

SEXUAL / GENDER IDENTITY CONFUSION

Our generation is experiencing an increased level of confusion with regard to sexual identity. When addressing same-sex attraction, gender identity concerns, or a transgender disposition we must approach such struggles with several foundational 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. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number'"* (Genesis 1:26-28). Sexual health begins by understanding that our sex (male or female) is fixed in us at our creation and not a social construct or individual choice subject to alteration by the person created.

Common Struggles

Children can exhibit gender confusion; however, they normally and naturally lose these feelings as they grow older. Confusion over sexual identity can be common during puberty as an influx of hormones throw the body and emotions out of balance. This is no time to panic. Under normal circumstances the confusion clears. However, those who are 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.

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 at Rome, *"For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. 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, and for some that may include sexual struggles like pornography addiction, same-sex attraction and others.

A Redemptive Approach

The emotions associated with same sex attraction and gender identity confusion are both real and complex. Many individuals desperately wish they could free themselves from feelings and desires that can make them feel abnormal or even shame. 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 a political agenda. Loved ones and friends are told that if you don't accept the person's lifestyle choices you are rejecting them as a person. Christians should love others too much to perpetuate lies that undermine sexual wholeness. To become agents of redemption in the midst of an increasingly emotional debate, both the person wrestling with sexual identity confusion and the person who cares about them can follow a few important steps.

Step One: Extend Grace

Refuse to perpetuate stereotypes or to assume that anyone experiencing same-sex attraction or sexual identity confusion is acting out their inclinations. As well, don't assume those who believe

God intended sexual union exclusively for a husband and a wife are motivated by ignorance or hate, not truth and love. Extend grace and give one another permission to disagree without calling names or assuming the worst.

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 resources suggested in the Going Further 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. Seek wisdom from those who have been where you are and have now discovered the joy and health that comes from pursuing God's loving, beautiful design for human sexuality.

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GOING FURTHER RESOURCES

Loveology: God. Love. Marriage. Sex. And the Never-Ending Story of Male and Female

by John Mark Comer

Explores the meaning and implications of God's design for human sexuality including tackling sensitive and challenging questions.

Is God Anti-Gay? by Sam Allberry

Addresses why the gospel is good news for those, like the author, who struggle with same-sex attraction.

Restoring Sexual Identity: Hope for Women Who Struggle with Same-Sex Attraction

by Anne Paulk

Offers practical advice for healing and change to women, their families and friends wrestling with same-sex attraction.

When Homosexuality Hits Home by Joe Dallas

Provides grace-filled, biblical perspective on same-sex attraction from those who have left the homosexual lifestyle.

Living in a Gray World by Preston Sprinkle

Provides Christian teens with a guide to understanding homosexuality.

When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment by Ryan T. Anderson

Addresses gender identity confusion and reassignment in light of the physiological realities to put recent cultural debates in perspective.

LivingOut.org

A ministry that supports believers who experience same-sex attraction stay faithful to Biblical teaching on sexual ethics and flourish in their Christian walk.
