



NAVIGATING GENDER IDENTITY

SEXUAL/GENDER IDENTITY CONFUSION

Our culture is experiencing an increased level of confusion concerning sexual identity. When addressing same-sex attraction, gender identity concerns, or a transgender disposition (generally, any confusion), we must approach such struggles with several foundational and “biblical” understandings.

SEXUAL WHOLENESS

Wholeness begins with the realization that sex is, first and foremost, a noun (what we are) rather than a verb (what we do). Each of us has been created by God to reflect His image as male or female. “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’ ... So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth’” (Genesis 1:26–28). Our physical design as male and female reflects the nature of the triune God, an eternal communion of persons in whose image we are created. Nothing in creation reflects that image more than when two become one as husband and wife and enter into oneness and the intended design of conjugal love. A healthy understanding of sexuality begins by understanding that our sex (male or female) is fixed in us at our creation and, despite revisionists’ teaching, not a social construct or individual choice subject to alteration by the person created.

COMMON STRUGGLES

Confusion over sexual identity and attraction can be common during puberty, as an influx of hormones can throw the body and emotions out of balance. Parents and caregivers should be careful not to panic or overreact; the call is to be clear and consistent. Under normal circumstances, the confusion clears. However, those affirmed in or encouraged to act upon such short-term feelings can perpetuate and intensify the struggle into adulthood. Far too many adolescents listen to peers, the media, and even authority figures pushing them to “come out” or declare themselves to be something other than what God made them to be. This can trap them in the mistaken idea that one’s desires (even if short-term) dictate one’s identity. Children often explore out of natural curiosity, which is usually unrelated to sexuality. However, as children mature curiosity does not grant permission to disregard God’s teachings on sexuality, which is designed to be expressed within marriage alone. Sexuality outside of marriage is wrong, whether it is homosexual or heterosexual. Many children, adolescents, and young adults who step outside these boundaries often experience deep regret that may stay with them throughout their lives.

Christianity recognizes that human affections can become disoriented due to the effects of the fall. As the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the church in Rome, “We know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ... For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Romans 7:14–15). Every person feels desires that run counter to our intended design, including a variety of sexual struggles like pornography addiction, same-sex attraction, and others.

A REDEEMPTIVE APPROACH

The emotions associated with same-sex attraction and gender identity confusion (also gender dysphoria) are both real and complex. Many individuals desperately wish to free themselves from feelings and desires that can make them feel abnormal or shamed. Unfortunately, extending hope in such situations has become difficult because those who affirm God’s design for human sexuality are labeled “bigots” or “homophobic haters” by those with political (or even anti-Christian) agendas. Loved ones and friends are told that if they don’t accept the person’s lifestyle choices, they are rejecting them as a person (this is why it is important for them to connect sexuality with identity). But Christians love others too completely to allow perpetuated lies to undermine sexual wholeness. To become agents of redemption amid an increasingly emotional debate, both the person wrestling with sexual confusion and the person who cares about them can follow a few important steps.

STEP ONE: EXTEND GRACE

Refuse to perpetuate stereotypes. Not everyone struggling with same-sex attraction is acting on those feelings. On the other side, those who believe God intended sexual union exclusively for a husband and a wife are motivated by truth and love, not ignorance or hate. So, extend grace. Give one another permission to disagree without calling names or assuming the worst. Strive to keep lines of communication open. When someone comes to understand their mistake or embrace God's truth, we want to provide a compassionate and soft place of grace for them to return to.

STEP TWO: EXPLORE GOD'S DESIGN

Regardless of our current posture or perspective, the best starting place is to explore what it means to be created male and female in God's image and how we can find sexual wholeness as intended by our Creator. Start with the resources suggested in the Resources section.

STEP THREE: GLEAN FROM THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND

Same-sex attraction and sexual identity confusion are complicated matters with no easy answers. The journey to wholeness may be a difficult, long process. Families and individuals are encouraged to seek wisdom from those who have walked a similar path. God brings people into our lives who can help us navigate difficult processes. While this is important, not all processes are biblical. All advice may not be godly. The information gleaned should be brought before the Lord, allowing Him to teach and direct. Trusted voices can help families and individuals discover the joy and health of pursuing God's loving, beautiful design for human sexuality (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

RESOURCES

The following resources are recommended for those struggling with same-sex attraction or sexual identity confusion and their loved ones.

AXIS—A wealth of important and relevant (trustworthy) information is available at [AXIS.org](https://axis.org/?s=sexuality), from videos to audio teaching.
<https://axis.org/?s=sexuality>.

RestoredHopeNetwork.org—A Christian inter-denominational membership-governed network dedicated to restoring hope to those broken by sexual and relational sin, especially those impacted by homosexuality.

FirstStone.org—A ministry leading the sexually and relationally broken into a liberating relationship with Jesus Christ. There is a detailed empha-

sis on overcoming all forms of sexual brokenness, including homosexuality, sexual abuse, and addiction to pornography.

Focus on the Family—www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/answering-parents-questions-on-gender-confusion-in-children/

Family Life—www.familylife.com/?s=transgender

Your Local Church—A church's pastoral staff is always ready to walk alongside families through difficult and complex issues. Many who have faced similar challenges have found help, wholeness, and healing through the local church. Pastors and trusted leaders can connect families with others for support, and all interactions should remain confidential.



Download more resources at
D6HomePoint.com

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