

HUMAN SEXUALITY – ANYTHING GOES?

Understanding the Issues and Developing a Strategic Christian Response

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*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)*

But at the beginning of creation God “made them male and female.” (Mark 10:6)

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. (Proverbs 14:12)

Introduction

There is a lifestyle which has been considered immoral or unacceptable by many civilizations over the centuries, but which is now gaining approval in western culture. This behavior or way of life known as transgenderism, makes the claim that a person’s gender may not be what is actually evident at birth. In other words, transgender people feel and believe they are not the gender they physically appear to be.

In April 2015, transgender issues surfaced when Fairfax County School Board members wanted to add to the nondiscriminatory policy within Virginia public school system wording that would protect transgender students and teachers from discrimination. Heated discussions on this topic were prevalent during the public meeting, especially concerning whether transgender students and teachers should be allowed to use bathrooms that suit their gender identity. After hearing all concerns the School Board decided to add the words “gender identity” to the nondiscrimination policy.

The acceptance of transgenderism can also be seen in other arenas, such as in the recent disclosure by Olympic icon, Bruce Jenner that he, or she, is now a woman. The mainstream media and the popular culture’s reaction to this thought-provoking episode in Mr. Jenner’s life seemed to be one of celebrating the “extreme makeover” of this 1976 Summer Olympian, who won the gold medal in the men’s decathlon. Through medical science and Bruce Jenner’s belief that he is truly a woman, the June 2015 edition of Vanity Fair reveals a startling transformation on its front cover of Mr. Jenner’s new identity as Ms. Caitlyn Jenner.

The above transgender issues that have impacted the lives of famous individuals as well as local communities are just some of the recent events that are building an atmosphere of tolerance toward what was once considered objectionable behavior. What should the Christian response be to the transgender issue? Before answering this question as well as others that will naturally surface concerning this matter, let’s go back to the Fall of 2008 for more perspective on the growing support for transgenderism and the Christian response, especially from believers calling Immanuel’s Church their community of faith.

Gender Identity Bill 23-07

On September 9, 2008, a law was enacted in Montgomery County, Maryland, allowing “gender identity” to become a protected class in what the county’s government declared as an anti-discrimination bill. Non-discrimination—Gender Identity Bill 23-07 was unanimously passed by the eight County Council members present and signed by the County Executive. Bill 23-07 defines “gender identity” as: “an individual’s actual or perceived gender, including a person’s gender-related appearance, expression, image, identity or behavior, whether or not those gender-related characteristics differ from the characteristics customarily associated with the person’s assigned sex at birth.” This bill, when it was first introduced, had an amendment that specifically allowed access to public facilities (e.g., bathrooms, showers) based on a person’s “gender identity.” In other words, men who feel they are women would have full access to women’s bathrooms, showers, and dressing rooms. After a well-organized campaign against Bill 23-07, led by Maryland Citizens for Responsible Government (MCRG), the authors of the bill removed the initial amendment, and replaced it with vague and confusing language, which after close scrutiny still allowed access to public facilities based on “gender identity.”

Maryland state and federal legislators have a long history of supporting many liberal causes that cross over into moral issues, especially in the areas of homosexual/lesbian relationships, a woman’s “right” to choose abortion, and stem cell research. So, it is not surprising that the Montgomery County Council introduced and passed a bill that provides certain rights and privileges to individuals who are experiencing job discrimination because of “gender identity” issues. The disturbing aspect of Bill 23-07 is not the fact that a County Council wanted to rightfully stop discrimination in the workplace because of “gender identity,” but that under the guise of job discrimination, the County Council wanted to allow activity that seemed to defy human decency and basic common sense. The obvious abuses in which sexual predators could easily participate under this poorly written legislation appeared to be ignored by the County Council.

For many people in Montgomery County, this legislation was a surreal episode in their lives that they couldn’t explain or understand. What many failed to recognize is that legislation such as Bill 23-07 is not only a product of a liberal, provocative mindset, but also the result of decades of inaction by what many are beginning to see as a secularized Christian approach to the moral issues of the day. In *The Secular Revolution*, Dr. Keith G. Meador, Professor of the Practice of Pastoral Theology and Medicine at Duke University’s Divinity School, writes the following statement in his article entitled, “My Own Salvation - The Christian Century and Psychology’s Secularizing of American Protestantism”:

It seems paradoxical to speak of American culture as secularized, for Americans profess their personal religious beliefs in study after study. Yet the governing institutions in which Americans live out their lives – business, education, entertainment, law and medicine alike – bear little evidence of this faith. . . Americans bracket off their individual beliefs from their public lives (Smith, 2003, p. 270).

Though there was some effective opposition to Bill 23-07, especially through the efforts of organizations such as MCRG, the number of Maryland churches that put forth a major effort to inform their congregations on the issue and collect signatures for a referendum was not overwhelming. However, the required number of signatures for a referendum vote was acquired before the deadline. Regrettably, this referendum designed to undo Bill 23-07, was nullified by the Maryland Supreme Court on a supposed technicality on September 9, 2008. As the homosexual, lesbian and transgender community continue to gain support and promote their lifestyles through

political, social and economic means, those opposed Bill 23-07 began to see how the delicate balance of freedom and justice that goes hand in hand with our local, state and federal laws is consistently tilting toward a worldview that does not agree at all with the Judeo-Christian perspective.

Church Bylaws and the Three Questions

Recognizing the potential impact to the church from the gender identity bill, which could result in two biological males (with one identifying as a female) requesting to be married, Minister Robert B. Nelson proposed an amendment to the church bylaws. The addendum that was voted on by the congregation stated:

In this stand of Immanuel's Church regarding moral criteria for membership and staffing is found our clear commitment as a Church to three vital moral values – 1. *The Sanctity of Human Life*, as clearly taught by God in Psalm 139:13-16, Jeremiah 1:5, Luke 1:41, Galatians 1:15. 2. *The Sanctity of Human Sexuality*, as clearly defined by God in Genesis 1:26-27. 3. *The Sanctity of Marriage*, as clearly defined by God in Genesis 2:18-24. Those who would be members and staff in Immanuel's Church are bound to uphold these moral values as the revealed heart of God for mankind.

The members of the church voted in favor of the new additions to the bylaws, but some interesting questions were raised in the process, concerning challenges the Body of Christ will eventually face concerning human sexuality issues. (1) How should the congregation respond to men who believe they are women, or women who believe they are men, and who claim that they are born again, Spirit-filled Christians and want to become members of Immanuel's Church or another Christian church in the area? (2) How should the congregation respond to men who believe they are women or women who believe they are men who have gone through sex change operations and claim they are born again, Spirit-filled Christians, and want to become members of Immanuel's Church or another Christian church in the area? (3) How should the congregation respond to men who believe they are women, or women who believe they are men, because they were born with a mixed sex anatomy (i.e., intersex), who claim they are born again, Spirit-filled Christians, and want to become members of Immanuel's or another Christian church in the area?

Concerning #3 above, it should be noted that Pastors Charles and Dotty told of their own personal experience some 40 years ago at a college fellowship in Arkansas: "A young college student had been born with mixed organs and had been in torment over this for many years. As a young man, he made the decision to become what he believed he really was – a young woman. At the juncture that we met him, he was well underway to becoming that woman. We were both deeply and lastingly impressed with two things – first of all, the compassion and care with which the fellowship surrounding him as he was walking through this difficult experience. And secondly, the consecration on the part of this (new) young woman in which she dedicated herself to a life of celibacy, as the Lord's handmaiden. We often wondered how she fared over the years. And we also wondered what our advice would have been had we been asked early in the process. Perhaps Paul's words bear on this – 'I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is' (1 Corinthians 7:26). But above all, even as we weigh these issues, we should be compassionate toward people who are walking through this personal maze."

Historical Background

Before addressing these queries further through the spiritual filter of the Bible and available medical information, I think it is important to first take a brief historical and ideological diversion to better understanding how “gender identity” or transgender issues are gaining acceptance in today’s culture. It is also necessary to explore the secularization of the Christian church.

For centuries, Western civilization was characterized by the belief that God or “the gods” gave meaning to life. This pre-modern era of Western Civilization showed an avid acceptance of the supernatural, which was prevalent throughout Western culture, even though societies such as the Greek and Roman cultures became morally decadent. Even under these fallen empires, the spiritual realm continued to be the source of all values and the ultimate goal of mankind, especially the Judeo-Christian beliefs that greatly influenced European and New World societies. For example, biblical truth became a driving force in the forming of laws and ethics within Colonial America and its western expansion. However, a shift in thinking, birthed near the end of the Renaissance period in Europe, would soon find its way into the Western world and eventually usher in a modern age that substituted the natural for the supernatural.

The Enlightenment period celebrated the idea that human reason and science would be the new way to explain everything. This new movement in determining man’s origins and purpose in life was a reaction due in part to the religious abuses manifested during the Middle Ages. The rejection of religious authority and “modern” ideas like Darwin’s Theory of Evolution stripped the world of spiritual and supernatural meaning, proclaiming the scientific method as the correct process to be used, or dare I say worshipped, if the culture were to move forward.

As Western culture moved through the 20th Century, a change in thinking began to overtake the stark naturalism of the modern-age thinker. This new view sought meaning apart from the material world. The age of postmodernism replaced the “survival of the fittest” mentality of Darwin with the idea that there is no universal right or wrong, yet there are truths and morals that apply to each individual or social group. In *Ethics & Medicine: An International Journal of Bioethics, Volume 21:3*, Dr. Mary B. Adam, Clinical Lecturer, Department of Pediatrics, University of Arizona College of Medicine, wrote in her article, “From Steinem to Schlafly: Creating a Basis for Constructive Conversation on Human Sexuality”: “For the postmodern, morality is simply a matter of desire. ‘I will choose what is right for me, you choose what is right for you’ or ‘whatever’ are, in effect, the campaign slogans for postmodernism” (Adam, 2005, p.133). In the same article, Ms. Adam went on to explain the postmodernist’s view of human sexuality by stating, “In the postmodern paradigm, human sexuality is what you make it. The fulfillment of sexual desires is viewed as a right. Since human sexuality is a preference, all forms of sexual expression are viewed as equally valid” (Adam, 2005, p.133). As the postmodern ethos continues to influence the United States and other 21st Century societies, growing support from outside the gay and transgender population for their lifestyles will inevitably follow suit, becoming a part of America’s social environment, unless effectively challenged.

Current Ideological Perspectives Shaping the Culture

In *The Journal of Family and Culture*, Dr. George A. Rekers, Ph.D, Professor of Neuropsychiatry and Behavioral Science, and Chairman of Faculty in Psychology at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine in Columbia, S.C., made the following statement:

The past three decades have witnessed a well-publicized trend for certain vocal elements in education and the media in American culture to sharply question the legitimacy of many, if

not all, sex role distinctions in the socialization of children. Television programs and textbook revisions have been used by these social forces in the attempt to normalize father-absent families as well as households of various combinations of unmarried adults as simply *alternate family forms* with no inherent adverse social consequences (Vol. II, No. 3, 1986).

Events described in an October 13, 2008, Washington Times article by Andrew Breitbart, revealed a proposal that was birthed by elected officials in Chicago, Illinois, to create a public high school for gay, lesbian and transgender students. Mr. Breitbart wrote, “The Pride Campus of the School for Social Justice is set to open with 600 students in 2010, and its curriculum promises to do the following: ‘teach the history of all people who have been oppressed and the civil rights movements that have led to social justice and queer studies.’ ”

The media, politicians, and educational institutions are not the only influential organizations or groups that accept, promote, or protect sexually blatant lifestyles. There are a growing number of denominations within the traditional Christian churches that adhere to a worldly or secular viewpoint and allow openly gay and transgender people to join their congregations with no intention of trying to change their sexual proclivities. Some of these churches also see no problem in supporting the ordination of homosexual or lesbian ministers. The struggle within the Anglican Church is a case in point. Openly gay Episcopal Bishop V. Gene Robinson caused a split within the Anglican Church when he was ordained in 2003. During a conference in England, Bishop Robinson worked with advocates for Anglican gays and lesbians to meet as many overseas Anglican bishops as possible to present the homosexual point of view, hoping to change the minds of those who were willing to listen. Bishop Robinson, along with many others like him, are causing great friction amongst clergy and laity in attempting to reshape people’s thinking on human sexuality, especially on principles that contradict biblical revelation.

So how should church congregations which are trying to follow the commands of the Bible react to the cultural pressures of the times that push different views of human sexuality? Bringing these issues closer to home, how should the Immanuel’s Church respond to “gender identity” issues that have been made into law and have the support and backing of prominent individuals and groups, many of whom claim to be believers in Jesus Christ?

First, it is important to mention that transgendered individuals who are experiencing “gender identity” issues are suffering from what the American Psychiatric Association (APA) calls Gender Identity Disorder (GID). GID is defined as a mental disorder by the APA in its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-IV, Fourth Edition*, yet Maryland’s anti-discrimination bill unashamedly wants to provide legal protection for these mentally ill individuals. In an open letter to the Montgomery County Council, Peter Sprigg, Vice President for Policy, Family Research Council, made the following statement,

“Gender Identity Disorder” is classified as a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association. Legal protection against discrimination based on mental illness is not provided for any other disorder, and there is no rational explanation why it should be offered for this one. Those who wish to assume a “gender identity” contrary to their biological sex are in need of mental health treatment to overcome such disturbed thinking, not legislation to affirm it.

Dr. Sprigg is an expert on this subject, having written a book entitled, *Outrage: How Gay Activists and Liberal Judges Are Trashing Democracy to Redefine Marriage*.

Secondly, before 1973 homosexuality was considered to be a mental disorder. In his book entitled, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis*, Ronald Bayer conveys

his frustration with the conflict between scientific perspective and ideological factors in American culture. He states,

In 1973, after several years of bitter dispute, the Board of Trustees of the American Psychiatric Association decided to remove homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*... Instead of being engaged in sober consideration of data, psychiatrists were swept up in a political controversy. The American Psychiatric Association has fallen victim to the disorder of a tumultuous era, when disruptive conflicts threatened to politicize every aspect of American social life. A furious egalitarianism that challenged every instance of authority had compelled psychiatric experts to negotiate the pathological status of homosexuality with homosexuals themselves. The result was not a conclusion based on an approximation of the scientific truth as dictated by reason, but was instead an action demanded by the ideological temper of the times.... (Bayer, 1981, pp. 3-4).

Political and social successes in the gay community as well as judicial and legislative support for the transgender lifestyle are growing. We are beginning to see the “alternative” forces of cultural change in America, which clash with traditional and biblical values, make gender identity a part of the American way of life.

Orthodox vs. Progressivist

In James Davison Hunter’s *Culture Wars: the Struggle to Define America*, the author makes the claim that there are two moral visions that are competing against each other for the heart and soul of the United States. These diverging philosophies are becoming so distinct within American culture, that those who believe they hold a moderate or independent view of the world will sooner or later align themselves with one of them. Mr. Hunter calls one of these moral viewpoints “orthodox” and the other “progressivist.”

Using his, as well as other author references, Hunter sums up the “orthodox” vision by stating,

...the founders of our nation, George Washington, James Madison, and even Thomas Jefferson (who did not have any church affiliation), believed that government must be based on God; that governmental structures must have an authority greater than itself, which is God... The genius of the “American experiment,” from this perspective, was the creation of institutions that would guarantee both freedom and justice.... Underlying the reverential endorsement of capitalism... is the conviction that economic and spiritual freedoms go hand in hand, that one is impossible without the other.... Justice is generally defined in terms of the Judeo-Christian standards of moral righteousness.... A just society, therefore, is a morally conscientious and lawful society. When its people abide by these standards it is also an ordered society... the moral fiber of American life is built upon standards of biblical morality.... If change is necessary, it should be undertaken to more perfectly fulfill the ideals established at the nation’s founding (Hunter, 1991, pages 110-112).

As for the “progressivist” vision, Hunter introduces the reader to a way of thinking that rejects the idea of a Supreme Being having any direct influence on our nation’s origins, but instead, sees human beings forming their own thoughts and ambitions from a rational, secular, humanistic perspective. He states,

The premise of the progressivist account... is a rejection of the particularistic loyalties of the orthodox in favor of what one secular tract called ‘eternal verities’— universal ethical principles in part derived from the nation’s religious and humanistic traditions... freedom is defined largely in terms of the social and political rights of individuals.... Justice, on the other hand, tends to be understood by progressivists in terms of equality and the end of oppression in the social world.... Where *cultural conservatives* tend to *define freedom economically* (as individual economic initiative) and *justice socially* (as righteous living), *progressives* tend to *define freedom socially* (as individual rights) and *justice economically* (as equity). (Hunter, 1991, pages 113-115).

In comparing the differences between the orthodox and progressivist worldviews, it doesn’t take long to recognize that these two visions are worlds apart in the way they believe culture should operate under their code of ethics. For example, both of these worldviews celebrate diversity and pluralism, but the “progressivist” desires to grant individuals what seems to be a special exemption from outside interference concerning cultural differences. In other words, diversity, or what many call multiculturalism, needs to be established and preserved in a way that doesn’t harm any culture’s system of beliefs. For this to become reality, the progressivist demands that individuals give up what they consider to be moral absolutes and become moral relativists. This thinking says truth lies with individuals and groups who hold certain beliefs, and there is no absolute right and wrong. In other words, “I’m OK , you’re OK,” or “doing your own thing,” sums up moral relativism. So, applying the progressivist worldview to the issue of human sexuality, there is no moral aversion to abortion, homosexuality, transgenderism, and a host of other “moral issues” or “alternate lifestyles” that contradict biblical principles or the “orthodox” vision. Don Closson in his paper, “Multiculturalism,” describes the final outcome of the progressivist’s idea of how freedom and justice work in a diverse culture: “Tolerance becomes the only absolute. To be exclusive about truth, or to argue that some action might be morally wrong for all people all the time, violates this new absolute of tolerance.”

In the State of Maryland, we are witnessing an increasing tension between the “orthodox” and “progressivistic” worldviews in dealing with human sexuality issues such as “gender identity.” I believe God is in the process of pruning His 21st Century Church to unsecularize itself and truly morph into a body of godly believers who live in the world but are not of the world and who are willing to be a voice for righteousness. It seems God is allowing the moral decay in our nation to birth in His Church a real desire to pray, and then take that prayer and turn it into Isaiah 6:8 moments, where believers will truly respond with the prophet’s words, “Hear I am, Lord, send me!”

Seeking a Strategic Christian Response to Human Sexuality

With the growing, vocal movement toward the redefinition of marriage and issues such as “gender identity” or transgenderism, it does not take a prophet to see that a time is soon coming when all 50 States will be challenged to change their laws to accept human sexuality as “anything goes.” Further evidence of this can be seen in a commentary written by Cal Thomas, published in *The Washington Times*. He wrote,

An indication that the objectives of the gay rights movement go far beyond what any two individuals wish to do with each other can be seen in what California has tried to impose on heterosexuals wishing to marry...some county clerks exchanged the word ‘bride’ and ‘groom’ on marriage licenses for “Party A” and “Party B.” (October 15, 2008, p. A20).

We must seek God’s wisdom in developing a strategic Christian response, in which believers can be “salt and light” in addressing these moral issues of the day. Immanuel’s Church must stand for righteousness by confronting the sinful transgender lifestyle, while providing godly direction to those struggling with “gender identity” issues. We should not fool ourselves into thinking we are a loving, compassionate and caring church by accepting the lie that human sexuality is what the person truly feels he or she is, even if the desired sexual identity is counter to their biological gender and the Word of God.

Let us return now to the questions asked earlier in this paper.

Response to Question #1

How should the congregation respond to men who believe they are women, or women who believe they are men, who claim that they are born again, Spirit-filled Christians, and want to become members of Immanuel’s Church or another Christian church in the area?

Transgenderers describe themselves as individuals trapped in bodies that don’t match their biological gender. In essence, transgenderism declares that there are not just two genders, but a gender continuum that allows an individual to identify where one falls on the masculinity to femininity scale.

This premise of transgenderism is clearly unbiblical. Genesis 1:27 proclaims “...male and female he created them,” and those same words are confirmed by Jesus in Mark 10:6. From a biblical perspective, sexually immoral gender issues have a long track record that goes back to the first chapter of Genesis. After the fall of Adam and Eve, gender issues began to surface with widespread homosexuality in various cities (see Genesis 19:1-7). Recorded up through New Testament times are numerous other sexually immoral practices which conflict directly with God’s gift of human sexuality between a man and a woman (see Romans 1:21-28). God’s Word is also very clear that transvestitism is detestable in His sight and was strictly forbidden: “A woman must not wear men’s clothing, nor a man wear women’s clothing, for the Lord your God detests anyone who does this” (Deuteronomy 22:5). A possible reference to sinful transgender activity is found in 1 Corinthians 6:9, where male prostitution is listed as a separate condemned activity from homosexual offenders. The King James Version uses the word “effeminate” for male prostitutes, giving the strong impression that the male prostitutes were acting and dressing like women.

There are Scriptures also throughout the Bible revealing that God does not make mistakes when it comes to His human creation. Romans 9:20 states, “But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” In Job 10:8-9, God’s Word declares, “‘Your hands shaped me and made me...Remember that you molded me like clay.’” Isaiah 29:16 pointedly addresses those opposing God’s gender specific creation by stating, “You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘He did not make me’? Can the pot say to the potter, ‘He knows nothing’?” These and other Scriptures (e.g., Isaiah 45:9; 64:8) directly emphasize that God is the Potter and we are the clay, and that we actually have no right to question Him or quarrel about how He has made us.

If we love God and believe He does not make mistakes, we must in humility accept how He made us, and trust that He does all things well. Transgender people may argue that they are not a mistake and that God is using them in awesome ways because they themselves have matched their bodies to the gender they believe they have always been. Christians need to lovingly but boldly confront the deception that somehow our hearts can know better than God how He should have created us. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked:

who can know it?” If we accept that God’s Word is true about the human heart, we cannot trust our hearts, especially when they contradict His Word.

If transgenderism is to be accepted, we would also then need to agree with the notion that humanity at its conception is actually genderless, since genetically predisposed gender doesn’t really matter. This idea also goes directly against Scripture concerning God’s human creation revealed in Genesis 1:26-27. In Psalm 139, the Lord also describes in astonishing detail an intimate relationship between Himself and His creation. “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.... My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place... your eyes saw my unformed body” (verses 13-16). King David, in penning Psalm 139, reveals that when God created him, He knew every detail of his mind, body and soul. To make the claim that the one’s sex at birth is irrelevant goes against the purposes and perfect will of God for each of His created beings. For example, in the Book of Jeremiah, the prophet goes into a much deeper understanding of God’s creative revelation by proclaiming, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart...” (Jeremiah 1:5). It is here that God reveals that even in His mind He fashions mankind after His own image as males and females even before being formed in the womb, giving each one purpose and a role that He desires to see accomplished. There is no convincing argument that can be made that shows God to be unconcerned about the specific sexual identity of each person. There is no provision to allow individuals to reject their biological sex. Though there are instances where sexual identity at birth causes some challenges, which will be discussed later, the bottom line of Holy Scripture tells us that no one is born into the wrong body or mistakenly given the wrong sex at birth.

When transgenders or those suffering from GID approach Immanuel’s or any other Christian Church to become members because they believe they are born again believers, it is important that these individuals receive immediate counseling to help restore their true identity as a man or a woman in Christ by dealing with issues in their past that enabled their sinful transgender lifestyle to flourish. Many may find it easy to see transgenders as victims of their environment, because of possible mental and/or physical abuse, the lack of a father figure, divorce in their families, or a host of other tragic circumstances. The Church must not succumb to the temptation of thinking that transgender behavior is a psychological disorder only, but to recognize it as a rebellion against God’s plan for humanity.

Repentance and restoration for those caught in the transgender lifestyle will not be effectively accomplished unless believers are willing to reach out in a loving manner to restore their broken lives, while boldly and compassionately exposing their way of living as harmful to their relationship with God. The repentance and restoration process must not fall only on the shoulders of a few counselors within the church. A network of congregational members needs to come alongside these confused men and women, who need godly examples of people made in the image of God. Coming alongside may initially involve inviting transgenders to group Bible studies, family dinners, outdoor group activities, etc., which will actively reinforce what the counselors have been sharing about the restorative heart of God and the loving nature of the Body of Christ. This might be a little uncomfortable for some Christians, but the time has come to get the Church out of its comfort zone and back to its spiritual roots of being true salt (i.e., preservative) and light (i.e., used by God to provide divine illumination).

Response to Question #2

How should the congregation respond to men who believe they are women or women who believe they are men and who have gone through sex change operations and claim they are born

again, Spirit-filled Christians, and want to become members of Immanuel's Church or another Christian church in the area?

Scripture does not have any examples of individuals going through what might be construed to be a full or limited sex change operation. What the Bible is very clear about concerning human sexuality is again best revealed in Genesis 1:27. Besides making the declaration that humanity is both male and female made in His image, God goes on to give His "final" seal of approval in Genesis 1:31, "...God saw all that he had made, and it was very good...." In other words, God declares in no uncertain terms that what He has created is excellent in every way and that mistakes are not a part of His workmanship. To say sex change operations are permissible, or should be granted to those who desire them, is equivalent to telling God He makes appalling mistakes when He creates some individuals. Those who find themselves wanting these surgeries testify that they believe they were really made a woman, but are somehow are trapped in a man's body, or vice versa. The struggles these individuals endure are tied to a confused, emotional rollercoaster, and they base their decision-making on perceived heartfelt feelings that easily fall into sexual fantasies. God's Word clearly declares that He has made man to be man and woman to be woman, and we must heed the following wisdom of Jeremiah the prophet concerning the heart: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

There are some in the medical profession who support sex change operations and are willing to provide the service with little or no counseling. In his paper, "Surgical Sex," Dr. Paul McHugh, Distinguished Service Professor of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University, laments on past "heartfelt" decisions and writes,

As for the adults who came to us claiming to have discovered their "true" sexual identity and to have heard about sex-change operations, we psychiatrists have been distracted from studying the causes and natures of their mental misdirections by preparing them for surgery and for a life in the other sex. We have wasted scientific and technical resources and damaged our professional credibility by collaborating with madness rather than trying to study, cure, and ultimately prevent it.

Scripture reveals a consistent model for humanity where under God's plan, men and women are to have relationships with each other by being fruitful and increasing in number, filling the earth with their own kind and being caretakers of His creation (see Genesis 1:28-30). Even if a man has a sex change operation and is somewhat transformed into a womanlike figure, he is still a man internally and cannot reproduce or birth a child. This obvious natural law principle brings the whole transgender house of cards down on itself, regarding the issue of sex change operations.

As for the restorative processes and the roles of the Body of Christ in dealing with people who have had sex change operations and claim they are still close to God and born again, an approach similar to that laid out in Question #1 is recommended. One major difference is that greater insight will be needed for future decisions once a transgender is spiritually restored to Christ and recognizes that his or her sex change surgery was the wrong thing to do. The following are some possible next steps: (1) Advise expensive and painful surgery, which may produce unforeseen complications, to bring physical appearance back to his/her genetic sex; after recovery from surgery, continue counseling concerning marriage or being abstinent. (2) Advise no surgery, and adoption of a life in alignment with his/her genetic sex, but forgo marriage and follow an abstinent lifestyle. (3) Same as in (2), but if marriage is desired, advise counseling, so that all challenges are discussed and decisions align with God's Word.

The above options are limited, and may have some variations that need to be properly thought out. These ideas are a work in progress, and there is no easy formula to the serious and

complicated issue of restoring people who believed they were transgenders and went through a sex change operation. Other innovative ideas need to be explored within the Body of Christ and information be made available to church leadership to better understand what people spiritually, physically, psychologically and emotionally endure when dealing with transgenderism. Equipping the saints at Immanuel's and other churches concerning transgender issues is becoming increasingly important, as churches will undoubtedly soon be attacked by various secular organizations and "alternative lifestyle" communities for taking a strong, biblical stance on gay and transgender issues.

Response to Question #3

How should the congregation respond to men who believe they are women, or women who believe they are men, because they were born with a mixed sex anatomy (intersex), who claim they are born again, Spirit-filled Christians and want to become members of Immanuel's Church or another Christian church in the area?

The condition called intersex, which is a discrepancy between the external genitals and internal reproductive organs of a newborn, adds to the debate that some argue favors transgenderism and supports the concept that human sexuality is not necessarily determined genetically. The transgender community uses this controversial and challenging condition to help justify its lifestyle.

Penn State Children's Hospital Health and Disease Information and Penn State Hershey Health Information Library websites reveal that intersex affects one in every 2,000 births." Using the 2000 *Census of Population and Housing* report for the United States, it can be determined that approximately 0.05% of the population could be affected by this perplexing condition.

The following information from the Penn State Hershey Health Information Library site on intersex provides a better understanding of the four categories of this condition, medical treatment, and past and present practices:

46, XX Intersex. The person has the chromosomes of a woman, the ovaries of a woman, but external genitals that appear male. This usually is the result of a female fetus having been exposed to excess male hormones before birth.... Usually this person has a normal uterus and Fallopian tubes.... It used to be called female pseudohermaphroditism.

46, XY Intersex. The person has the chromosomes of a man, but the external genitals are incompletely formed, ambiguous, or clearly female. Internally, testes may be normal, malformed, or absent.... It used to be called male pseudohermaphroditism.

True Gonadal Intersex. Here the person must have both ovarian and testicular tissue. This might be in the same gonad (an ovotestis), or the person might have one ovary and one testis. The person may have XX chromosomes, XY chromosomes, or both. The external genitals may be ambiguous or may appear to be female or male. This condition used to be called true hermaphroditism.

Complex or Undetermined Intersex. Many chromosome configurations other than the simple 46, XX or 46, XY can result in disorders of sex development. These include 45, XO (only one X chromosome), and 47, XXY, 47, XXX – both cases have an extra sex chromosome, either an X or a Y.

The Penn State Hershey Health Information Library site provides the following details on medical treatment for intersex:

Ideally, a team of health care professionals with expertise in intersex should work together to understand and treat the child with intersex.... In the past, the prevailing opinion was that it was generally best to assign a gender as quickly as possible, often based on the external genitals rather than the chromosomal gender, and to instruct the parents to have no ambiguity in their minds as to the gender of the child. Prompt surgery was often recommended.... More recently, the opinion of many experts has shifted. Greater respect for the complexities of female sexual functioning has led them to conclude that suboptimal female genitalia may not be inherently better than male genitalia, even if the reconstruction is 'easier.' In addition, other factors may be more important in gender satisfaction than functioning external genitals. Chromosomal, neural, hormonal, psychological, and behavioral factors can all influence gender identity.

The above information provides a very basic overview of what Christians need to know about the intersex condition. Though this condition can be quite traumatic for those involved, individuals experiencing intersex at birth can go on to live healthy, normal lives as men and women, especially if the child and parents are given appropriate support and guidance from health care professionals during the early years of their child's adolescence. It should be noted that intersex is different from transgenderism and that children born with the condition are not predisposed to lean toward transgender activity. In her article, "Intersex," Dr. Alice Dreger, Professor of Clinical Medical Humanities and Bioethics, Northwestern University, writes,

...intersex is different from transgender in that a person with intersex is born with mixed sex anatomy, whereas a person who is transgendered is a person who feels himself or herself to be a gender different than the one he or she was assigned at birth. Some people who are transgendered were born intersexed, but most were born with 'standard' male or female anatomy.

Regrettably, even though God created the earth perfectly, His human creation still must exist in a world marred by sin (see Romans 5:12). Many would argue, especially within the transgender community, that children born with intersex should be allowed to choose the sex that they feel comfortable with, since they have the characteristics of both sexes. Even though the physical abnormalities of ambiguous genitalia might on the surface put into question the real gender, there are medical diagnostic procedures available that have been effectively used (though some are controversial) in helping to distinguish an intersexed individual's true sexual identity. Some of the diagnostic procedures include a pelvic ultrasound, chromosomal analysis, a genitourethrogram (looks at the urethra and vagina if present) and exploratory surgery. Also available are support groups that deal with the various pressures and expectations that parents and their intersex sons and daughters face. Support groups that are radical in their approaches to life should be avoided, but there are groups that provide a good foundation of faith, family and friends.

Even though the intersex community is extremely small, there is a small portion of that community who may believe they are transgenders, and may confront Christian churches to ask for membership. To effectively support their intersex condition and challenge their transgender tendencies, the Christian church can do the following: (1) become educated on the intersex condition, (2) be aware of the closest medical sources that provide diagnostic procedures to assist in determining true gender, (3) provide Christian counseling and congregational support as

recommended in Questions #1 and #2, (4) investigate the proximity of available intersex support groups, and determine which ones follow traditional values versus radical secular approaches, and (5) continue to hold firmly to God's Word, especially Genesis 1:27.

Closing Thoughts

There is a growing acceptance within Western Culture, especially in the United States, to not only tolerate, but fully celebrate the transgender lifestyle. Regrettably, like homosexuality, intelligent and thoughtful debate on transgenderism is being lost in the sea of "political correctness." Wesley Pruden, Editor Emeritus of the Washington Times, wrote in the paper's Commentary section on May 8, 2015, the following insightful comments: "The latest fad in the cultural marketplace is the celebration of transgenderism, which once required lots of chemicals and knifework but now can be done in the mind, where it's a lot cheaper. If a man thinks he's a woman, or a woman wants to be a man, that's about all it takes. We're all God's children, the argument goes, and everyone is entitled to his/her/its dignity, with or without a truss or skirt." Later in the article he goes on to say, "A man far ahead of his time posed what he thought was a clever riddle to Abraham Lincoln. 'If you call his tail a leg, how many legs does a dog have?' That was easy. 'Four,' old Abe replied. 'You can call a tail a leg, but its still a tail.'"

The times in which we now live are becoming more and more challenging when it comes to following, as well as trying to interject Christian principles into our secularized world. What seemed to be common sense in the past isn't so common anymore. Under these turbulent conditions the Body of Christ needs to lovingly but boldly stand firm in dealing with transgender issues. As believers we need to understand that individuals struggling with sinful transgender activity need Christians in their lives who are willing not to enable their behavior but come alongside them in a loving manner, clarifying and redirecting them in light of God's Word and His natural order. Believers also need to understand that the intersex or hermaphrodite condition is a rare and unique medical situation requiring doctors and family members to carefully consider available approaches to ensure that lives are not ruined by hasty decisions early in life when physical differences are discovered.

God wants His Church to give Him glory and rely on His power to open blind eyes, as well as restore lives that are confused by mixed sexual anatomy. His Word says it best, " 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.' " (John 9:2-3) The intersex man or woman who is living a transgender lifestyle will not be restored or brought to repentance by the world, but by those within the Body of Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, holding to His Word, and seizing the opportunity to share the love of God, not being intimidated or swayed by the "wisdom" of the world.

Are we, the Body of Christ, willing to sacrifice our lives, professional positions or property, so that those who initially hate what committed Christians believe about sinful, alternative lifestyles and other moral and bioethical issues, might in the end see God's truth revealed? Moral issues surrounding human sexuality that deal with life and health will inevitably come to a climax, and even now many lean toward the "anything goes" mentality. However, numerous souls who have lived sinful and deviant lifestyles are being drawn to Christ through the sacrifices of His Church, because His servants are not afraid to take a loving, compassionate, but uncompromising stance on what it means to be human, made in the image of God.

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