

TRANS AND THE GOSPEL

a conversation

week 1 - definitions



THE UMBRELLA TERMS: TRANS AND TRANSGENDERISM

Both *trans* and *transgender(ism)* are umbrella terms that refer to an individual's experience of *gender incongruence*, that their biological sex and assumed gender are not in keeping with their mental experience of who they are/should be. Sometimes, this is medically/psychologically diagnosed (either as a synonym or due to severity) as *gender dysphoria*.

WHAT ABOUT _____?

TRANSSEXUALITY - While this was once used as a synonym for trans, it is now specifically associated with one's change in sexual orientation, perhaps as a result of one's experience of being trans, but is no longer a synonym

INTERSEX- a biological condition of having a different chromosomal pattern than XX or XY; less than 1% of intersex individuals ever experience gender incongruence

CISGENDER - a synonym for someone who is not trans, sometimes shortened to cis- (created to avoid the comparison of 'normal' vs. trans people)

NON-BINARY - people who do not consider themselves either male or female, but a combination of both, or neither

HOW IS SOMEONE DEFINED?

SEX -chromosomal make-up, or (sometimes contested) reproductive organs

GENDER IDENTITY - how one views one's own (or others') gender

EXPRESSION or **PRESENTATION** - how one displays or lives out one's gender identity



ORIENTATION- one's sexual or romantic preferences or attractions, and sometimes the amount thereof

TRANSITION - when one changes one's gender expression to reflect a new identity; can be cultural or medical in nature

THE QUESTIONS OF GENDER - IS GENDER CULTURALLY CONSTRUCTED?

Yes?

Expressions of gender have changed throughout history and across cultures. Examples of how masculinity has changed :

- Fashion: 17th century European men favored high-heels to appear tall
- Art: Edo-period samurai viewed poetry and painting as warrior pursuits
- Work: indigenous American peoples sometimes viewed agriculture as 'women's work'
- Color: 19th century British boys favored pink as a youthful version of the 'redcoat'

No.

There are biological differences between men and women which affect cultural perception:

- Male testosterone levels affect bone density and muscle mass, as well as promote aggression/adrenaline production
- Female reproductive capability affects sexuality, childbirth accentuates biological shifts
- Female hormone combinations promote relational connections between individuals

THE QUESTIONS OF GENDER - IS GENDER A SPECTRUM?

26 Then God said, "Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 So God created man in his own image, in **the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.** (Gen. 1)

18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a **helper** fit for him."... 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his **ribs** and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and **they shall become one flesh.** (Gen. 2)

While each individual is made in the *imago dei*, the image of God, the mysterious nature of God as the Trinity emphasizes the need for community to fully express the image of God in the world.

Further, this image could not be expressed in community alone, but also in difference - the biological separation normalized in creation of male and female. While this text does not *alone* limit gender to male and female (and indeed, in the animal kingdom some occurrences of other biological sexes and reproductive systems exist), the emphasis in connection with the necessity of imaging God is important.

The Hebrew word for 'rib' here is actually the word used to describe the timbers of the tabernacle in the OT. This emphasizes the sacredness and unique nature of the woman, rather than a subjugated or lesser status.

Again, while this alone does not establish only two genders, it does situate the biological and sexual bond of similarity (as two humans) and difference (men and women) as a creational cornerstone. Jewish rabbis and prophets and later NT authors would point to this sexual union in the context of treasuring, sacrificial relationship, as pictures of God and his love for his people.

CONSIDER THE DIFFERENCE...



ONE SPECTRUM?

OR TWO?

