

5 Myths about Gender Identity

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Myth #1: The two-gendered world of men and women is a restrictive fabrication.

In the 1990s professor of gender studies Judith Butler made popular the idea of “gender performance.”¹ By this she meant that manhood and womanhood (gender identity) are not innate to male and female bodies (biological sex) but are social constructs we “perform.” In short, biology is not destiny.

This divorce of gender identity from biological sex not only makes way for gender transition—a man transitioning to be a woman, or vice versa—but it also makes way for gender expansion. With the riverbanks of biology removed, gender possibilities expand far beyond the binary of man and woman. Recent lists of identities include gender *expansive* and *gender fluid*.¹

While we should be careful not to reduce gender to cultural stereotypes, we must realize that uprooting gender from biology effectively kills it. If gender can be anything, it ends up being nothing. If it issues merely from psychology or culture, it’s as unsteady and transitory as are they.

The Bible, however, teaches that God created two sexes, “male and female he created them” ([Gen. 1:27](#)), and that gender identity is rooted in biological sex (see point 2 below). Gender and sex cannot be put asunder.

Moreover, Scripture reveals the two-gendered world of men and women as anything but restrictive and oppressive. “[A]t its very heart,” writes Rebecca McLaughlin, “the male-female binary is *creative*.”³ Only through the union of man and woman is the cultural mandate fulfilled—“be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” ([Gen. 1:28](#)). By God’s design, every human being owes his or her existence to one man and one woman: the gender binary is *life-giving*.

Myth #2: My gender is a feeling.

A classmate once shared with me that he struggled with confusion about his gender. Born male, he told me he always felt like a female. One day he asked me, “Do you feel like a man?”

For years that question troubled me. How does someone describe what it *feels* like to be a man or a woman? Finally, it occurred to me that hidden within his question was a false premise: gender is a feeling, an emotional or psychological reality. But we no more feel our gender than we feel our ethnicity or age. We may have feelings *about* our age or ethnicity, but these feelings don’t *determine* these realities. They’re rooted instead in cold, hard biological facts. It’s no different with gender.

The notion that being a man or a woman is reducible to feelings is a radical and modern idea (as noted in Butler’s work, quoted in point 1 above). And it is not biblical. When God forms the first man and woman, the emphasis lies upon the physical materiality of bodies, not emotions: “God *formed* the man of dust from the ground” ([Gen. 2:7](#)).

The term translated “formed” is used elsewhere to describe a potter working with clay ([Isa. 45:9](#)). “And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he *made* into a woman and brought her to the man” ([Gen. 2:22](#)). The term translated “made,” used to describe God shaping the woman’s body, literally means “built” and is used elsewhere to describe the shaping of an altar ([Ex. 17:15](#)) and the building of a city ([Num. 32:37](#)).

These passages don’t explain gender as an inner sense put inside us but as an embodied reality God designs. Biblically, gender is never less than biology. You may have feelings about your gender, but they do not determine it.

Myth #3: My gender is a mistake.

A young girl explained her sibling’s gender confusion, saying, “It’s a boy mind in a girl body.”⁴ The assumption here is that one can be born in the wrong body.

In a fallen world our bodies can feel like bad news. Paul says they’re “wasting away” and that we “groan inwardly as we await . . . the redemption of our bodies” ([2 Cor. 4:16](#); [Rom. 8:23](#)).

However, there are at least two reasons your body is not a mistake.

First, because everything God makes is good ([Gen. 1:31](#)), and God made your body, weaving it together in your mother’s womb ([Ps. 139:13](#)). And although sin and the fall impact our bodies, even east of Eden the creation (including our bodies) still bears continuity with its original, good design, which is why Paul can anchor arguments in the order of nature (see [Rom. 1:26–27](#)).

Gender, written into our very bodies, is received from God, not assigned by man.

Secondly, your body is not a mistake because in the resurrection it isn’t discarded but perfected. Paul explains that Christ will “transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body” ([Phil. 3:21](#)). We know from the example of Jesus’s resurrected body that this means not a creation *ex nihilo* (from nothing) but a perfection of God’s original work. The resurrected Christ was flesh and bone ([Luke 24:39](#))—a body that was in one sense new and different, less restricted by space and time ([John 20:26](#)). However, Christ’s new body still bore the scars of his pre-resurrection suffering ([John 20:27](#)). Jesus’s journey from birth to death to resurrection teaches us that redemption is not a start-over but a perfection and completion of creation.

Your male or female body, therefore, is not a mistake. Riddled with aches, pains and brokenness though it may be, it is very much a part of God’s good creation and will one day be part of his good redemption.

Myth #4: My gender is assigned.

People today speak of the “sex or gender they were assigned at birth,” suggesting gender is something we decide and determine. But such a notion is just another manifestation of our quest to be free of limits—even limits of biology.

Our gender is neither assigned to us by a doctor at birth nor determined by ourselves during adolescence. Rather, [Genesis 1](#) teaches that gender is received as a gift from God, that human

identity isn't self-made but God-given. "God *created* man in his own image, in the image of God he *created* him; male and female he *created* them" ([Gen. 1:27](#)). This threefold use of "created" underscores that we're creatures with a creator, and our gender is determined by God, not man. God grants us the honor of living out and stewarding our gender identity, but he does not give us license to assign or design it. Gender, written into our very bodies, is received from God, not assigned by man.

Myth #5: Transitioning genders is the best path toward wholeness and happiness.

I've spent time with friends who experience *gender dysphoria*—the technical term for severe and persistent discomfort between one's biological sex and psychological sense of gender. One friend told me he'd struggled with this painful experience since childhood.

Christians cannot affirm the underlying ideology of today's gender revolution, and must be cautious of the phenomenon of "social contagion" as cases among youth increase.⁵ However, Christians should have much to say by way of sympathy and hope to anyone in pain.

The word *dysphoria* refers to a "state of feeling very unhappy, uneasy, or dissatisfied."⁶ It's the opposite of euphoria. Christians speak of the fall, that plunge into sin, exile, and brokenness that began with Adam and Eve. Its affects touch all of us and are devastating: "darkened hearts" ([Rom. 1:21](#)), "debased minds" ([Rom. 1:28](#)), "slavery to passions" ([Titus 3:3](#)), "inward groanings" ([Rom. 8:23](#)), "wasting away" ([2 Cor. 4:16](#)). In a sense, to be human in a fallen world is to experience dysphoria—our life and world are not the way they're supposed to be, and this hurts.

While sympathizing with anyone experiencing dysphoria, Christians offer a unique pathway toward wholeness and healing. The gender movement offers the hope of *transitioning*, a process involving puberty blockers, hormone treatments, and surgeries. The effects are often irreversible, and results are so varied that many European countries are limiting the access of minors to treatments.

The Bible's pathway out of pain takes the form not of transition but *transformation*, and this makes all the difference. Transformation doesn't begin with our outer appearance but much deeper, with our minds and hearts: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be *transformed by the renewal of your mind*" ([Rom. 12:2](#)). Transformation doesn't culminate in a cosmetic refashioning of our bodies but in God's resurrection and perfection of them: "we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, *the redemption of our bodies*" ([Rom. 8:23](#)).

And transformation is not the work of the scalpel nor carried out in any man-made community. Rather, it's the work of the Spirit within the human heart, unfolding among the fellowship of the church: "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" ([Rom. 8:16](#)). This same Spirit unifies us with other Christians: "In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" ([1 Cor. 12:13](#)). The Spirit within us and the Christian community around us change us, reshaping us to be more like Christ.

Transitioning does not offer a promising pathway toward wholeness and happiness. It is a cosmetic solution to a psychological and spiritual malady. To be sure, the depth and thoroughness of biblical transformation mean it is no easy path. However, it is carried out by

the hands of our Creator, in the fellowship of his people, and marked by ever-increasing glory and joy.

Notes:

1. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1990.
2. Mark A. Yarhouse and Julia Sadusky, *Emerging Gender Identities: Understanding the Diverse Experiences of Today's Youth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2020), 8–9.
3. Rebecca McLaughlin, *The Secular Creed: Engaging Five Contemporary Claims* (Austin, TX: GospelCoalition, 2021), 96. Emphasis original.
4. Petula Dvorak, “Transgender at Five,” *Washington Post*, May 19, 2012.
5. <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/its-a-social-contagion/>
6. “Dysphoria,” *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dysphoria>.