

A close-up photograph of a human eye. The iris is replaced by a vibrant, multi-colored globe of the Earth, showing blue oceans and green and brown landmasses. The eye is looking slightly to the right. The skin around the eye is a warm, natural tone.

CROSS IDENTITY

UNCHANGABLE IDENTITY
IN A **CHANGING** WORLD

A “Cross” Identity?

“Trans” comes from the Latin language and means “cross over.” “Trans” is attached to words in the English language as a prefix to indicate that something is crossing over. When I transmit data, that information crosses over from one location to another. When I get a blood transfusion, blood crosses over from a donor to me, the recipient. When I get a job transfer, I move from one job position to another. When I translate, I carry the meaning of a word from one language to another.

What about “transgender”? Can someone cross over from one gender to another? Can the inner person be one gender but their biological or assigned sex another?

This Bible study was written with the goal of addressing the emerging gender identities in our current day and age with the identity that God gives us. Even in a world where definitions are constantly crossing from one meaning to another, God gives us an identity that is rock solid because of its origin and basis. It is our prayer that through the study of God’s Word, you will journey with us to cross over your identity to God and what he has done for you.

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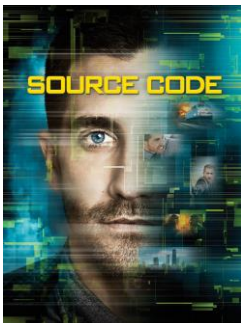
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Section 1

WHO ARE YOU?



Who are you? Take 5 minutes to think and answer this question. Feel free to talk with someone near you. However, you will not be asked by the teacher to give your answer to this question.



Look over your answer to the “Who are you?” question. What are the sources for your answer, your source code, so-to-speak? To ask it this way: from where do you get your identity?

Source of Identity: Gender

Define "gender."

What do you think of when you think of male? What do you think of female? Write your answers below.

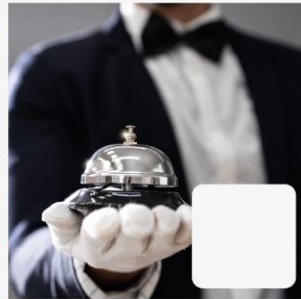
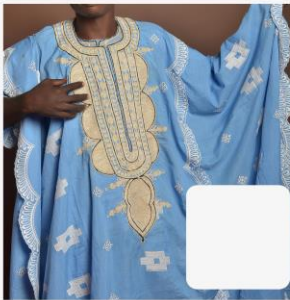
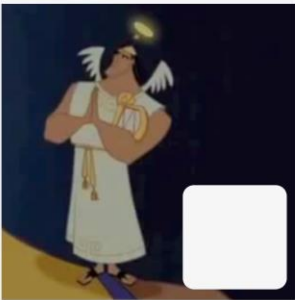
Male	Female

Identifying Gender Stereotypes


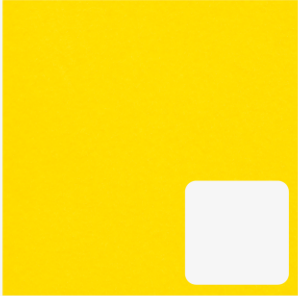

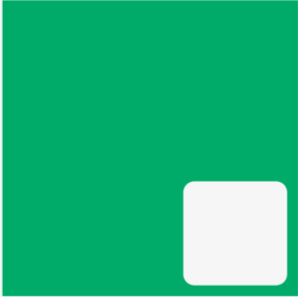
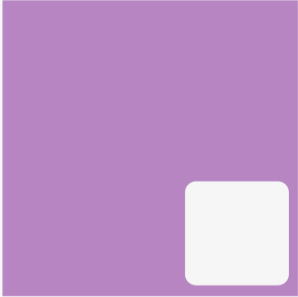
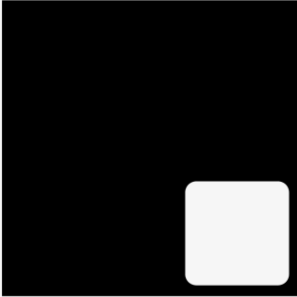




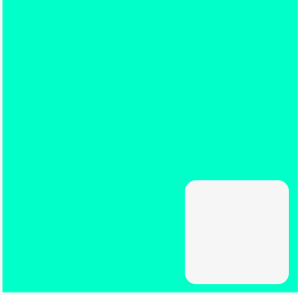

Next to the picture, mark if the toy is for a male (M), female (F), or both (B).



Next to the picture, mark if the clothing is for a male (M), female (F), or both (B).



Next to the picture, mark if the color is for a male (M), female (F), or both (B).

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Look over the lyrics of the song "A Hymn to Him" as sung by Rex Harrison in the film *My Fair Lady*. How many of these attributes, actions, emotions, etc. are strictly male? How many are strictly female? How many cross between the genders?

HIGGINS What in all of heaven could've prompted her to go, After such a triumph as the ball? What could've depressed her; What could've possessed her? I cannot understand the wretch at all. Women are irrational, that's all there is to that! Their heads are full of cotton, hay, and rags! They're nothing but exasperating, irritating, vacillating, calculating, agitating, Maddening and infuriating hags!

[To **Pickering**] Pickering, why can't a woman be more like a man?

PICKERING Hmm?

HIGGINS Yes... Why can't a woman be more like a man? Men are so honest, so thoroughly square; Eternally noble, historic'ly fair; Who, when you win, will always give your back a pat. Well, why can't a woman be like that? Why does ev'ryone do what the others do? Can't a woman learn to use her head? Why do they do ev'rything their mothers do? Why don't they grow up- well, like their father instead? Why can't a woman take after a man? Men are so pleasant, so easy to please; Whenever you are with them, you're always at ease. Would you be slighted if I didn't speak for hours?

PICKERING Of course not!

HIGGINS Would you be livid if I had a drink or two?

PICKERING Nonsense.

HIGGINS Would you be wounded if I never sent you flowers?

PICKERING Never.

HIGGINS Well, why can't a woman be like you? One man in a million may shout a bit. Now and then there's one with slight defects; One, perhaps, whose truthfulness you doubt a bit. But by and large we are a marvelous sex! Why can't a woman take after like a man? Cause men are so friendly, good natured and kind. A better companion you never will find. If I were hours late for dinner, would you bellow?

Source of Identity: Truth

Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" (**John 18:38**) While it may have been a flippant or sarcastic question, it is something that we want to know. Define "truth."

When identifying our source of truth, we want to answer the questions:

- Authority: Who or what has the right to tell me what to do?
- Knowledge: Who or what knows what is best for me to do?
- Trustworthiness: Who or what loves me and wants what is best for me?

Based on the following Bible passages, who or what has the right to tell me what to do (authority), knows what is best for me to do (knowledge), and loves me and wants what is best for me (trustworthiness)?

Numbers 23:19

Psalm 103

Psalm 119:105, 106

Psalm 139:1-19

Job 38:1–40:2

Matthew 28:18

John 14:6

John 17:17

Ephesians 1:18–23

Hebrews 6:13–20

Hebrews 13:8



Cross Examination

Prior to this section, who or what defined you?

Having completed this section, who or what should define you?

Section 2

YOU ARE PURPOSELY, PERFECTLY DESIGNED



Another blessed worship service just finished. You had noticed a couple of people whom you haven't met before. One looks like a dad and the other a teen. "Someone should greet them," you think to yourself. "I should greet them," is your second thought.

Your instinct is good. Summoning your courage and your extroverted part of your personality, you get up, walk over to them, hold out your hand, and introduce yourself. You greet the dad, and the dad motions to his child and says, "This is Sam."

Sam is probably 15 years old, long hair extending down to the middle of the back, slim frame, baggy clothes that don't define any of their physical features. You think, "I remember those awkward teenage years still trying to get comfortable in my body as puberty does its work. Nothing wrong with a girl being skinny and flat chested."

Sam says, "Hi." Your brain stops for a tick as something registers. That was a rather deep voice for a girl. But, then again, there are some girls with deep voices, right? You shake Sam's hand, but you get the feeling that something is off here.

You see and greet Sam over the next few weeks. It's always a bit of small talk, but you are trying to just be nice to them, get to know them, show them a loving face.

Then, on another Sunday, Sam lays it out there for you. "You know, I'm trans. What does your church teach about me?"

What do you do? What do you say? Do you awkwardly change the conversation? Do you say, "You know, that's a good question for our pastor"? Do you say that you have to go because people are waiting for you to have brunch with them? Do you say, "Well, that's wrong"? Where do you start? (Keep this in mind as we will dive into this in **Section 8**.)

Thankfully, God gives us a really good place to start. It's the starting place of humankind: **Genesis chapters 1 & 2**.

Read the following passages which give us a starting point in answering Sam's question: What does your church teach about me?

Beginning Point: You're Designed with an Image

What words come to mind when you hear the word "image"?

What do these passages teach us about the image with which we were purposefully designed?

Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV) ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

John 4:24 (NIV) ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

Hebrews 1:3 (NIV) ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV) ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Beginning Point: You're Designed with a Body and a Soul

Every person is designed with two parts which make them who they are. What are they?

Genesis 2:7 (NIV) ⁷ Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

1 Corinthians 15:44b–46 (NIV) ...If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual.

Psalms 139:13–16 (NIV) ¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Beginning Point: You're Designed to be Social

Throughout Genesis 1, it's a repeated refrain that at the end of each day God declares that everything was good. There were no flaws, no imperfections, nothing was lacking in his design. Then you get to this section of **Genesis 2**, a chapter that takes a magnifying glass on the creation of human beings on Day 6. Read it over and answer these questions:

What is not good?

What does God do to change what's not good?

What does that teach us about our design?

Genesis 2:18–25 (NIV) ¹⁸ The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

¹⁹ Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh.

²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³ The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Beginning Point: You're Designed to be Male or Female

When God made humans, he made them in the image of God. At the same time, he also made Adam male and Eve female. How are these two genders perfectly complementary to God's creation?

Matthew 19:4–6 (NIV) ⁴ "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' ⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

Genesis 1:28 (NIV) ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Beginning Point: You're Designed, and that's Good!

As God reflects on the very first male and female, the very first two people, what does he declare about them?

Genesis 1:31 (NIV) ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Psalms 8:3–9 (NIV) ³ When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? ⁵ You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. ⁶ You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: ⁷ all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, ⁸ the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. ⁹ LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!



Cross Examination

Where do we start when it comes to teaching people who they are?

With what we read in this section, what does our church teach about how we were designed?

The First Article of the Apostles' Creed with Martin Luther's Explanation

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean?

I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my mind and all my abilities.

And I believe that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle, and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life. God also preserves me by defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil.

All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it. For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him.

This is most certainly true.

Section 3

YOU ARE FULL OF SIN IN A STILL SINFUL WORLD



Hold up a minute. You just told me that God purposefully created only two biological sexes and only two genders and that it was all perfect. So, why do some people feel that they are in the wrong body? Why are some people identifying as transgender, that they cross over from one gender to another? Why do some people say that they are non-binary? On a spectrum of gender? In fact, why are some people born blind? With autism? Lacking limbs? Dead? Why is there so much NOT good in the world?

The answers to those questions start with **Genesis chapter 3**. This is the breaking point of God's creation.

Breaking Point: The Beginning of Not Good

Circle or underline all the NOT good things that came about with God's once good and perfect creation.

Genesis 3:1–24 (NIV) ¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "

⁴ "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

¹¹ And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

¹² The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

¹⁷ To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

²⁰ Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. ²¹ The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

²² And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." ²³ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Breaking Point: Full of Sin

After the initial breaking point of God's good creation, how much worse does it get?

Genesis 6:5

Romans 3:9–20

Romans 7:14–24

Romans 8:7

1 Timothy 1:15

Breaking Point: Image of God

How does our image change after the breaking point of sin?

Genesis 5:1–5

Genesis 9:5–6

James 3:9

Breaking Point: Male or Female

What happens to the perfectly designed male and female compatibility?

Genesis 3:16

Hosea 9:10–14

Romans 1:20–27

Breaking Point: Body and Soul

Instead of being perfectly joined together to make you you, what has happened between our body and soul?

Romans 6:23a; Genesis 3:19; Ecclesiastes 12:7

John 9:1–3

Psalm 139:23

Proverbs 12:25

1 Kings 19:1–4

Psalm 42

Jeremiah 17:9

Breaking Point: Society

How is our once perfect society of people now affected by sin?

Genesis 3:16

James 4:1

Matthew 19:3–9

1 Corinthians 7:12–15

Proverbs 27:15–16

Breaking Point: Purpose

What happens to our purpose in a world full of sin?

Genesis 3:17–19

Ecclesiastes 2:17–23

Breaking Point: Good

Even with all the sin in me and in the world, what do we still know?

Romans 2:14–15

Ecclesiastes 2:10–11



Cross Examination

Because of sin, what has happened to my perfectly, purposefully designed image?

How does sin show me that things are not the way they are supposed to be? What can I no longer trust because of sin?

Because of my sin, who am I? (I encourage you not to stop here, but to at least look at the header of the next section if you don't have time to continue in this Bible study.)

Section 4

YOU ARE LOVED



"I love pizza." "I love long walks on the beach." "I love my dog." "I love you, man." "I love my wife." "I love my God." There are a lot of ways that we use the word love. Define love.

Read **1 Corinthians 13**. Circle or underline the phrases that help define love according to God.

1 Corinthians 13:1–13 (NIV) ¹ If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails.

But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. ¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Love is Action

Reviewing **1 Corinthians 13**, it's clear that the way God has us know love is through his actions to us. To say it this way, love is what someone does for someone else. How did God show his love for us?

Genesis 3:14–15

Genesis 3:20–24

Luke 15:1–32

John 3:14–18

Isaiah 52:13–53:12

1 Corinthians 15:1–11

1 Timothy 1:15–17

Love Gives You Value

Value is given to things based on what someone is willing to pay. What was God willing to pay for you?

1 Peter 1:18–21



Cross Examination

When I look at my definition of love and God's definition of love, what's different? What's the same?

How do I know if I am loved?

What does God's actions for me mean about me?

What value does God's love give to you?

Section 5

YOU ARE PERFECT



Have you ever heard of kintsugi? It's a Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold, making the once broken and useless vessel not only useful again but even more valuable.

How is the art of kintsugi like what God does with us?

Jeremiah 18:1–6 (NIV) ¹ This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ² "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." ³ So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. ⁴ But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

⁵ Then the word of the LORD came to me. ⁶ He said, "Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel."

Putting the Broken Pieces Back Together to Make You Perfect

How does God put us back together into someone who is perfect?

Psalm 51:5–10

1 John 1:8–2:2

Romans 8:1–4

Ephesians 2:1–10

John 3:3–8

Romans 6:1–14

Galatians 3:26–29

Putting the Broken Pieces Back Together to be Someone New

Having been put back together with the precious gold of God's perfect life and sacrifice, what is my identity?

2 Corinthians 5:16–21

Ephesians 4:20–24

Colossians 3:5–10

1 Thessalonians 5:23–24

Putting the Broken Pieces Back Together to be Forever Perfect

My identity is Jesus' perfection lived for me, the image of God. Yet, what about the cracks and the broken features in my life? Will these ever be taken care of? What hope do I have?

Genesis 3:22–24

Philippians 3:17–21

Romans 8:18–25

1 Peter 1:1–25

1 Corinthians 15:35–57

Revelation 21:1–7



Cross Examination

How did God put me together like a piece of kintsugi art?

What is my identity right now?

Even though I still wrestle with whom I am right now (and I may even wrestle with whether I am male or female), what hope do I have for the future?

The Second Article of the Apostles' Creed with Martin Luther's Explanation

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.

All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.

This is most certainly true.

Section 6

YOU BELONG



Take a couple of minutes and write down all the memberships that you hold. After each one, write how you joined, why you joined, and how that club defines you.

Membership	How you joined	Why you joined	How it defines you

Belonging: Brought Together

We have been fixed by God and covered in his perfection. We are perfect in his eyes right now! What else does God do while he restores his image to us?

Ephesians 2:11–22

1 Peter 2:9–10

1 Corinthians 12:12–27

Belonging: Chosen

Maybe we take our families for granted because it's almost like they are forced to have us. How is that different with God?

Ephesians 1:3–10

John 1:9–14

Galatians 4:4–7

Mark 3:31–35

1 John 3:1–3



Cross Examination

What is different in how I became a child of God vs. any of the other memberships I hold?

How does being chosen by God to be a part of his family form my identity?

The Third Article of the Apostles' Creed with Martin Luther's Explanation

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian Church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers. On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

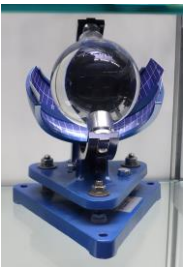
This is most certainly true.

Section 7

YOU ARE MADE FOR A PURPOSE



Take a few minutes to look at the images below. Guess what their purpose is.



Perfect Purpose: New Mindset

Knowing that we are loved by God, fixed by him, what new mindset does he give us?

Colossians 3:1–17

Romans 8:5–11

1 Corinthians 6:7–13

1 John 4:7–12

Ephesians 4:32–5:2

Romans 12:1–21

1 Peter 4:8–11

Perfect Purpose: Come Alongside Others

Remembering that we are still designed to be social, what is our purpose when it comes to others?

Luke 10:25–37

Hebrews 13:1–3

Mark 2:15–17

Galatians 6:2

2 Corinthians 1:3–7

1 Corinthians 9:19–23



Cross Examination

Being a new creation in God, what is my purpose?

What burdens do other people carry? How can I help carry their burdens?

What does it look like to be all things to all people to save some? Who does that look with someone who is struggling with their gender identity? (This will be more specifically addressed in **Section 8**.)

How can I come along someone who is hurting and broken? (This will also be more specifically addressed in **Section 8**. Keep going!)

Section 8

AND YOU ARE?



In this picture frame, put a picture of a transgender person you know. If you don't know anyone personally, put a picture of a trans celebrity. See this person. See emerging gender identities not as a strictly theological topic but as a person who is struggling and hurting and needs a fulfilling and permanent identity.



Meeting the Transgender Person: Recognize Where You Are Now

How do you talk about transgender? Thoughts aside, picturing the person, what do you actually say?

What do your kids hear when the topic comes up?

How do your kids see you interact with someone who is trans?

In your current way of talking about transgender, does it open doors to accompany them as they struggle with their identity? Why or why not?

Does your current way of talking about transgender show these struggling people the love God has for you? If so, how? If not, why not?

Meeting the Transgender Person: Meet Them Where They Are

There are three potential areas in which we will engage someone who identifies as transgender in the topic of gender identity: politically, publicly, or privately.

With what we have already studied and learned, what is a Christlike way to respond to the topic of transgender in the following areas of engagement? Pick one option from each potential category and discuss each with someone near you.

Politically

Option 1: At a city council, a citizen brings up their support for the Commission on Human Rights' legal guidelines to mandate that anyone who provides jobs or housing must use an individuals' preferred gender pronoun or risk paying a fine.

Option 2: Your child's teacher has "The Gender Unicorn" posted in the classroom along with a rainbow sign that says, "Safe Space."

Publicly

Option 1: Asa, who was Adam, is a neighbor who offers to babysit your kids.

Option 2: The clerk at your local store where you get your watch service has a beard, shaved head, large breasts, eye liner, and painted nail.

Privately

Option 1: Jo has taken a leap of faith and tells you that they are struggling that they feel female even though their biological sex is male.

Option 2: While at church, Sam asks you where the bathrooms are. You point them to the men's room. They start hearing that direction, but then sees the women's restroom and goes there instead.

Meeting the Transgender Person: Acknowledge and Appreciate

Before stating any of your viewpoints or beliefs regarding gender identity, thank the person for sharing this information with you. It means that they are willing to talk to you about this topic. Don't jump to what you think they should do or how you feel about it. Respond in a way that shows you paid full attention to what they shared with you.

Take what they are saying seriously, especially the older the person. There is a difference when a 3-year-old says that they are a girl and not a boy and vice-versa than a 40 year old who says that they have transitioned. Over 80% of people who identify as transgender have considered suicide and over 40% have attempted. Basically, if you meet someone who identifies as transgender, especially as a teenage or older, they more than likely have thought about killing themselves. If you meet two transgender people, then is more than likely that one of them attempted to take their own life. This person needs your time, attention, care, and appreciation.

If you want to try to understand the struggle that can exist for someone who experiences gender dysphoria and identifies as transgender, consider reading "A Roller Coaster Through a Hurricane: One Wild Ride: My Journey with Gender Identity" by Greg Eilers.

Meeting the Transgender Person: Ask & Listen

It's been said that if you have met one transgender person, then you have met one transgender person.

God made every person unique. Yes, we have many similarities, but we also have many differences. Before anyone is going to care what you have to say to them about gender identity, they have to know that you care about them. Remember **Section 1** and identifying sources of truth? Having the authority (having the right to tell someone what to do) and the knowledge (knowing what is best for someone to do) are pieces of identifying truth. The trustworthiness (loving the person and wanting what is best for them), though, is just as vital of a component in someone's journey for truth, maybe the most vital.

The best way to get to know this unique person is to become an expert in them. In other words, ask them a lot of questions to get to know them. Invest your time and your energy in them. This shows them love as you are doing this to serve them over serving yourself. This will also help you show care and compassion when giving the knowledge and authority of God to talk about gender identities.

Questions to ask (This list is modified from questions presented in the book "Emerging Gender Identities: Understanding the Diverse Experiences of Today's Youth" by Mark A. Yarhouse and Julia Sadusky):

- You say that you are trans. I want to understand better what you are going through. What does it mean for you when you say that you are trans?
- What has been communicated to you about gender expectations or rules?
- With whom have you been able to share your story with? Friends? Family? People at church? How did they respond? What has been the best conversation you've had so far? What made that conversation good? What was the most difficult conversation? What made that conversation especially challenging?
- How's it been for you at home as you've been exploring gender identity? How have the conversations with your parents gone? With your siblings?

- How about school? Have you had this conversation with people at school? If so, how did people respond? What are some questions you have when you think about school as you struggle with your gender identity?
- Have you had this conversation with other people at our church? What have they said? How has it been for you at our church as you've been exploring questions about your gender identity? What are some of the burning questions you have when you think about our church?
- If they don't go to church: What do you think about how Christianity addresses sex and gender? Why do you think that?
- I know that other people navigating questions around gender identity have sometimes spoken with a counselor psychologist. Is that something you've had the opportunity to do? If so, how has that been for you? What's been most helpful for you? What do you hope to explore down the road? What remaining questions do you have for your work there?
- People may be plugged into the transgender or LGBTQ community to different degrees. Is that something you've explored? If so, how has that been for you?

If at any point they use a term relating to gender identity, ask them to define it. We do this more in recognizing that the terminology around gender identity is changing at a rapid pace. Terms are quickly becoming outdated and deemed hurtful or insensitive. (This is also why I am not providing you with a list of terms that will immediately date this Bible study.) Your best tact in having an engaging conversation with someone about gender identity is to have them articulate to you what they mean when they use specific terms.

Meeting the Transgender Person: Accompany Them

Once you have better understood who this person is and what they are experiencing, you want to follow Jesus' example. You want to remain in their life, maybe as the only Christian who is going to love them and share with them the identity that God gives us. Jesus didn't wait for sinners to change first before he engaged with them. Think of Zacchaeus in **Luke 19:1-10**. While we don't know when exactly Zacchaeus' heart was changed by Jesus' visit, we do know that Jesus invited himself to eat at Zacchaeus' house while the people still regarded Zacchaeus as an awful, dirty, reprehensible sinner. Instead of waiting for someone to be cleansed and made new by God before we interact with them, we want to interact with them in order to give them this new and perfect identity in Christ that we have.

Again, though, every person is different. We cannot force ourselves into their lives to walk with them. So, we offer to do what we can do.

Accompanying a transgender person may be...

- Inviting them to share their struggles with you and then praying out loud for them based on their struggles.
- When they struggle with feeling that they are in the wrong body, focus them on the identity that God has given them. Fixing our eyes on God, let the feelings follow.
- Sitting with them in church or in the fellowship hall.
- Reading the Bible with them in an environment where they can explore questions.
- Invite them to social events, such as going out to eat, going on a hike, etc.
- Rejoicing with them when they have positive experiences.
- If you know their family, reaching out to the parents, letting them know that you are available for them, asking how you could support them at this time while also admitting that you don't know exactly what to do but that you do want to help.

As you walk with them, be patient with them as this struggle may not only take years to resolve, but it may very well be lifelong.

Walking with the Transgender Person: Names and Pronouns

This is a tough one. Let's be frank about this. If that person looks like a guy and asks to be called a gal, your first instinct will probably be to oppose such a request. You want to honor the biological, sexual, and gender identity that God has given to them. You know that God made them male or female and that you can't cross over from one to the other.

Before deciding in advance which pronouns you will use, ask yourself a few questions.

- Have I encountered this before? How did I deal with it then? Was it in line with how God has treated me?
- How long have I known this person?
- Do I actually know what gender they are?
- How well do I know this person?
- How well does this person know me?
- Are they a member of my church? Do they share my beliefs?
- If I use the gender pronoun that I think they are, how will my words be perceived? What may be an unintended consequence of using a pronoun other than what the person has asked me to use?
- Am I willing and ready to be uncomfortable to show this person the love of Jesus?

If this is the first time that you are meeting this person, I would err on the side of compassion and respect and use their stated preferred pronoun. Besides, neither you nor I are going to be fact checking this. Maybe they biologically male or female but don't fit my gender stereotypes.

If this is a person I have known before and now they are transitioning and so making a request for me to use different pronouns for them, let's go back to our being an expert in the other person and asking them questions.

- Thank you for sharing your desire to change your pronouns. Because I want to understand better, may I ask what prompted this desire?
- How might be the implications of doing this? How might this help you? How might this hurt you?
- Have you thought about how you would communicate this to people, people at home? People at school? People at church? What do you think the advantages are? What are the drawbacks?
- Have you thought about how other people will respond? How might you meet those responses?

While you wrestle with what pronouns to use, maybe the best is to refer to them in one of the ways God does: beloved. God loves them. You love them because God loves them.

And for our grammarians, remember that it is grammatically correct to use third person plural pronouns (they, them, themselves) for individual people. Also, you will only need to do use gender specific pronouns when talking ABOUT them. When talking TO them, you will use the second person pronouns (you, your, yourself).

Walking with the Transgender Person: Treatment and Surgery

The treatments available for someone who struggles with their gender identity or who identifies as transgender are numerous. I don't expect that either you or I will be able to thoroughly study and research all treatment options.

To help us navigate treatment and surgery options, we are again going to start by asking and listening to the person.

- What are you thinking of doing? Why do you think it will help you? How might it harm you?
- How does this help you? Is there any chance that it won't?
- Is this temporary or permanent? Reversible or irreversible?
- Are there other treatment options? Have you tried counseling? Can I help you find a counselor?

With that in mind, here are some worthwhile facts to consider:

- Most cases (80%+) of gender dysphoria resolve themselves after puberty. If this person wants puberty blockers, hormone replacement therapy, or surgical treatments before puberty is over, advise them to wait. Receiving these treatments before puberty is over may cause irreversible complications and problems to their body. Be ready to walk with them through intense suffering that you do not feel.
- If their gender dysphoria persists past puberty, ask for doctor advice. Research the prescribed treatments. Learn if they are temporary or permanent treatments. Give time as you prayerfully consider them with the person.
- God infused our biological sex into us at a cellular level. Since the body and soul make a human being human, gender is also tied into every person at a cellular level. To pursue and have gender-affirmation surgery or sex reassignment surgery is a cosmetic fix at best; it will not change your gender.
- Ultimately, you cannot control what they do. You can love them. You can point out sin. But you cannot make them do anything.

When it comes to things that the Bible has not expressly commanded nor forbidden, we want to follow God direction through the Apostle Paul:

1 Corinthians 6:12–13 (NIV) ¹² “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³ You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (NIV) ¹⁹ Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

1 Corinthians 10:23–24 (NIV) ²³ “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. ²⁴ No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.

Colossians 3:17 (NIV) ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.



Cross Examination

Jesus ate with tax collectors, prostitutes, sinners, as well as with friends, heretical religious teachers, political activists, and enemies. In following his example, what attitudes and actions of mine need to change?

How will I follow Paul’s example from **1 Corinthians 9:19-23** when it comes to meeting a transgender person?

How can I give the identity that God has to offer the person who struggles with their gender identity?



Dear beloved person, no matter the struggles you go through with your gender identity, this is true:

2 Corinthians 4:16–5:9 (NIV) ¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. ¹ For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, ³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.



LIGHT OF THE VALLEY

—LUTHERAN CHURCH—

SHINING THE LIGHT OF JESUS

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Bible Study for All Ages

Sundays at 9:15 am

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