

What Does The Bible Say To Transgender People?

1. Warm up question. Have you ever felt an inner yearning to be or do something, but kept that to yourself because of how others might react? What was it and how did you think others might react?
2. We humans have a tendency to fear what we don't understand and pressure those who are different to fall in line. We tend to like people who are like us and to be afraid of those who are different. Right now our culture is having a big debate about whether to affirm transgender people. The North Carolina "bathroom bill" targeting transgender people recently made national news. The President also recently declared his intention to ban transgender people from the military. Most churches condemn transgender people. Our church affirms and celebrates them.
 - a. Have you ever gotten to know someone who is transgender? What did you learn?
 - b. Imagine growing up with a profound sense that you were trapped in the wrong body. For example, if you're a woman, imagine if you had to live a man's body or vice versa. How do you think that would have affected you growing up? How would it affect you now? How might it have affected your relationship with God?
3. The Bible verse most commonly used against transgender people is Genesis 1:27 which says, "So God created humans in God's image, in the image of God they were created, male and female God created them." Some use this verse to say, "God created you the way you are, male or female, and you shouldn't second guess that. If God created you a woman and you change yourself to a man, or vice versa, you are rejecting God's creation plan for you." Most of us agree that we should be who God created us to be. But before we can do that, we first have to figure out who God created us to be. When someone is created with an inner gender that differs from their body gender, they have to figure out which should take priority. In other words, is it our inner spirit or outer body that determines our gender?
 - a. Each of us is a combination of both spirit and matter – our inner self and our outer self – our body and our soul. In Christian theology, how long does the soul last? And how long does the body last? What happens to the soul when we die? What happens to the body?
 - b. So if there is ever a conflict between body and soul – and one of them has to yield – which should yield – and why?
 - c. Why do you think God creates some people with a difference in the gender of their body and the gender of their soul?
4. People who argue that it's a sin to change our bodies ignore the many ways most of us routinely change our bodies. If you have piercings, tattoos, or have ever dyed your hair, you have changed your body from "the way God made it." If you have ever had surgery or a medical procedure, or if you take medicines that alter the "natural"

chemical composition of your body, you have changed your body from “the way God made it.”

- a. Is it ok to make the foregoing changes? Does God favor or frown on those kinds of changes? Why or why not?
 - b. If it's fine to make the foregoing changes, and God sees them as an expression of our inner spirit and an improvement in our quality of life, is it any different when someone changes the gender of their body?
5. The Mosaic Law says, “A woman shall not wear a man's apparel, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment.” Deuteronomy 22:5.
- a. As followers of Jesus, are we subject to the Mosaic Law?
 - b. For the sake of argument, assume for the moment that we are subject to the Mosaic Law. If you have a female soul, but a male body, how should you dress in order to faithfully comply with Deuteronomy 22:5, given what we discussed above?
6. So far our conversation has assumed that everyone needs to fit into one of two binary categories – male or female. The teachings of Jesus challenge that assumption. Read Mark 7:1-23.
- a. This is a long and complex passage, but in verse 14 Jesus turns to whether it's ok to eat “unclean animals” for food. In Leviticus 11, the Mosaic Code divides all animals into three categories: land animals (quadrupeds), birds, and sea creatures. Some animals in each category are declared “unclean detestable abominations.” To understand why, read the Mercer Bible Dictionary quote on the next page.
 - b. According to Mercer Bible Dictionary, why were bats declared “unclean?” Why were storks declared “unclean?”
 - c. Who made bats and storks? And who makes “gender queer” humans?
 - d. Mark 7:18 says, “Thus Jesus declared all foods clean.” In other words, Jesus categorically rejected the old notion that God creates within fixed, rigid categories and never designs creatures who creatively blend characteristics of more than one category. How does this teaching apply to gender queer and transgender people?
 - e. Read the poem on the next page written by a transgender person who was raised fundamentalist, but is now finding the peace to begin transitioning from female to male. What word or phrase in this poem most speaks to you?
 - f. Jesus said, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” Matthew 25:35. As individuals, and as a church, how can we be more welcoming of gender queer and transgender people?

Mercer Bible Dictionary, p. 505

“The rules [about unclean animals] have been explained as early notions of hygiene, as allegories, or simply as preferences of taste; however, their key probably is the one stated with the rules themselves: they are for keeping Israel holy. . .

Among the animals of Leviticus 11, the unclean are those of mixed or confused identity. If for example birds typically fly and quadrupeds walk, a quadruped that flies – the bat – is perceived as having a confused identity; it is unclean. The birds listed as unclean swim or dive or in some other way do not behave like birds. . . .

[T]he principle is clear: the animal perceived as ‘ordered’ has its holiness and is clean; the animal having blurred identity is contaminated and to be avoided.”

Poem By An Anonymous Transgender Author

Budding violet gold
Traipsing on my soul
All that I'm to be
Found conclave beneath
The rubble of the thought
"But one way to love"
"But two types to belong"

Dash it on the rocks!
The lies that hold my heart
Hidden from the candle
Of all I'm meant to behold-
I am canvas of color
I am light and His wonder
Displayed for a dark world
To know and to discover

God makes no mistakes
I am a masterpiece
I am as I'm meant to be
A rainbow of beauty