

Controversial Christianity

Bringing compassion, conviction, clarity, and Christ into the controversy.

1. At NECC, we believe God's Word has something to say about the controversial issues everyone's dealing with.
2. At NECC, we desire to model a better way of discussing these issues.

Pastoral Support

Have questions relating to our
Controversial Christianity Series?

We're here for you.



Scan QR code to request time to speak with a Pastor.

Outline

1. Our Perspective, Postures, Positions at NECC
2. Self-Reflection and Lament
3. Tracking the Cultural Shift
4. Contemporary Medical Research
5. Theological Foundations
6. A Closing Word from Jesus

Integrity Lens - “A Concern to be Corrected”

- Sees nonbinary gender identities as sinful violations of the creation intent of God and sinful violations of the male-female differences set out in Genesis 1-2.
- These violations should be condemned and corrected.
- Superpower: Obedience

Disability Lens - “An Experience to be Empathized With”

- Understands nonbinary gender identifies as uncommon but expected variations that are a byproduct of our fallen world marred by sin. We are all sexually broken.
- These identity struggles should be empathized with and ministered to.
- Superpower: Empathy

Diversity Lens - “A Culture to be Celebrated”

- Champions diversity in gender and sexuality as something to be celebrated. These diverse identifications are in no way sinful.
- These identities should be encouraged and protected.
- Superpower: Belonging

Sister:

“I tell people it’s a disorder and that it’s not her choice.”

Jazz:

“Personally, I don’t like the word disorder that much. I prefer special or unique because that’s what I believe transgender is.”

Every lens has a superpower.

- Lens 1 - We should obey God's design.
- Lens 2 - We should have incredible empathy.
- Lens 3 - We should create belonging for all people.

Follower Lens - "An Image-Bearer to be Disciplined"

- We use wisdom and discernment to draw on the strengths of all three lenses.
- Sometimes we draw on Integrity lens and give a thoughtful word from Scripture.
- Sometimes we draw on Disability lens and accompany people through their struggle.
- Sometimes we draw on Diversity lens to remind people they can find belonging w/us.

Two Key Postures

1. We must be liberal with our love ...
2. While conserving the historic Christian ethic on gender and sexuality.

Four Key Positions

1. Anything less than compassion here is not Christian.
2. Every person is sexually broken.
3. God created us male and female, so we embrace our sexed-bodies God gave us at birth.
4. Our identity is most fundamentally in Christ.

A. Perspective

- Follower Framework - Every person is an image-bearer in need of discipleship

B. Posture

- Liberal with our love
- While conserving historic Christian ethic on gender

C. Positions

- Anything less than compassion is not Christian.
- Every Christian is sexually broken.
- God created people male and female.
- Our identity is in Christ.

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Self-Reflection and Lament

- Failing to show empathy and compassion to trans people
- Calling gender dysphoria a sin
- Being an unsafe place to talk about gender identity struggles
- Teaching cultural gender stereotypes as biblical gender norms

Definitions

- **Biological sex:** a person is biologically male or female based on four traits: (1) presence or absence of Y chromosome (XX – female, XY – male); (2) internal reproductive organs; (3) external anatomy/genitalia; (4) endocrine systems that produce secondary sex characteristics
- **Gender identity:** one's internal sense of self as it relates to gender
- **Transgender:** a broad term for many experiences of gender identity that do not align with a person's biological sex
- **Gender dysphoria:** the distress associated with incongruence between one's biological sex and gender identity

Self-Reflection and Lament

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“It’s a men’s retreat!
Bonfire! Brisket! Bourbon!”

“It’s a women’s retreat!
Journaling. Salads. Nature.”

Self-Reflection and Lament

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Title IX

“No person in the US shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

EO 14183: Prioritizing Military Excellence and Readiness

Bans trans individuals from serving in the U.S. military

EO 14168: Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to Federal Govt

Mandates the federal govt recognize only two genders—male and female

Executive Order 14201: "Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports"

Aims to prevent biological men from participating in women's sports at all educational levels

EO 14187: Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation

Seeks to end gender-affirming medical treatments for minors

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Data on Gender Dysphoria

- We have about 100yrs of data on GD (we didn't call it that until 2010s)
- Until recently, GD was a medically quantifiable "rare disease"
- According to DSM-5 (2013), primary demographic affected by GD was adult males at .005–.014% (10:100,000)
- Natal females reported even rarer prevalence of .002–.003% (3:100,000)

Data on Gender Dysphoria

- The classification of “rare disease” is a quantifiable (86:100,000 people or less)
- In 2013, GD was not only rare but a rarer than rare disease
- 300x more likely to have cerebral palsy (300:100,000)
- 100x more likely to have down syndrome, heart defect, cleft lip (100:100,000)
- Researchers point out this 2013 data set is certainly dated today
- There has been a meteoric rise in late onset identification, especially among teen girls

Data on Gender Dysphoria

- England govt reported youth referred for gender treatment increased by 4000% from 2009-2017 (75% female)
- They also reported 4500% increase in teen girls
- Pew Research (June 2022) reported 5.1% of US population under age of 30 identifies as trans or nonbinary
- That is 1:20 young people, an increase of 55,000% in a single age bracket
- Largest demographic of individuals w/GD has flipped from adult men to teen girls

Q. Why the sudden recent explosion in trans-identifying youth ?

1. Awareness & Acceptance

- Trans activist position
- It's true that society is now safer and more open
- This position doesn't account for the explosive growth in a single age demographic (teen girls)

Q. Why the sudden recent explosion in trans-identifying youth ?

1. Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria (ROGD)

- Some experts point to the power of peer influence and social media
- Term coined by Dr. Lisa Littman (Brown Univ) in journal article published 2018
- Surveyed 256 parents of self-identifying trans kids

Data on ROGD

- Nearly all youth surveyed said feelings of dysphoria showed up without any prior signs in childhood. This contradicted previously documented trend that GD starts for most adults in childhood.
- 86.7% reported an increase in social media or internet usage prior to self-identifying as trans
- 62.5% reported ASD or other mental health diagnoses
- Her conclusion? The cause of the huge demographic shift was ROGD (something like “social contagion”)

“This review is not about defining what it means to be trans, nor is it about undermining the validity of trans identities, challenging the right of people to express themselves or rolling back on people’s rights to health care. It is about what the health care approach should be, and how best to help the growing number of children and young people who are looking for support from the N.H.S. in relation to their gender identity.”

-Dr. Hilary Cass

1. Medical interventions like puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and surgery are rarely necessary for youth.

- Exploration of identity is a natural process in childhood that rarely requires medical intervention.
- Persistence rates for GD were found as low as 10%.
- Most of the time it goes away.

2. There is not strong evidence to suggest medical and social interventions work at treating gender dysphoria.

- Social transitioning techniques (changing name or pronouns) do not have strong evidence they improve mental health of youth
- Medical interventions like puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones do not have strong evidence
- UK, Sweden, Finland, Brazil, 25 US states have prohibitions
- Kentucky law prohibits puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, surgical interventions for minors

3. Most of the young people who are referred to gender clinics are dealing with other issues like ASD, ADHD, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, suicidality, self-harm, or trauma.

- Puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones can fail to treat these other issues which may be the root issue.
- They can also worsen internalizing problems like depression, anxiety, or suicidality.

4. Social media and peer influence have played a key role in the rise of trans-identifications among teens, especially girls.

5. Medical professionals (and others) have allowed this to become politicized.

- The report says there was an unprecedented rush to normalize gender affirming care before evidence was there
- Many of the studies accepted as foundational were poor quality
- Cass, “There are few other areas of healthcare where professionals are so afraid to openly discuss their views, where people are vilified on social media, and where name-calling echoes the worst bullying behavior.”

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Central Theological Question

If there is incongruence between someone's biological sex and their internal sense of gender identity, which takes precedence?

Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied*

1. The body is essential to our image bearing status

2. Male and female in Genesis 1 are categories of biological sex not internal gender identity

3. Adam and Eve's bodies are viewed as sacred

4. Jesus views Genesis 1-2 as normative

5. Paul sees the body as significant for moral behavior and correlates it w/personhood

6. Scripture prohibits cross-sex behavior

7. The incarnation of Christ affirms the goodness of our sexed embodiment

8. Sex difference probably remains after the resurrection

Genesis 1:26-28

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Image of God Mandates

1. “Cultural Mandate” – Subdue and rule the earth. Care for the planet. Lead the world.
2. “Creation Mandate” – Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. Make families.

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Matthew 19:3-9

Some Pharisees came to Him, and to test Him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?” He answered, “Have you not read that the One who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

Matthew 19:3-9

They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?”

He said to them, “It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery.”

Jesus views Gen 1-2 as normative.

-Quote #1 - Gender (G1:27)

“At the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female’ ”

-Quote #2 - Marriage (G2:24)

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh”.

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1 Corinthians 6:13-20

But you can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. And God will raise us from the dead by His power, just as He raised our Lord from the dead. Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! And don't you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, "The two are united into one." But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Run from sexual sin!

1 Corinthians 6:13-20

No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

Theology of the Body in 4 Metaphors

a. Tool – The body is the place of concrete obedience in everyday life.
6:13 – “Our bodies were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies.”

b. Temple – The body is the sacred place where God’s presence dwells.
6:19 – “Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you”

c. Stewardship – God is the owner of our body. We are the managers.
6:15 – “Don’t you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ?”
6:20 – “You must honor God with your body.”

d. Signpost – The body points to God’s design and will (past, present, and future).
6:14 – “God will raise us from the dead by His power, just as He raised our Lord”

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John 8:1-11

Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, but early the next morning He was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and He sat down and taught them. As He was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. "Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do You say?" They were trying to trap Him into saying something they could use against Him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with His finger.

John 8:1-11

They kept demanding an answer, so He stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” Then He stooped down again and wrote in the dust. When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?” “No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”

