

“THERE’S A BOY IN THE
LITTLE GIRLS ROOM!”: FAQ ON

TRANSGENDERISM

TRUTH & GRACE

Transgenderism as a cultural phenomenon raises many hard questions for Christians. In this FAQ, we address eight of the toughest queries Christians face on the issue of transgenderism. In our responses, we give short, biblical, and practical guidance. Beyond this, readers do well to engage the leaders of their local church for wisdom.

(With permission, this material is taken and edited from this book, and is a part of a sexuality trilogy by Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock that includes a book on lust and another on homosexuality.)

1. Our five-year-old son dressed up in his sister's princess outfit. How should I handle this?

He is probably just experimenting as children sometimes do. He may be doing it out of interest and amusement, or for attention. If it continues, you should gently but clearly bring such behavior to a halt. Use the moment as an opportunity to teach and reinforce how God made him a boy (in God's image) and is pleased when boys dress to show they are boys. Encourage him by showing how daddy dresses different than mommy and how he is like daddy and not mommy in this regard. Redeem the moment even as you graciously guard against flouting God's design (out of ignorance).

2. My eight-year-old daughter says she is a boy, wants to dress and cut her hair like one, and she wants to change her name. She is insistent. What is my response?

There could be and probably are many factors influencing her, not least of which is the culture that has made transgender identity acceptable and even desirable.

First, realize and assume your parental responsibility and authority before God. She is an eight-year-old in your care, not the school's or the culture's. We don't let our children drink and drive or have sex, and so she cannot insist that her immature will prevails against yours. At all stages of being a minor, she doesn't have the right to change her name. You should teach her that it is the name her parents gave her as God's guardians over her and that it would be disrespectful to God for her to change it.

Second, use the opportunity to teach about God's design of two fixed sexes, how her body is given by God to show her who she is, how it is a gift to be respected, and how her expression of that is tied to her biological sex at birth.

Third, you should take her back to the gospel. Whether she is professing faith or not, show her that we all have disordered feelings that don't align with God's will because of sin and the fallen world in which we live, but Jesus came to redeem us and empower us to think and feel rightly.

Fourth, it's a matter of parental wisdom when you let your child begin to have a say in what she wears or how she appears (eight seems way too young). But you ought to be affirming her femaleness by the clothes you dress her in. Gender-neutral clothing is becoming more and more the norm. We are not saying that a girl can never wear jeans and must be able to sit on her hair, and we certainly do not wish to over-stereotype so that a girl who prefers climbing trees to playing with her Barbie dolls might think she is a boy! But she should generally appear and act in biblically appropriate ways that express her femininity and distinguish her from a boy.

3. My child is what is called "intersex," having both male and female genitalia. Toward what sex should I raise them?

First, a better term for this condition is a "disorder of sexual development" (DSD). Second, this is not an easy situation in the rare cases that exist and requires much wisdom. Be assured that the existence of DSD doesn't change the fact that there are binary complementary sexes only. There is no possibility of a third sex. Scripture defines what is true and normative, not fallen creation.

Third, remember that the entrance of sin has created ambiguous cases like this. The gospel promises the reality of freedom from the penalty and power of sin and the guaranteed hope of total renewal of body and soul (already begun) in the New Heavens and New Earth. So, parents should try and find the chromosomal state of their child. If there is a Y gene, then your child is most likely a boy. Resist surgery. Don't rush in. Pursue treatment that is in line with Christian ethics.

4. Should we use the preferred name and gender-specific pronouns of a transgender person?

When it comes to gender-specific pronouns, it is advisable not to compromise. To call a man “she” or “her,” or a woman “he” or “him,” is a lie. And although we must remember that all sin is sin, not all sins are the same in gravity. Transgenderism is a serious sin before God and tramples on His glory, for He is the one who created us in His image male or female (Genesis 1:27). Affirming the opposite of that truth with the pronouns you use for that person also participates in the lie, and that person’s delusion, and spreads confusion among believers in the church. So, for the sake of love for God, the transgender person, and the church, we should not use those pronouns.

5. What should Christian parents do when someone of the opposite sex is allowed to compete on their child’s sports team and shower in their locker rooms?

We assume that the child is still a minor but in his or her teens, as this is typically when the situation might arise with respect to showering. You can make the case to the team coach or organizers that biology should trump identity and that no one should impose upon everyone else the fact that someone is confused and has a subjective sense of being something they are not. In addition, you could state the fact that this is a team of one sex, and the well-being of the group is more important than the individual’s subjective sense of self.

You might attempt to gain some support from other parents, but if the team organizers insist on this policy, we advise that you remove your child from the team and an immoral situation. We would also hope your child would desire to be off a team which allows for a member of the opposite sex changing and showering with them.

6. Parents at my child's school are encouraging their child to embrace an opposite-gender identity. How should I handle this?

Here we recall a key biblical precept: you should speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). This does not mean being really nice and only telling people that God loves them and has a wonderful plan for their life. It means seeking to engage these parents in a respectful and Christlike way, and, in doing so, making it clear to them that they may be thinking they are helping and loving their child. But in truth, they are harming their child terribly, sinning against the Creator, and must cease any form of encouraging the child to embrace an opposite-sex appearance and identity. Ideally, this will lead to an opportunity to share Christ, the hope of every sinner.

7. What is the right response when loved ones grow up and reject Christianity while embracing transgenderism and the LGBTQ+ lifestyle?

We seek to disciple our children in the Christian faith. This takes much dependence on God. We must both teach the truth of God and seek to live by the grace of God. We want our homes to be anchored in the Bible, but to be places of great joy, great love, and great compassion, never provoking children to rebellion through stringent and legalistic parenting (Ephesians 6:4). With that noted, if an older child rebels against biblical teaching and the discipleship we have sought to provide (always imperfectly), we should seek to love them still.

We cannot affirm their sin, but we can strive to communicate that we care for them and want their greatest good. Our hearts may be broken in this situation, but we must remember that God alone can save. We should pray for them, strive to talk calmly and respectfully with them, and do what we can to show genuine love to them. Again, we will feel real and ongoing pain in these kinds of predicaments, but our hope as believers is in God. God is good and does good, even when loved ones turn away from him (Psalm 103:8). We remember this as well: he may turn them back!

8. If we tell the truth about transgender sin, won't unbelievers tune us out, causing us to lose our witness?

There is no tension between telling the truth and loving fellow sinners. It is loving, in fact, to tell the truth. Our proclamation of God's teaching, then, does not get in the way of Christian witness. Christian proclamation is Christian witness. We need to supplement our speech with the fruit of the Spirit, to be sure. We cannot think that we should only speak up and do no more. We are called to be "light," after all, to shimmer with life and love and the beauty of holiness (Matthew 5:17-20).

But do not be mistaken: the natural man does not receive the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). People may well disagree with, dislike, and even despise us for telling the truth about transgenderism. They could even go so far as to persecute us, as happened with Christ, as happened with His apostles, as has happened to countless Christians over the centuries. Come what may, we must not lose sight of the fact that we are called to speak the truth in love. There is no new mission for Christians today; there is no new way for the church to proclaim God's Word. As we proclaim Christ and all God's truth in love, God will change, save, and transform (Ephesians 4:15). This is our hope; this is our confidence.