

## **INTRODUCE**

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to Genesis chapter 1. Genesis 1. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to Genesis 1.

## **INTRODUCTION: TRENDING**

Well, happy Palm Sunday, which is traditionally when we kick off Holy Week by remembering Jesus' triumphal entrance into Jerusalem. But today we're in-between sermon series at Fathom, and so we're going to do something a little different.

When we did our annual members feedback survey last year,

- one thing that became clear
- was that you wanted some more specific teaching and training
- on how to handle current events and issues
- from a biblical perspective.

And so, from time to time we will be doing sermons and providing resources in a new series we're calling TRENDING. What does the Bible say about these trending topics?

And today is the first in this series, specifically concerning the topic of transgendered identities.

## DISCLAIMER

Now, this is a HUGE topic, and I'm not going to barely be able to scratch the surface on it, let alone comprehensively cover it.

So, today I want to give a brief overview of this topic,

- what the Bible says about it,
- and some basic applications for followers of Christ.

But we've also set up a resource website,

- **SLIDE** [fathomchurch.org/trending](http://fathomchurch.org/trending)
- where you can find more info.

Furthermore, if you have any questions about anything in this topic

- you can text them to **SLIDE** 720-507-8687,
- and we'll record some follow-up podcasts.

Also, I'll ask for your grace as I preach today,

- because I'm not a psychologist.
- I'm not a doctor.
- I'm not a scholar.
- I'm a local pastor.
- And I'll be leaning on lots of books and resources
- to help me in this...

And, man, there are tons of opportunities for me to step in it on this one.

- So, I do not intend to offend or hurt anyone today...
  - Unless, of course, it's God's Word that offends.
- And I hope I won't be misunderstood, though I might.

So, I just ask grace as we begin today.

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## IN THE NEWS

Now, transgender identities have been hot in the news for the last decade, but even in recent weeks, it continues.

- The Equality Act just passed the House of Representatives.
- The Senate just confirmed the first transgendered doctor as the assistant secretary of health.
- Multiple books have been banned from Amazon and Target for writing in ways deemed non-supportive of the trans movement.
- I am deeply concerned about what's being taught to children
  - about gender in public schools.
  - Which, at times, seems to advance a single ideology
  - while suppressing other views.
- And I'm deeply grieved
  - when medically invasive and irreversible procedures
  - are performed on young children and adolescents
  - wrestling with their identities.

But I'm also deeply concerned for how the church has historically responded to this issue.

- I'm deeply concerned for Christians and churches
  - who have ignored,
  - shunned,
  - disregarded,
  - mocked,
  - and been unloving towards those
  - experiencing gender identity incongruencies.

- And I'm deeply concerned for Christians and churches
  - who have wholeheartedly adopted the world's ideology,
  - and become—the coin phrase—open and affirming.

## TRANSITION

So, we want to see what the Bible has to say.

If someone experiences incongruence between their biological sex and their internal sense of self, which one determines who they are—and why?

## DEFINITIONS

Now, we have to start with some definitions. Because the terms are numerous, and what we mean when we say certain words is really important.

First: **SLIDE TRANSGENDER**

Transgender is an umbrella term

- for the many ways
- people might experience,
- present,
- or express
- their gender identities
- differently from people
- whose sense of gender identity
- is congruent with their biological sex.

Now, transgender typically refers to

- a biological female who identifies as a male or vice versa,
- but it has come to include many nonbinary categories which
- refer to a person who identifies as neither male nor female.

Next, **SLIDE GENDER DYSPHORIA**

Gender Dysphoria

- is a psychological diagnosis found in
- *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.*
- It is a diagnosable mental disorder
  - describing the deep distress
  - some people feel
  - when their internal sense of self
  - doesn't match their biological sex.

Not everyone who identifies as transgender experiences gender dysphoria.

And not everyone who experiences gender dysphoria identifies as transgender.

Next, **SLIDE INTERSEX**

Intersex is a term used to describe

- a medical condition
- where a person is born
- with one or more uncharacteristic features
- in their sexual anatomy
- or sex chromosomes.

Medically these are known as “*disorders of sex development*” or DSD.

Things to note:

- Intersex is different from transgender.
- 99% of people with an intersex condition
- are biologically male or female. Only 1% are both.

Intersex does not mean “*neither male nor female.*”

- Some people—and a statistically small number—
- are a blend of the two biological sexes
- rather than a third sex.

Now, I’m not able to give intersex people the time they deserve in this sermon, but if you have questions about this, please send them to us and we’ll address them.

## **SEX VS. GENDER**

Now, on to some key terms for this conversation.

### **SLIDE SEX**

Humans, like most species, are sexually dimorphic.

- That is, there are two sexes, male and female,
- and they are both necessary for human reproduction.

A person is biologically either male or female based on four things:

- The presence or absence of a Y chromosome
- One’s internal reproductive organs
- One’s external sexual anatomy
- And hormones that produce secondary sex characteristics.

Now, I know for some of you this feels like a science lesson...

- but listen, I went to public school,
- and while this stuff was covered...
- it doesn't seem to be acknowledged culturally right now.

So, just to be clear, **all persons (even most intersex persons) are biologically male or female, regardless of how they identify.**

Now, the next term, and here's where it gets confusing: **SLIDE GENDER**

- Sex and gender used to be synonyms...
- but in this conversation, that is no longer the case.

The most widely agreed upon definition of gender is this:

- the psychological,
- social,
- and cultural aspects
- of being male or female.

Now, there are two parts to gender we need to address:

First **SLIDE GENDER IDENTITY**

- Gender identity describes
- the psychological aspects associated
- with being male or female,
- or one's internal sense of self
- as male, female, both, or neither.

And the concept of gender identity does feel nebulous.

- It's psychological...
- or an internal sense.

Now, how many gender identities are there?

- Well, at one point,
- Facebook allowed for 71 gender identities
- and now has the option of a “custom” gender.
- Which sounds absurd to some,
- but this is an actual conversation among scholars.

So, let me be clear:

- there are only two sexes...as in biological sex.
- But that is not the way the word gender is typically used today.

So, when people use the term “gender,”  
make sure you ask them what they mean.

But, the second part of gender we need to address is

### **SLIDE GENDER ROLES & STEREOTYPES**

- This describes the social and cultural aspects
- of being male or female,
- sometimes shorthanded as *masculinity* and *femininity*.

Gender roles & stereotypes have to do with how males and females are expected to act in any given culture, based mostly on generalizations.

In the modern Western world, masculinity is usually associated with

- playing sports,
- being physically aggressive,
- not crying or being tender,
- and excelling in science, technology, engineering, and math.



Masculine boys prefer blue over pink,

- jeans instead of dresses,
- and rough-and-tumble play
- rather than sitting in a circle chatting with their friends.

Feminine women are

- more nurturing,
- compassionate,
- agreeable,
- and less physically aggressive than men.

Women who fit this stereotype prefer pink over blue,

- talking instead of sports,
- and working at jobs that involve people rather than blueprints.

Gender roles & stereotypes are based on generalities, not absolutes.

They are generalities, and this is so very important:

- we don't determine whether a person is male or female
- based on whether they match the role or stereotype of their gender.

This is key, and I think we'll see this in the scriptures as well.

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## TRANSITION

So, back to our original question: If someone experiences incongruence between their biological sex and their internal sense of self, which one determines who they are—and why?

Well, let's move out of definitions, and into the Bible.

The problem is: the Bible doesn't directly answer our question. Ok?

- There is no one transgender verse.
- But the Bible does say quite a lot
- about the importance of our biological sex,
- which will position us theologically and biblically
- to consider our question.

So, look at Genesis 1:

### **GENESIS 1:26–28**

[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.

[28] And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

## EXPLAIN: IMAGE OF GOD

This is God creating humans. And let's start by just noting a few things:

- First, in verses 26 & 27, humans are created in God's image.
  - That's the *imago dei*, the image of God.
- Second, verse 27, humans are created with two sexes:
  - male and female.
- And third, these are referring to biological sexes,
  - not genders as we just defined them,
  - because the mandate to reproduce follows in verse 28.

So, biblically,

- our sexed bodies,
- male and female,
- are essential to bearing God's image.

Humans are a visible representation of God on earth.

- We are not gods...but
- we bear God's image as male and female.

And note that all of this is before the fall.

- Male and female
- as binary sexes exist
- before sin corrupts.

Now, this will be the normative stance for the rest of the Bible.

Jesus says this in Matthew 19:

## **SLIDE MATTHEW 19:4-5**

[4] He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, [5] and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?

## **BLANK SLIDE**

Now, Jesus isn’t directly addressing the issue of gender identity, but biological sex difference is assumed.

Paul does the same. We saw this last year as we studied 1 Corinthians.

- In 1 Corinthians 6 Paul challenges the Corinthians
- who are holding to a belief
- that the body was not significant...only the soul.
- This was how they excused their sexual promiscuity.

But Paul says:

## **SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19–20**

[19] Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

## **BLANK SLIDE**

What Paul is saying is you can't separate the immaterial you from the physical you.

- Personhood is physical.
- **We are not souls with bodies...but rather, embodied souls!**

## **EXPLAIN: TRANS IN THE BIBLE**

Now, scripture doesn't often mention people publicly presenting themselves as the opposite sex, but when it does, it always prohibits such behavior.

- Deuteronomy 22:5 prohibits cross dressing.
- 1 Corinthians 6:9 includes a prohibition of a term
  - that most scholars primarily recognize
  - as describing men who act like or identify as women.
- And 1 Corinthians 11,
  - with all its interpretive difficulties,
  - highlights sex and gender distinctions.

## **CONCLUSION**

The scriptures maintain sex differences as something that should be upheld and celebrated.

They, on some level, affirm that male and female sex distinctions are a creational good and should be honored.

So, I think it is safe to say this:

- God made us persons
- who are not completely defined by our sex,
- but who cannot be defined apart from our biological sex.

## **BIBLICAL GENDER STEREOTYPES**

But the next question is this:

- What about gender?
- What about biblical masculinity and femininity
- as opposed to the gender roles & stereotypes of today?

Well, we have some examples!

We've been studying 1 Samuel working our way to the great King David. And by most American standards, David did some feminine things as well as a bunch of masculine things:

- David sat on hilltops,
- wrote poetry,
- played the harp,
- openly wept and danced in worship,
- and hugged and kissed his best friend.

But David also

- chopped off the head of a giant,
- killed a lion with his bare hands,
- and lead armies in battle.

So, is King David gender fluid?

You see, men in the Bible defy our stereotypes.

- Men are called to be tender.
- They are profoundly emotional and relational.
- They are called to turn the other cheek,
- to love their enemies,
- to weep with those who weep,
- to raise up and teach children,
- to be sensitive,
- to be kind,
- and to be peacemakers.

Also, Biblical women defy current stereotypes.

Consider the Proverbs 31 woman:

- Yes, she is an excellent wife
  - Who rises up early
  - and provides food for her household...
  - Who makes bed coverings and linen garments.
- BUT she sells those garments for a profit.
- She considers a field and buys it.
  - She is wise,
  - hardworking,
  - has strong arms,
  - and engages social justice in her spare time.

## Biblical women

- smash tent pegs through the skulls of men.
- They are sometimes unmarried businesswomen.
- It was wealthy women who funded Jesus' ministry.
- And it was the women
  - who were the first brave disciples
  - to come to the tomb
  - after Jesus' had been buried.

## Was Jacob any less a man

- because he was a quieter man,
- enjoyed cooking,
- loved his mother,
- and couldn't grow a beard?

## Was Deborah any less of a woman

- because she settled national disputes,
- spoke on God's behalf,
- and lead an army?

I say all that to say that most gender stereotypes come from culture, not from the Bible.

- The Bible is much more concerned that we be godly,
- not stereotypically masculine or feminine.



## CULTURAL STEREOTYPES

And yet, some people say that if you aren't the stereotype for your sex, that's a problem. And ironically, it's from both sides of the argument.

From a more conservative approach, it's

- *"Be a man!"*
- *"Boys don't cry!"*
- *"Don't throw like a girl!"*

But from a progressive approach they actually take the very same stereotypes and say,

- *"You throw like a girl?"*
- *"Well, you might actually be one."*

Now, are stereotypes causing all this confusion concerning sex, gender, and identity. Certainly not.

But it certainly seems to me that stereotypes exacerbate the problem!

## CONCLUSION

Listen to me...biblically,

- Being a man is not about being masculine.
  - It's about being godly.
- Being a woman is not about being feminine.
  - It's about being godly.

And, in all these things, I don't think the Bible is too outdated or out of touch to speak into this topic with authority. It actually seems to be sufficiently relevant!

So, I would say that the Bible—and actually science as well—

- but the Bible offers evidence
- that our sexed bodies
- determine whether we are male, female,
  - or both, for those with some rare intersex conditions.
- AND that our physical bodies
- are an essential part of how we image God in the world.

And I don't think the Bible—or science for that matter—

- offers enough evidence to suggest
- that our gender identities or stereotypes
- overrules our sexed identity,
- even if we experience incongruence.

## **TRANSITION**

However, that does not mean we should downplay the significance of a person's experiences or internal sense of who they are.

- You see, we can get the Bible right...
- and still get love wrong.

So, let's talk about that.

## **EXPLAIN: GRACE & TRUTH**

As I've already mentioned, Christians and the church haven't always handled this topic well.

There are two polars:

- One tendency is to lean too heavy on truth
  - and just crush people,
- The other is to lean too heavy on grace,
  - and never have a backbone
  - when it comes to God's Word.

But the biblical mandate is for us to be full of grace & truth.

### **SLIDE JOHN 1:14**

[14] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

### **BLANK SLIDE**

### **EXPLAIN: GRACE & TRUTH**

- It's grace AND truth.
- It's compassion AND conviction.
- People AND concepts are both important.
  - Both are necessary.

But sometimes we have used truth as a weapon.

And sometimes compassion without critical thinking

- can move you to do things
- that make a person feel good in the short run
- but cause harm in the long run.

## APPLICATION: RELATIONSHIP

So, let's talk about how to love people with grace and truth in some real practical ways:

First, if someone tells you they're trans,

- they've just given you an opportunity for
- **SLIDE RELATIONSHIP**
- This is an intimate detail in their life,
- and you are being invited to steward this opportunity well.

One of the best things you can do is ask them what they mean by trans.

- Don't interrogate.
- You may even want to ask if it's okay
  - to inquire about their identity.
- But engage in relationship.
- Don't write them off...
- Don't run...
- Lovingly engage them in relationship.

Jesus bids us to embody God's kindness and love toward neighbor and enemy alike, and this can't be done if we don't learn how to listen.

Listen,

- it's far too easy for us to dismiss the struggles of others,
- especially if we don't face the same struggles ourselves.

## APPLICATION: WELCOME

Next, if a man or a woman shows up at our church who doesn't fit cultural gender roles or stereotypes...if a transgendered person comes to Fathom...we respond with **SLIDE WELCOME.**

- If they're not welcomed,
- and embraced
- and delighted in
- and listened to
- and learned from
- and loved
- and cared for
- and shown Christ's kindness saturated with compassion...

**then our church has some serious issues that need to be dealt with!**

- We should want trans people to flood our churches!
- It will create beautifully complex discipleship opportunities,
- that some Christians will get uncomfortable with. SO BE IT!

As the number of trans people in the world increases,  
our churches should have more trans people...not fewer!

- Not because our conviction is weak or unclear,
- but because it is strong and wholistic—
- true, courageous, compassionate, and humble.

I want our church to be filled with those

- who know their brokenness,
- who don't hide their pain,
- and who ask very hard questions.

## APPLICATION: DISCIPLESHIP

But thirdly, our aim is always going to be **SLIDE DISCIPLESHIP**.

We say this all the time:

- at Fathom, it's ok not to be ok...
- but it's not ok to stay there.

Discipleship is the call for us all to GO DEEPER with God.

- And I do believe that a long-term goal of discipleship
- is for all believers to identify with their biological sex. Ok?

But hear me: that will take a good deal of time!

Question:

- How long have you been at this “be more like Jesus” thing?

Church, discipleship is a long process...

and praise God that he doesn't demand overnight sanctification!

So, we need to welcome all people...

- and welcoming people doesn't mean
- we agree with everything they believe or do!
- That's nonsense!

You don't have to compromise convictions to be compassionate!

Welcoming is the first step of discipleship...

- God welcomes us as he adopts us into his family!
- But then discipleship moves us to
- invite God to tell us who we are
- and who he wants us to become.

Listen to me: no one other than God gets to tell you who you are. No one!

Not even you! Being a Christian is becoming who God says you are.

## **BLANK SLIDE ILLUSTRATION: RANDY**

So let me end with a story.

For many years I led mission trips to the inner-city where we would serve homeless people in the city.

Well, on one of the trips I led,

- we were out on the streets serving coffee and snacks.
- It was probably 9 o'clock at night,
- so, people were getting their bedding set up on the streets.

Now, on this trip, my in-laws came along.

- And my sweet mother-in-law, Mary,
- starts talking to a homeless woman.
- Well, my father-in-law, Royce,
- joins in the conversation.

And they soon realized that this woman wasn't biologically a woman,

- but was actually
- an African-American
- transwoman named Randy,
- who did not look well.

And as they talked,

- Randy shared some of her story with them.
- Earlier in life she had come out of the closet
- and was shunned by family.

She ended up on the streets

- and got caught up in the world of sex,
- and drugs,
- and a lot of other painful stuff.
- She also shared that she was HIV positive.

So, there stood Mary, and Royce, and Randy,

- the HIV positive,
- homeless,
- African-American
- transwoman.

And as we were wrapping up, needing to get back, Mary and Royce asked Randy if they could pray for her.

- She obliged,
- and they took her hands
- and prayed over her.
- Then we piled into the van and took off.

And as we were driving away, Royce turned to me and said,

- *“You know Chris, if Randy had shown up in church last week*
- *I would have thought she was weird and probably ignored her.*
- *But if she showed up now, I’d think differently about her.”*

Royce saw the Image of God in Randy!



Now, let's be honest...

- most of us see a dude in drag who looks sickly,
- and we immediately judge them.
- We immediately shun them.
- We immediately move them into a category in our minds.

But here's the truth:

- Randy...
- broken,
- battered,
- shunned,
- homeless,
- sick,
- dirty,
- and add whatever other words you may want to that list...

That person, Randy,

- is made in the image of God.
- She is deeply loved by Jesus Christ—
  - so loved, in fact, that Christ died for her...

That's what we're actually celebrating this Holy Week...

- and therefore,
- she is deserving of dignity,
- and love,
- and respect
- as one of God's pinnacle created beings.

## ENDING

Fathom,

- may we all hope and pray
- that our church will embody Jesus more vibrantly,
- working tirelessly to share the hope we have in Jesus Christ
- with the people God has entrusted to us.

Grace AND truth. Compassion AND conviction, church.

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

## RESOURCES USED:

- The Center for Faith, Sexuality, & Gender. <https://centerforfaith.com>
- The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. *What is the Equality Act?*
- Moore, Russel. *The Gospel is Big Enough for Our Transgender Neighbors.* [https://youtu.be/hkERnfdBa\\_E](https://youtu.be/hkERnfdBa_E)
- Oshman, Jen. *Traversing Today's Transgenderism.*
- Sprinkle, Preston. Embodied.
- Village Church, *The Transgender Debate.*