

THE BIBLE ON GENDER

POSITION PAPER

A **MANNAHOUSE** RESOURCE





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THE BIBLE ON GENDER

This document has been prepared to represent the Mannahouse Eldership's agreed upon understanding of what the Bible clearly teaches regarding topics related to gender. It is meant to lay a doctrinal foundation that can be applied pastorally to promote understanding, clarity, and healing.

The Bible addresses the concept of gender by stating God's creative intent and design. It also gives us clear guidance regarding how we are meant to view, value, and treat every person God has created to bear His image.

As our creator, God alone has the right to define our personhood. Accepting and surrendering to His definition of us is the foundation of healthy identity. Rejecting God's creation and His definition of it is an act of rejecting God Himself.

Except for the first two, the flow of the points below is meant to follow the general order of how these topics unfold in Scripture, rather than listing them in a hierarchy of importance. We believe that the starting point of addressing issues is the revelation of God's thoughts on the matter as revealed in Scripture. Our thinking must be based in His revealed truth while our approach to others must be an expression of His amazing love. For this reason, we intentionally begin with the first two numbered points below.

Following are some key summary points that arise from the Biblical research (the Scripture references included are not exhaustive but are a representative sampling):

1. When a person's sense of identity, whether regarding gender dysphoria or sexual attraction, deviates from God's intent and design, he or she can believe in Christ, surrender to him, and be born again with a new heart and identity, which aligns with God's intent and design in all areas (John 3:1-16; 2 Corinthians 5:17). While all Christians are new creatures in Christ, they must remain vigilant in the ongoing battle against their old sinful nature with its desires (Galatians 5:16-17; Romans 13:13-14; cf. Ephesians 6:10-17) and are called to "put off" the old sinful thoughts and habits, and to "put on" thoughts and habits in accordance with their new nature in Christ (Ephesians 4:17-32; Colossians 3:1-17). Struggling against temptation, which comes via the old sinful nature, is not a sin, but entertaining it and surrendering to it is (Hebrews 12:4; James 1:12-15). Yet in the process of sanctification, believers can overcome such temptation by surrendering to the Holy Spirit, who always provides a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13; Galatians 5:16-18).



2. As a church, we have grace, patience and compassion for all people bound in sin or struggling with it. Scripture directs us to teach and correct believers within the church, not to judge unbelieving individuals outside of it (1 Corinthians 5:12), to whom we offer the gospel which frees people from sin and death through Christ (Romans 6). Once saved, we encourage all believers to stand firm in their new Christian identity, endeavoring by God's grace to put off their old sinful thoughts and desires and to put on Christ in those areas instead – whatever those particular areas may be (Ephesians 4:17-32). While all sin is shameful, we do not shame or stigmatize a believer who fights the good fight against sin, the flesh, and the devil. We are committed to impartially and patiently teach, counsel, encourage, forgive, and restore one another by God's grace and through his word as we all journey together in the ongoing process of sanctification (Galatians 6:1-10; 1 Timothy 3:16-17). Those who struggle against old sin-nature habits, thoughts and desires manifesting in areas of sexual or gender identity are not to be treated with any less patience, sincerity, and love (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 John 1-2).
3. The Bible declares that God created the first human beings with distinct genders, male and female (Genesis 1:27; Mark 10:6). The Bible only ever identifies these two genders.¹
4. God's stated purposes for creating humans as male and female included bearing His image, reproducing mankind, and extending His dominion (Genesis 1:27-28). Notice that the pronoun "them"² implies that all the stated purposes are shared by both men and women.
5. The image of God is passed on through parents as God intimately forms whole humans – both material and immaterial components – in the womb (Genesis 2:7, 4:25–5:3; Psalm 139:13-16). The God who created mankind as male and female in the beginning also forms them as male and female in the womb. "From the beginning" he has not changed the design He called "good" (Matthew 19:4).
6. One major purpose for which God created male and female was so that the two could partner together in the covenant of marriage (Matthew 19:4-6). This established a Biblical pattern in which both men and women labor together to fulfill God's purpose in the broader covenant community (Genesis 2:20-25, Ephesians 5:22-33).

¹ Well over 100 verses use some word for man/male alongside woman/female in a matter that teaches binary distinction; and other gender categories are never offered. E.g., Gen. 5:2; Exod. 35:22; Jer. 30:6; Matt. 19:4; Acts 5:14; 17:12; 1 Tim. 2:8-10.

² In the language of the Bible, third person plural pronouns (translated "they" or "them") may imply plurality or collectivity, and third person masculine pronouns are often gender neutral when addressing a group of both men and women, but such pronouns never imply ambiguity or fluidity along a gender spectrum.



7. Marriage is progressively revealed as a picture of God's ultimate purpose in creating the church as a covenant community in which both men and women together comprise the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33, Hosea 2:14-23, Revelation 19-22).
8. God intended males and females, whether married or single (1 Corinthians 7), to partner together in fulfilling His purpose (Genesis 2:18, Joel 2:28-29, Galatians 3:28).
9. God defines a person's gender and does not acquiesce to his or her gender preferences. For example, God considers dressing and presenting as the opposite sex to be an abomination as it mixes and corrupts His created order for gender (Deuteronomy 22:5, cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1-16).³ Homosexual desires and activity likewise represent a corruption of God's created order for gender (Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:26-27). Passages such as these teach that abandonment of God's created order with respect to His design and purpose for gender is a rejection of Him as Creator and Lord.
10. In Scripture, neither removal of reproductive organs nor barrenness results in a change of a person's gender identity (Matthew 19:12, Genesis 25:19-21, Psalm 113:9).
11. The Bible never endorses a person deciding, exploring outside, adding to or removing his or her gender.⁴
12. In Matthew 19:12, Jesus mentioned that some few people were born with a physical irregularity that made the normal sexual and reproductive expression within marriage impossible. This statement was almost certainly intended to include intersex people – those born with both male and female biological traits. Jesus did not condemn such people. Instead, he compassionately underscored the difficulty of accepting the fact that some must forego marriage, sexual intimacy, and reproduction, whether by way of their calling and gifting (“eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom,” such as Paul in 1 Cor. 7) or by congenital deformation (“eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb”). Elsewhere, Jesus said that a man had been born blind neither because of his sin nor the specific sin of his parents, but that God would nonetheless be glorified by his work in the man (Jn. 9:3). Likewise, while mankind's fall into sin is the basis for disease and death

³ Some argue that this is only a prohibition against certain pagan rituals involving crossdressing; but nothing in the context suggests this. Rather, the context presents a chiasm with laws regarding dress (v. 5), animals (vv. 6-7) and house (v. 8) followed in reverse order by laws regarding field (v. 9), animals (v. 10) and dress (vv. 11-12). The theme uniting this passage is the prohibition against improper mixture in violation of natural order. (See E. Merrill, *New American Commentary*, v. 4.)

⁴ This point is considered an argument from silence.



(Gen. 3; Rom. 5; 8), those experiencing these things are not necessarily under God's direct judgment by them. Therefore, Christians ought to exercise understanding, charity and compassion toward intersex people, and Christian pastors should help them navigate matters like sense of identity, marriage, singleness, etc. Such a burden can be alleviated in Christian fellowship (Gal. 6:2) and might be used by God to draw a believer closer to Himself, rely more on His grace and grow in spiritual maturity (2 Cor. 12). As stated above, the rare exception of intersexuality cannot be used to define gender as God designed it (binary, male or female) nor to justify transgenderism.

13. Due to the fallenness of creation there may be people born with chromosomal or genital deformities (Matthew 19:12 John 9:1-5). Such intersex individuals are uniquely men and women made in God's image experiencing the tragic effects of a sin-sick world. Our hope is that they (alongside their parents, doctors, counsellors, pastors, etc.) find divine grace to navigate their unique biological situation with trust in God who works all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).
14. The rare occurrence of a person born as intersex cannot be used to redefine God's original design as to gender as defined above. A thing is defined by its perfections not its exceptions.
15. We conclude, therefore, that in God's sovereign order of creation human gender is binary and accords with biological sex to the effect that only biological males are men and only biological females are women⁵ in the eyes of God – a design which cannot be redefined or changed by such means as human alteration or subjective sense of personal identity.

⁵ The experience of intersexuality is not a contradiction to this principle in that it represents an irregularity in God's created order resulting from the fallen state of the world (as mentioned above).

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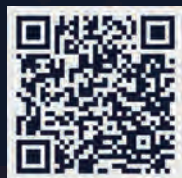
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