not good that the man should be alone" and decided to "make him a helper fit for him" (2:18). The first humans were unique creations of God made in His image and for His glory.
- b) *Authority.* Instead of Adam discovering his need for a complementary helper, it is God who determined *He* would make a helper fit for him (2:18b).<sup>32</sup> God created woman from Adam's rib (2:21) and brought her to him (2:23b). Neither Adam nor Eve contributed to their own creation. God did it alone. He is the One with authority, therefore, to command them how to live in accordance with their purpose (Gn 1:28-31).

2. *The Secular View in Genesis 3:1-13*<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, "[Genesis](#)," in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 13.

<sup>33</sup> "You can be God in your own life, Satan told the first humans. *You can have the authority. You know what's best. You can't trust God—but you can trust yourself.* And the humans said, *Yes*" (emphasis in original). Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*, 62. Satan's argument to the woman in Genesis 3 holds chillingly similar enticements to transgender ideology today. Both strategically attack the biblical concepts of identity and authority as given by God.

a) *Identity*. Satan presented Eve with an enticing idea of who she could be if she ate of the fruit (Gn 3:5).<sup>34</sup> He posed the dangerously deceptive notion that her identity would change for the better if she disobeyed God’s command. She would find her identity in doing what she wanted over what God commanded.

b) *Authority*. Satan’s initial statement, “You will not surely die” (Gn 3:4b), holds an indirect challenge to God’s authority, a tacit claim to that authority himself, and a bold offer of the authority to Eve. Sadly, as with all sin, once committed, the results are never as expected, and always lead to guilt (Gn 3:7-13). The only One qualified to hold authority is God.

3. *Implications for the Gender Confused in Genesis 2:25 and 3:7, 10*. Before the first sin, Adam and Eve were not ashamed of their bodies (2:25). After the sin, they covered themselves and hid from God, afraid due to their nakedness (Gn 3:7, 10). Shame in one’s body was an immediate result of the first sin.

### III. THE BELIEVING PARENTS

A. *Ignorance is Not Bliss*. At the time of Christ, the Essenes intentionally isolated themselves from society.<sup>35</sup> Parents will be tempted to do the same but must not!<sup>36</sup> They

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<sup>34</sup> “Satan cannot actually make a new humanity.... But Satan can tell people that God’s design is not best and that there is an alternate vision available.” Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 170.

<sup>35</sup> “[The Essenes] believed that right religion meant separation from the rest of society.... [T]hey led austere lives in remote, barren areas....” John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 134.

<sup>36</sup> “Some Christians have acted on this temptation [to ‘flee like a bird to your mountain’ from Psalm 11:1], creating closed communities stockpiled with supplies. And those who don’t go that far are still tempted to disengage.” Peter Jones, *The Other Worldview: Exposing Christianity’s Greatest Threat* (Bellingham, Washington: Kirkdale Press, 2015) 131.

must look beyond the fear and pain of the moment to honor God in the midst of this situation, putting their trust in Him and the power of His gospel (Rom 1:16)! Learning the context and foundations of this issue is critical,<sup>37</sup> and is a central goal of this paper.

Ignorance is not an option. It cannot be. Too much is at stake.

B. *Terms are Everchanging.*<sup>38</sup> The terms surrounding transgenderism are unsurprisingly “fluid.” Nearly every book on transgenderism provides a glossary of terms, but no two glossaries are alike. Parents must recognize this as they step into this world with their child.

C. *Initial Response is Critical.* A child who opens up to his parents about his gender confusion<sup>39</sup> will be gauging their response. Andrew Walker writes, “What do you say in this moment? How do you react? It matters. These few seconds are perhaps some of the most consequential of your child’s life, and yours.”<sup>40</sup> He recommends the following:<sup>41</sup>

1. Communicate unconditional love to them.
2. Listen to their thoughts and feelings in full, without interrupting.

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<sup>37</sup> “Christians...are called by God in His Word to know the particular ideas that constitute the world's pattern of thinking and belief; in this way, we can both resist the Lie and make a statement of the Truth that understands and exposes the Lie and offers the only true hope in the gospel.” Jones, *The Other Worldview*, 132.

<sup>38</sup> A more thorough list of definitions of key terms is provided in the Appendix.

<sup>39</sup> The phrase, “opens up about his gender confusion” requires clarification. The convoluted terms involved in transgenderism cause confusion as to what the child means and get in the way of the parents ministering to their child’s heart. The child may state, “I am trans,” or, “I feel like a girl,” or, “I’ve never felt comfortable with my birth-assigned gender,” or any other of a number of statements. The critical point to determine is if his statement demonstrates an unease or confusion about his gender. This demonstrates gender confusion to one degree or another and is all the parents need to know *at this point* in order to respond lovingly.

<sup>40</sup> Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*, 138.

<sup>41</sup> The following are my paraphrased statements taken from Andrew Walker’s recommendations in *God and the Transgender Debate*. I have included all five of his recommendations, although I disagree with his fifth recommendation. Please see footnote 42 for clarification. Ibid, 138-139.

3. Remember their age and developmental level. A conversation with a four-year-old will be different and less challenging than one with a teen.
4. Contact your church leaders to let them know what is going on. (He emphasizes this point as the most critical.)
5. Evaluate your child's emotional and psychological state and consult a Christian counselor or psychologist who will refuse to embrace the ideological underpinnings of transgenderism.<sup>42</sup>

**IV. THE CHILDREN.** Every child, without exception, has been impacted from the sin within and the sin without.<sup>43</sup> To ignore one in favor of the other is to misunderstand the nature of humanity, perhaps at the expense of the child.

A. *Sin on the Inside.* All children are sinful from birth (Ps 51:5).

1. *A Heart that Worships Counterfeits.* All humanity runs after God-substitutes. The idols in vogue change with time,<sup>44</sup> but the heart still lusts after God-substitutes in the exact same way.

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<sup>42</sup> This last point is where my opinion and that of Walker diverge. I would recommend biblical counsel for this family, especially in light of recent developments in legislation against "conversion therapy," and the pressure on licensed counselors to conform to these ungodly laws. Throughout his book, Walker provides theological wisdom, practical insight, and Christlike compassion in dealing with transgenderism. But no mention is ever made in recognition of biblical counseling as an option to provide guidance for the family of a gender confused child. That said, I believe his list of recommendations as to *how* parents should consider their initial response to a child's revelation that he is gender confused is still valuable and helpful.

<sup>43</sup> "Wrong ways of defining who we are arise naturally in our hearts, and the world around us preaches and models innumerable false identities." David Powlison, "A Man's Identity," 78.

<sup>44</sup> "So many crazes have come and gone. Serial killing is vanishingly rare; mass shootings, on the rise. Bulimia may be in decline, while cutting and suicide sharply spike. Other fads died off, while this one [transgenderism] took root. Why? What's in the national drinking water?" Shrier, *Irreversible Damage*, 142. This pointed (and seemingly passionate) monologue comes from an unbeliever who is a testament to the common grace of God in a human's ability to reason. She asks what is in the water, but the problem is not in the proverbial water. It is in the heart of man. We do not know just how bad our hearts are even when we see the evidence right in front of us. We need the Word of God to shine the light on our situation (Ps 19).

2. *The Noetic Effects of Sin.* The noetic effects inhibit the child's ability to see reality as it is. If the child is unregenerated, he is utterly helpless against such seductive ideologies.<sup>45</sup>

B. *Sin on the Outside.* A world governed by satanic ideas provides a seductive pull on the child as well. It wages war against biblical views of identity and authority, in a way that is every bit as alluring as Satan's attack in Genesis 3.

1. *Abnormality is Normal.* The world calls good evil and evil good (Is 5:20). Even for a child holding to a biblical perspective, there is a normative nature to these concepts of transgenderism.

2. *Worldliness is Appealing.* The message underlying transgenderism is a child can choose his own destiny. This appeals to the selfish heart of every human being. Like every other lie, it does not deliver on its promise. It is a trap, leading to destruction for the child (Prv 5:22-23).<sup>46</sup>

3. *Transgenderism Ideology is Constantly Accessible.* The internet provides ready access to both amazing and awful things. Thus, this ideology is not only available to all, but it is specifically promoted and emphasized. This contributes to the normalization of these issues and promises the child that not only is transgenderism a wonderful thing, but it is also the popular<sup>47</sup> thing.

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<sup>45</sup> The concept of the noetic effects of sin is among the most critical in understanding how to approach transgenderism ideology. An examination of Romans 1:18-32 later in the outline will address this more fully.

<sup>46</sup> This passage speaks to the trapping nature of sin. This rejection of God-given gender and of a self-conception rooted in biblical truth leads to the destruction of this child if it is not confronted.

<sup>47</sup> It is no secret that children in the teenage years often manifest an idolatrous desire for popularity. Thus, a key danger of transgenderism ideology is it targets a common heart idol of this age group—the desire to be popular.

## V. THEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND CONSIDERATIONS <sup>48</sup>

A. *Humans: Male or Female.*<sup>49</sup> How did God create us? <sup>50</sup> God created human beings as either<sup>51</sup> male or female (Gn 1:27). <sup>52</sup>

1. *“Very Good.”* God’s description of His *only* design for mankind was that it was “very good” (Gn 1:31). Walker wrote, “God’s creation was ‘very good.’ It was not average, and it was not purposeless.”<sup>53</sup>
2. *Complementarian.* Males and females are distinct from one another by design and by role, *but not by value*. The differentiated roles of husbands and wives is found consistently in the Old and New Testaments.<sup>54</sup>
3. *Nonnegotiable.* God’s binary design for gender is the *only* design for gender. Any other definition of humanity is to be rejected.<sup>55</sup> Those who accept the

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<sup>48</sup> This section is intentionally placed before “Biblical Counseling Methods” to belabor the point that theology *must* drive the counsel given to such parents. Additionally, this is why the title is worded as it is, “*Theologically Based Biblical Counsel...*” Nowhere is correct theology more important in understanding how to counsel the soul than in the issue of transgenderism.

<sup>49</sup> The headings provided here (“Male or Female,” “Body and Soul,” and “Fallen and Sinful”) are borrowed and adapted from J. Alan Branch. Branch, *Affirming God’s Image*, 40-42.

<sup>50</sup> “Transgenderism... attempts to grasp at an understanding of gender beginning with our subjective feelings. But [a correct] understanding... begins with God who made us.” Ibid., 49.

<sup>51</sup> The existence of “intersex” humans ought not hinder a Christian’s belief in only two genders existing. This horribly sad physiological issue is a reflection of the effects of the fall on physical bodies, even in development.

<sup>52</sup> For more on this, see “The Nashville Statement” provided by The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. “Nashville Statement,” CBMW, accessed April 23, 2022, <https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement/>.

<sup>53</sup> Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*, 48.

<sup>54</sup> For a more thorough statement on the biblical position of men and women, see “The Danvers Statement” put out by The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. “The Danvers Statement,” CBMW, accessed April 23, 2022, <https://cbmw.org/about/danvers-statement/>.

<sup>55</sup> What are parents to do if their child is “intersex”? A thorough discussion of this question is beyond the scope of this thesis, however, a footnote on this is important to include. The following response to this issue is sound

gender theory behind transgenderism (that gender is fluid) will never find true joy or hope because they have rejected the design and the Designer.<sup>56</sup>

B. *Humans: Body and Soul.* Humans are comprised of body (outer man) and soul (inner man). This is the dichotomist view of mankind.<sup>57</sup> This can be seen at the creation of the first human in Genesis 2:7, when God created man from dust (physical) and His breath (spiritual).<sup>58</sup> This view is reiterated throughout Scripture (Mt 10:28; Mk 7:21-23; Rom 8:10; 2 Cor 4:16, 7:1; Jas 2:26).

1. *The Body is Good.* God cares about the human body. By implication, what one does with it either honors or dishonors God. Otherwise, God would never have commanded, “glorify God in your body” (1 Cor 6:19). For this reason, it matters what people do with, and to, their bodies (1 Cor 16:13-19).

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and biblical: “First, parents should be extremely reluctant about—if not altogether against—corrective surgery when the child is an infant. This is especially the case when the surgery would involve the modification of the child’s genitals or reproductive organs. Perhaps surgical procedures would be in order at some point during the child’s life, but do not rush a child into surgery simply out of a desire to make the child ‘normal.’ Second, try to determine as soon as possible the chromosomal make-up of the child. If there is a Y chromosome present, that would strongly militate against raising the child as a female, regardless of the appearance of the genitals and other secondary sex characteristics. It would also suggest that medical treatments designed to make the child into a female are out of line. Third, understand that not all doctors and medical professionals share your biblical convictions. Worldviews affect the treatment of intersex conditions. Some doctors may view gender as social and therefore would not let biological markers (such as a Y chromosome) determine the child’s gender. Fourth, parents need to take an active role in understanding the condition and pursuing treatment options in keeping with their biblical convictions.” Denny Burk, *What Is the Meaning of Sex?* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2013), 181-182.

<sup>56</sup> “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.” Roberts, *Transgender*, 35-36. This analogy was given in relation to transgenderism.

<sup>57</sup> While some Christians hold to a trichotomist view of mankind (body, soul, and spirit), it is the opinion of this author and those who hold to a belief in biblical counseling that the dichotomist view is the most supported in Scripture. See also Winston Smith, “Dichotomy or Trichotomy? How the Doctrine of Man Shapes the Treatment of Depression” 18, no. 3 (Spring 2000): 21–29.

<sup>58</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 422.

2. *Hormonal or Surgical Alterations Do Not Change God-Given Gender.*

Because God created binary gender, transgender-driven surgeries are not to be viewed as truly changing one's gender. Both Christian and secular resources can be cited supporting this point.<sup>59</sup> In general, Christians should view these procedures as self-mutilation,<sup>60</sup> a harming of the God-given body in a similar (but not identical) fashion to intentionally cutting or starving oneself.<sup>61</sup> These choices *do* dishonor the God-given body, which is serious (Dt 23:1). The gender of each person is a good thing given by God, which should lead to praise for the way God created each person (Ps 139:13-14).

C. *Humans: Fallen and Sinful.* The fall of man (Gn 3) brought sin into the world. Sin has affected the bodies *and* minds of all humans from that point forward, including those who struggle with transgenderism. The text that best delineates the progression (or

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<sup>59</sup> “[Gender reassignment surgery] does not *really* change males into females or vice versa. In fact, the combination of hormone therapy and surgery results in a surgically altered male with high levels of female hormones or a surgically altered female with high levels of testosterone.” Branch, *Affirming God's Image*, 101-102; “Sex ‘reassignment’ doesn’t work. It’s impossible to ‘reassign’ someone’s sex physically, and attempting to do so doesn’t produce good outcomes psychosocially.” Ryan Anderson, “Sex Reassignment Doesn’t Work. Here Is the Evidence.,” The Heritage Foundation, accessed April 13, 2022, <https://www.heritage.org/gender/commentary/sex-reassignment-doesnt-work-here-the-evidence>. See also Paul McHugh, “Transgender Surgery Isn’t the Solution,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 13, 2016, sec. Opinion, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/paul-mchugh-transgender-surgery-isnt-the-solution-1402615120>.

<sup>60</sup> “...the false gospel of transgenderism invites its participants to mutilate their genitalia in order to find a kind of ‘salvation.’” David Schrock, “What the Gospel Has to Say to Transgendered Persons,” ERLC, July 20, 2015, <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/what-the-gospel-has-to-say-to-transgendered-persons/>; “In [gender reassignment surgery], perfectly functioning body parts are mutilated and rearranged.” Branch, *Affirming God's Image*, 112.

<sup>61</sup> Schrock, “What the Gospel Has to Say to Transgendered Persons.” This article compares circumcision to “gender reassignment surgery,” instructing toward a gospel-driven, biblical view of these surgeries. While gender reassignment surgery, cutting, and anorexia, are not identical, nor are they necessarily rooted in the same heart lust/idol, each one mistreats the body in a way that betrays a distorted view of the good body that God created.

digression!) of the noetic effects of sin on humanity is Romans 1:18-32.<sup>62</sup> First comes a rejection of an obviously existing God and a suppression of the truth (1:18-21). Idolatry then follows (1:22-23). Thirdly, God “[gives] them up” to all manner of evil, including sexual sins, and *inventing evil* (i.e., transgenderism)<sup>63</sup> (1:24-31). Finally, they not only practice these things, but they heartily approve of those who do (1:32). This is the mind of the man who has rejected his Creator God. The discontent of Eve is present in this description. According to this passage, sin affects mankind in the following ways:

1. *What We Want* (vv. 18b, 23).<sup>64</sup>
2. *What We See (and Do Not See)* (vv. 19-20, 28).<sup>65</sup>
3. *How We Think* (vv. 21-22, 28).<sup>66</sup>
4. *What We Worship* (vv. 23-25).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> This text is referred to in most biblical resources addressing transgenderism, and rightly so. It is the Bible’s clearest treatise on the effects of sin on mankind.

<sup>63</sup> “...genital mutilation of modern transgenderism... is the invention of men.” Schrock, “What the Gospel Has to Say to Transgendered Persons.”

<sup>64</sup> “It is the irony of God’s judgment that sinners receive what they seek by self-acclaimed wisdom.” Royce Gordon Gruenler, [“Romans,”](#) in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 931.

<sup>65</sup> “They are in rebellion against him and therefore are distorted in their perception of reality.” *Ibid.*, 930.

<sup>66</sup> “Biblical counseling takes seriously the effects of sin on the thought and decision-making processes. Thinking and obedience are really inseparable.” Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 172.

<sup>67</sup> “In their spiritual blindness, intellectual darkness, and moral depravity, men are by nature inclined to reject the Holy Creator for the unholy creature. Because something even in their fallenness demands a god, but one they like better than the true God, they devise deities of their own making.” John MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 91.

5. *Who We Trust* (v.25).<sup>68</sup>
6. *What We Do* (vv.29-30). In the list of sins found here, note the following four in relation to transgenderism: “haters of God,”<sup>69</sup> “insolent,”<sup>70</sup> “inventors of evil,”<sup>71</sup> and “disobedient to parents.”<sup>72</sup>
7. *What We Celebrate* (v. 32).<sup>73</sup>

## VI. BIBLICAL COUNSELING METHODS

- A. *Know God*. A growing understanding of who God is will be critical in responding to a gender confused child with truth and love.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> “And sin is always a lie, because sinners think that it will make them happy, whereas in the end it ruins life, both for those who sin and for others, in this world and in the world to come.” William Barclay, [The Letter to the Romans](#), 3rd ed. fully rev. & updated., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 35. This is exactly what Eve did in the garden (Gn 3:6)... She trusted the lie!

<sup>69</sup> “This describes people who hate God because they know that they are defying him. God is the barrier between them and their pleasures; he is the chain which keeps them from doing exactly as they like. These people would gladly eliminate God if they could, for to them a godless world would be one where they would have not liberty but license.” Ibid., 43.

<sup>70</sup> “...one who behaves with humiliating and unconscionable arrogance to those who are not powerful enough to retaliate.” F. F. Bruce, [Romans: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 6, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 92.

<sup>71</sup> “The phrase describes people who... are not content with the... ordinary ways of sinning, but who seek out new, obscure and subtle vices because they have grown bored and seek a new thrill in some new sin.” Barclay, [The Letter to the Romans](#), 45.

<sup>72</sup> “The reason for including this sin here is that, once the bonds of the family are loosened, wholesale degeneracy is bound to follow.” Ibid., 45. The promotion of children disowning parents who do not accept their transgenderism ideology is all bound up in the culture’s rejection of obedience to parents.

<sup>73</sup> “The height of sinful hubris is not simply sinning and knowing that the penalty for such things is death; no, it is encouraging and approving of others who do the very same things.” Steven E. Runge, [High Definition Commentary: Romans](#) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 33. The L (Lesbians) and T (Transgenderers) in LGBTQ+ do not agree on the role of the body in determining gender, but they band together and celebrate one another because they have a common enemy—God. For a more on this, see Chapter 10 (“The Triumph of the T”) in *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*.

<sup>74</sup> For a concise but rigorous resource dealing with God’s attributes, see Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Attributes of God*, New ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2006).

B. *Be Compassionate.*<sup>75</sup>

1. *Compassionate Biblical Counselors.* The biblical counselor must listen well to understand well (Prv 18:13). Parents are hurting, unsure of what to do, and children need heart-redemption.

2. *Compassionate Parents.*<sup>76</sup> The parents must view their child as one who is in danger, needing redemption. This is a rescue mission for the child's heart.<sup>77</sup>

God's patience toward His children is the example here (2 Pt 3:9; Rom 2:4; 2 Tm 2:24-26). Compassion is also vital in addressing myriad difficulties surrounding this issue (i.e., use of preferred pronouns, etc.).<sup>78</sup>

3. *Our Compassionate Christ.* Christ spoke the truth in love perfectly (Eph 4:15). "Our love should be modeled on the love of Jesus Christ, who offered the woman at the well living water so that she would never thirst again (John 4:14), yet confronted her sin with compassionate firmness (John 4:16-18)."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> For more on compassion in dealing with souls of others, see Jay E Adams, *Compassionate Counseling* (Stanley, NC: Timeless Texts, 2007).

<sup>76</sup> "But whether [the transgender community] trust[s] in Christ as Savior or not, we will not bow to the public normalizing of sin. Doing so is not compassionate. Standing for the truth is compassionate." Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Transgender Identities*, 79. The parent must distinguish their child's situation from the larger LGBTQ+ movement. Compassion toward one's child who is entangled/enslaved in this ideology is not the same as tolerance toward the LGBTQ+ movement.

<sup>77</sup> The phrase, "rescue mission," is borrowed from Tedd Tripp's book, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*.

<sup>78</sup> For succinct biblical answers to pertinent questions parents face with transgenderism, see the following: Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*, 145-159; Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock, *What Does the Bible Teach About Transgenderism?*, Trilogy (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2020), 141-160.

<sup>79</sup> Branch, *Affirming God's Image*, 131.

C. *Get the Log Out!* Matthew 7:1-5 provides a clearer understanding of the necessity of dealing with one's own sin before addressing that of another.<sup>80</sup>

1. *What Is the Log?* Parents must first open their eyes to their own heart idols!<sup>81</sup> The child's gender confusion can reveal the idolatrous heart lusts of the parents. What are some common heart idols of parents in this situation?

a) *Comfort.* Comfort-seeking parents may misrepresent the gospel to convince themselves their child is saved. They may also ignore study of the cultural influences and climate because of laziness or repulsion.

b) *Approval.* Approval-seeking parents may affirm transgender thinking as legitimate, or neglect to address it as sin.

c) *Reputation.* Well-respected parents in the Christian community (or those who seek such respect) may respond sinfully, fearing loss of reputation, and thus avoid openness and humility with their child.

2. *Why Get the Log Out?* According to Matthew 7:1-5, when a person aggressively deals with his own sin, it enables him to do the following:

a) *Preemptively avoid hasty judgment (v. 3).*<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> "My immediate problem... is not *his* sin...[, but] *my* idolatry.... If parents do not deal with their personal idolatry first, then all the strategies for dealing with your teen will not help" (emphasis in original). Paul David Tripp, "What Is 'Success' in Parenting Teens?," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 23, no. 3 (2005): 15.

<sup>81</sup> In a recent discussion with Dr. Stuart Scott on Ezekiel 14:1-11, he noted the relational aspect hindered by idols. The gospel is not just about facts, but relationships to be restored! Idolatry gets in the way of parents' relationship to God and their children, just as it gets in the way of children's relationship to God and their parents!

<sup>82</sup> "Such persons will not only be slow to undertake the office of censor on their neighbors, but, when constrained in faithfulness to deal with them, will make it evident that they do it with *reluctance* and not satisfaction, with *moderation* and not exaggeration, with *love* and not harshness" (emphasis in original). Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 29.

- b) *Personally eradicate hypocrisy (v. 5).*<sup>83</sup>
- c) *Clearly perceive sin of self and others (v. 5).*<sup>84</sup>
- d) *Effectively help another in sin (v. 5).*<sup>85</sup>

D. *Identify the Influential Voices in the Child's Life.*<sup>86</sup>

- 1. *Friends.*<sup>87</sup>
- 2. *School.*<sup>88</sup>
- 3. *Technology.*<sup>89</sup>

E. *Understand and Address the Child's Heart.*<sup>90</sup> It is easy for parents to focus on peripheral issues and neglect to get to the heart of their child's gender confusion. Thus,

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<sup>83</sup> "...the *hypocrite's* error is not in his diagnosis, but in his failure to apply to himself the criticism he so meticulously applies to his brother" (emphasis in original). R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 147.

<sup>84</sup> "Once the judge is aware of his own sin (v. 5a) and of the judgment that awaits it (v. 2), he can understand his brother's sin and help him deal with it (v. 5b)" J. Knox Chamblin, "*Matthew*," in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 731.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 731.

<sup>86</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*, Resources for Changing Lives (Phillipsburg, N.J: P & R, 2001), 239. This heading is a paraphrase of one of Tripp's recommendations for parents in interacting with teenagers biblically. He articulates how critical it is for parents to understand who their child listens to and respects, and what those influencers are "saying."

<sup>87</sup> "There is a great deal of material in Proverbs about friendship and the influence that others have on you and your behavior. Teenagers are often naïve and unwise in their choice of friends.... Friendship is very important." Tripp, *Age of Opportunity*, 83. This quote comes from a chapter discussing how Scripture defines teens.

<sup>88</sup> For specific biblical approaches to this topic, see Strachan and Peacock, *What Does the Bible Teach About Transgenderism?*, 147-148; Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*, 147-149, 151-152.

<sup>89</sup> "Nearly every novel problem teenagers face traces itself back to 2007 and the introduction of Steve Jobs's iPhone." Shrier, *Irreversible Damage*, 212.

<sup>90</sup> While addressing the child's heart must be mentioned in this thesis due to the parents' role in his life, this section is intentionally abbreviated due to the intended audience. Much more could be written concerning the child's heart, but the purpose of what *is* mentioned is to provide the parents with starting points and guidance in learning how to approach their child.

the parents must ask good questions to discern whether their child is identifying as transgender or experiencing gender dysphoria.<sup>91</sup>

1. *If a Child is Identifying as Transgender.* The parents must rely on the Holy Spirit as the Changer of hearts. The parents' focus must be on gospel truths (God, man, sin, the Savior, repentance, and belief). A repentance according to the gospel is the *first* thing the child needs before anything else! An unregenerate heart cannot respond to the truth of the gospel – it is foolishness to him (1 Cor 1:18).
  - a) *Watch for Entry Gates!*<sup>92</sup> Parents must determine what the child is living for.<sup>93</sup> Common heart lusts are *belonging*<sup>94</sup> and *identity*.<sup>95</sup>
  - b) *Do Not Give Up!*<sup>96</sup> Parents must remember that God's great patience and kindness are meant to lead to repentance (Rom 2:4).

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<sup>91</sup> The distinction is critical in getting to the heart of a child and provides the reasoning for its emphasis in this thesis. Experiencing gender dysphoria does not necessarily mean a child is identifying as transgender. But both descriptions demonstrate that a child is confused about gender. For more on this, see Branch, *Affirming God's Image*, 129; Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*, 33-34.

<sup>92</sup> This term is borrowed from Paul David Tripp, and refers to the opportunities to step into the life of another to see the situation from his perspective in order to proclaim the gospel truth in a relevant way to him. For more on "entry gates," see Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change*, Resources for Changing Lives (Phillipsburg, N.J: P&R Pub, 2002), 125-131.

<sup>93</sup> John D. Street, *Passions of the Heart* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2019), 138-140. According to Dr. Street, the most common root issue at the heart of transgenderism is discontentment. Parents must keep this in mind.

<sup>94</sup> "But the new identity gave her both a cause and a team." Shrier, *Irreversible Damage*, 69. This quote was a mother's description of what her daughter got in return for first identifying as "asexual," then "trans." Descriptive words that would also describe this heart lust would be "security" or "a place in this world."

<sup>95</sup> "Gender dysphoria is [a]... *ruling passion*... held intensely by the patient or the person, who is *making a life of that idea*" (emphasis mine). Ibid., 140. This definition is provided by Dr. McHugh, a leading psychiatrist who previously worked at Johns Hopkins, and who opposes gender reassignment surgery.

<sup>96</sup> "Never give in to thinking it is too late.... I have seen relationship after relationship between parents and teenagers change dramatically because parents refused to be discouraged" (emphasis in original). Tripp, *Age of Opportunity*, 234-235.

2. *If a Child is Experiencing Gender Dysphoria*

a) *Teach Repentance of Transgender Desires (Not Just Actions).*

James 4:1-10, especially verses 1 and 8, connect sinful desires with the need for repentance.

b) *Teach the Process of Biblical Change.* If a child demonstrates saving faith, teach him to put off the old self, renew his mind with the Word, and put on the new self (Eph 4:22-24; Rom 12:1-2; Phil 4:8-9).

c) *Learn, Model, and Teach Patience.* Nothing is likely to change overnight. Neglecting to teach the child this point will leave him without hope and distort his view of what biblical change looks like.<sup>97</sup>

F. *Remember the Gospel is Key.* This is true, whether the child has identified as transgender or is experiencing gender dysphoria. Either way, he needs the gospel to shed light on his gender confusion. Parents must remind each other of this regularly and often.

1. *Expect Opposition.* Make no mistake—this is war.<sup>98</sup> This is war for the hearts and minds of children. The gospel is seen as foolishness to the world (1 Cor 1:18-31). For this reason, Paul stated he was not ashamed of the gospel, for he knew it was the very power of God (Rom 1:16)! One way that the Christian can know he is presenting the gospel as God intended is that the world *will* perceive it

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<sup>97</sup> “For about eight months after my conversion, I did not cross-dress. Naively, I thought those desires were gone forever. I did not know that God helps us overcome old ways gradually, so that we learn dependence on Him.” Anonymous, “‘I Was a Transsexual Male...’: A Testimony to the Grace of God,” 34.

<sup>98</sup> “It’s a warfare. And the battle is for the minds and the hearts and the souls of people.... If you don’t understand that, it only indicates how far away you are from the issue.” John MacArthur, “The Elements of a Strong Spiritual Life, Part 2,” Grace to You, August 23, 1987, <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/55-6/>. These comments were made in a sermon in reference to 2 Timothy 2:3.

as foolishness. But, for the heart of a child who is being called from God effectually, it is His very power given to him (1 Cor 1:18)!

2. *Do Not Change the Message Even if the Child's Heart Does Not Change.*

The gospel the child needs will never change. It is not a new message, and it is the most urgent message that the child needs to hear.<sup>99</sup>

G. *Model Biblical Truths in Key Areas.* Do an honest self-examination (Mt 7:1-5) concerning how these concepts have been modeled in the past. If there has been an unbiblical modeling, the first thing to do is begin modeling humble repentance.<sup>100</sup>

1. *Biblical View of Identity.*<sup>101</sup> Repentance is needed if parents have mocked transgender people, insensitive to the image-bearing nature of such people.

2. *Biblical View of Gender Roles.* If parents have mocked their child (or others) for not being athletic enough, pretty enough, etc., repentance is necessary.

3. *Biblical View of the Body.* If parents have spoken negatively about their bodies (or those of others) due to deformities, etc., repentance is necessary.

4. *Biblical View of Feelings.* Repentance is required if parents have been making decisions based on feelings with their children. This could provide a

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<sup>99</sup> “The gospel is powerful precisely because it is able to save human beings from the inglorious exchange (v. 23), which theology terms ‘original sin.’” Gruenler, [“Romans.”](#) in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 3, 931.

<sup>100</sup> Each of the following headings of what to model include examples of what would require repentance.

<sup>101</sup> “...we [people] are not more or less human depending on our conduct, our views of God, or our moment-by-moment thinking. We may not feel as if we represent God on the earth, but we do.... We may not even wish to image God’s glory—we may live as heathens, as animals, in ongoing projects of self-destruction—but such self-abnegation does not diminish our image-bearing nature or make us less human.” Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 30-31.

wonderful entry point to opening conversations with their child about transgenderism, which is laden with feelings language!<sup>102</sup>

H. *Serve God, Even If...* In case the child never turns his heart toward God, the parents must still serve God and honor Him. This underscores the significance of parents dealing with their own ruling desires, especially the desire for their child's repentance. Habakkuk was a prophet who had to face the reality that his worship must be for the Lord no matter what! Sproul wrote, "Habakkuk's battle with God ended in a bold statement of faith: 'Even if \_\_\_\_\_ happens, yet I will rejoice in the Lord.' What are the 'even if's' in your life? Are you willing to surrender them to the Lord?"<sup>103</sup>

## VII. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH

A. *Be Ready for the Fallout.* The regret of those who receive hormone therapy and/or gender reassignment surgery is not oft proclaimed but is unmistakably present.<sup>104</sup>

B. *Continue Preaching the Word!* The best way for the church to interact with the culture has not changed. Utilizing the grammatical-historical hermeneutic in texts speaking to the origins, purpose, and identity of mankind (Gn 1-3) is crucial. "One's approach to hermeneutics will powerfully shape one's perspective on transgender experience and identity."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> For a great start to understanding a biblical view of feelings, see Timothy A. Bryant, "How to Live by Truth (Not Feelings)," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 18, no. 3 (Spring 2000): 50-53.

<sup>103</sup> R. C Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006), 153-154.

<sup>104</sup> *Trans Life Survivors* is dedicated wholly to stories of those who reached out to a former "transgender woman" (Walt Heyer), asking for help after regretting "getting a sex change."

<sup>105</sup> This quote comes from a book providing four "Christian" views on how to approach the issue of gender identity. These four approaches are based upon vastly different interpretations of Scripture, proving that hermeneutics is crucial. Beilby and Eddy, eds., *Understanding Transgender Identities: Four Views*, 49.

C. *Teach the Gospel in its Context.*<sup>106</sup>

D. *Revisit the Doctrine of Man.* This doctrine is under attack. Owen Strachan, who authored a systematic theology book in 2019 on the doctrine of man, wrote, “Since the publication of *Reenchanting Humanity*, I have only grown more convicted of what I argued in 2019: the doctrine of man is truly the doctrine of our time, both for good and (in the wrong hands) for ill.”<sup>107</sup>

1. *Promote Biblical Masculinity and Femininity.* The church must promote biblical manhood and womanhood as designed by God, in its teaching to both children and adults. This issue is addressed in both the Old and New Testaments (Dt 22:5; 1 Cor 11:3, 7-15).<sup>108</sup>

2. *Do Not Overcorrect.*<sup>109</sup> As a driver who is veering left can overcorrect in turning the steering wheel too abruptly to the right, the Church can easily overcorrect here. The *biblical* description of gender must reign supreme. Not all women need to love cooking all day, nor do all men need to obsess over football. Such stereotyping can actually *contribute* to childhood gender confusion.

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<sup>106</sup> For helpful resources on this, see Stuart Scott, “The Gospel in Context | One Eighty Ministries,” accessed April 2, 2022, <https://oneeightyministries.org/resources/the-gospel-in-context/>; Paul Washer, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ (10-Pack)*. (Place of publication not identified: Reformation Heritage Book, 2016).

<sup>107</sup> Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, “Preface.”

<sup>108</sup> “...loving others and God means that people will maintain a gender identity that aligns with their biological sex and will express this gender in a way that never leads to gender confusion in the eyes of others.” Jason Shane DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2017), 448.

<sup>109</sup> “Avoid over-exaggerated stereotypes of masculinity and femininity.” Sharon James, *Gender Ideology: What Do Christians Need to Know?* (Fearn, Scotland, 2019), 109.

E. *Recognize Legal Issues on the Horizon.*<sup>110</sup>

## VIII. CONCLUSION

A. *The Priority of the Parent.* In God’s ordered design, the best place to contend for the hearts of children is primarily in contending for the hearts of parents.

B. *The Call to the Parent.* It is a demanding calling to be a parent (Dt 6:4-9, 11:18-21; Prv 29:15-17; Eph 6:4). The parents of a gender confused child must not view the situation as misfortune, but as an *opportunity* for the gospel!

C. *The Questions for the Parent.* Teachers often pose questions instead of providing answers. Please consider the following questions, which relate directly to the major sections of this outline, as a self-assessment. Be honest with yourself, knowing that God loves humility (Jas 4:6)! Trust in His power and not your own (Prv 3:5-7), dear parent, knowing that God *can* and *may* change your child’s heart (2 Tm 2:24-26). But your goal must be to ensure that He changes *yours* (Ps 51:10, Prv 4:23)!

1. Do I understand the terms “transgenderism” and “gender dysphoria” well enough to discuss them with my child?
2. Why are the topics of identity and authority of such importance here? How can I refer to these concepts to clarify my child’s confusion about gender?
3. Do I know the difference between the self-conception of humanity from a biblical view versus a secular view?

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<sup>110</sup> For more information, see the following: “Canada: Bill C-4 Banning Conversion Therapy Comes into Force,” web page, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, accessed April 18, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2022-01-19/canada-bill-c-4-banning-conversion-therapy-comes-into-force/>; “West Lafayette Ordinance 31-21 - Association of Certified Biblical Counselors,” <https://Biblicalcounseling.Com/> (blog), accessed April 18, 2022, <https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/podcast-episodes/west-lafayette-ordinance-31-21/>; “Movement Advancement Project | Conversion ‘Therapy’ Laws,” accessed April 18, 2022, [https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/conversion\\_therapy](https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/conversion_therapy).

4. What are the major points I want to discuss with my child from Genesis 1-3, specifically regarding identity and authority?
5. Have I been ignoring this issue, angry at my child, or neglecting the hard work of diligent study? If so, have I repented? What am I doing to educate myself and engage in the battle for my child's heart?
6. Do I have a general understanding of transgenderism language/terms?<sup>111</sup>
7. How did I initially respond to learning of my child's gender confusion? If it was sinful (involving anger, worry, etc.), have I repented to God *and* to my child?
8. Do I acknowledge the effects of sin from within my child and from without? Am I reevaluating the "voices" in my child's life (school, friends, technology)?
9. Do I know and apply theology concerning God's complementary roles for men and women, and God's view of the body, in my own marriage/life?
10. How am I showing genuine compassion to my child through this?<sup>112</sup>
11. Do I know what my child is living for? If not, how can I find out?
12. In what ways is my own sin getting in the way of honoring God and helping my child? How can I eradicate this sin and remove such hypocrisy?<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> See the Appendix.

<sup>112</sup> Compassion is linked to kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and love (Col 3:12-14).

<sup>113</sup> For more on this, see Stuart Scott and Zondra Scott, *Killing Sin Habits: Conquering Sin with Radical Faith* (Bemidji, Minnesota: Focus Publishing, 2013).

13. Have I determined if my child is identifying as transgender or is experiencing gender dysphoria? If not, what questions can I ask to determine this?
14. Have I explained the key elements of the gospel to my child? *Can I explain the key elements of the gospel at all?*
15. Do I see evidence of my child's salvation?<sup>114</sup>
16. According to Romans 1:18-32, where does transgenderism come from? How can this knowledge help me to address the heart of my child?
17. Do I have a biblical understanding of feelings, and can I apply that in my conversations with my child?
18. Am I actively involved in a Bible-believing church which holds to a biblical view of gender?
19. Above all, am I prepared to serve God even if my child chooses to reject His good plan for biblical gender?<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> See the "Assurance of Salvation" resource at "Counselor's Toolbox," *Grace Fellowship Church | Gather Grow Go* (blog), accessed April 23, 2022, <https://www.graceky.org/biblical-counseling/counselor-toolbox/>.

<sup>115</sup> Everything rides on your answer to this question. An idolatrous desire for your child to change will not only get in the way of your ministry to him, but—far worse— it will get in the way of your relationship with your God.

## Appendix

### Common Terms of Transgenderism<sup>116</sup>

- **Gender dysphoria:** when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch 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.
- **Transgender:** 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 wide variety of terms. In other words, this term has many subgroups, such as transsexual, transvestite, gender fluid, genderqueer, etc.<sup>117</sup> Unlike "intersex," which refers to a biological reality, "transgender" has to do more with people's feelings and thoughts about their gender.
- **Gender identity:** a person's internal sense of their own gender, whether male, female, or something else.
- **Gender reassignment:** when a person undergoes "some form of medical intervention..., chang[es] names, pronouns, dress[es] differently, and liv[es] in their self-identified gender." A synonym for this term is "transition."
- **Intersex:** 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. This term refers to a biological reality, and is different from "transgender," which refers more to people's thoughts and feelings concerning gender.
- **Cisgender:** someone whose gender identity coincides with the sex assigned at birth.
- **Non-binary:** an umbrella term for a person who does not identify as male or female. Branch notes that "the vocabulary of transgenderism won't remain stable but will continue to change as different sexualities are mainstreamed."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Roberts, *Transgender*, 21-24. The definitions coincide with the world's use of them, though they would not fit into a biblical worldview. The purpose of this appendix is to help parents understand the words as the world understands them. The list of terms and definitions provided are mostly taken from Roberts' *Transgender*. If other resources were used in defining these terms, it will be indicated with a separate footnote in the list.

<sup>117</sup> Branch, *Affirming God's Image*, 36.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 36. The terms associated with transgenderism are constantly changing, as can be seen with the term "gender dysphoria" in the *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* "Gender dysphoria" in the 2013 edition of the *DSM* was formerly referred to as "gender identity disorder" in the 1994 edition.

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