TRANSGENDER AFFIRMATION

A Resource for Faithful Conversations

ANTHONY PARROTT

A CHRISTIAN CASE FOR TRANSGENDER AFFIRMATION

A RESOURCE FOR FAITHFUL CONVERSATIONS



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INTRODUCTION: WHEN LOVE MEETS CONTROVERSY

It's an all-too-familiar scene: you're at a family gathering, having a great time, and your cousin launches into a tirade about "the transgender agenda." Your stomach knots. You know in your heart that Christ's love extends to all people, including transgender individuals, but the words to explain this escape you. Sound familiar?

Maybe it's not a family dinner. Maybe it's your small group leader questioning whether transgender people can truly be Christians, or your pastor preaching about "God's design for gender" in ways that make your trans friend feel unwelcome in the sanctuary they once called home. Perhaps it's your own wrestling match at 2 AM, wondering how to reconcile the Jesus who ate with outcasts and the church culture that seems determined to create new ones.

You're not alone in this tension. Across denominations and dinner tables, Christians are grappling with questions about gender identity, and frankly, we're not doing a great job. Too often, "theological" positions sound suspiciously like cultural prejudices dressed up in biblical language. Too often, a desire to be "faithful" becomes an excuse to be faithless to the radical love Jesus modeled.

Bad theology kills. The Trevor Project's 2022 research revealed that 45% of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered suicide in the past year, with transgender and nonbinary youth facing even higher rates. When religious families reject their LGBTQ+ children, suicide attempts increase by 70%. Meanwhile, family acceptance reduces suicide risk by more than half.

The math is brutal and clear—theological rejection has body counts.

But here's the beautiful truth that often gets buried under culture war rhetoric:

Supporting transgender people isn't just compatible with Christian faith—it actively flows from it.

When we dig beneath surface-level proof-texting and cultural assumptions, we discover that affirming transgender people aligns perfectly with Christianity's core commitments to love, justice, and human dignity.

This resource exists for precisely these moments when you need to articulate this truth with both conviction and compassion. Whether you're defending your trans child to skeptical in-laws, explaining your evolving theology to concerned church friends, or simply working through your own questions, you'll find tools here that are both academically sound and relationally sensitive.

We'll journey together through the foundational Christian principle of neighbor-love, exploring how the Golden Rule applies without footnotes* or exceptions. We'll look at Genesis, not to proof-text but to uncover the beautiful complexity of God's creation that binary thinking often misses. We'll examine what Scripture actually says about gender (spoiler alert: it's less than you think) and celebrate the gender-bending saints who populate biblical narratives.

^{*} There's a list of resources and references at the end of this book.

You'll discover how modern medical understanding enhances rather than threatens theological reflection, and we'll tackle headon the logical inconsistencies that plague anti-transgender arguments. Most importantly, we'll construct a positive theology of affirmation—not just explaining what we're against, but articulating what we're beautifully, boldly for.

Contrary to what Fox News might claim, this isn't about being politically correct or culturally relevant. It's about taking seriously our call to love our neighbors—all of them—as ourselves. It's about seeing the *imago Dei* in every person, especially those who don't fit our tidy categories. It's about choosing the radical inclusivity of Jesus over rigid exclusivity that masquerades as faithfulness.

By the time we're done, yes, you'll have some talking points for difficult conversations. But hopefully you'll also have a theological framework rooted in love, backed by scholarship, and seasoned with the kind of grace that changes hearts.

Good theology shouldn't merely win arguments—it should save lives, restore relationships, and reflect the scandalous love of a God who refuses to stay within the lines we draw.

The next time someone challenges your support for transgender people, you'll be ready to respond not from defensiveness but from the deep well of Christian conviction. You'll remember that you're not abandoning your faith—you're living it out in its fullest, most beautiful expression.

Let's begin.

STARTING WITH LOVE: THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS



et's begin where Jesus did: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). It's not complicated theology—it's Christianity 101. Yet somehow, when it comes to transgender people, we often forget this fundamental command.

Ask yourself: If you experienced gender dysphoria—that persistent, clinically significant distress caused by incongruence between one's experienced gender identity and assigned sex at birth—how would you want to be treated? Gender dysphoria isn't a philosophical preference or political statement; it's a recognized medical condition that can cause profound psychological suffering. Imagine waking up every day feeling like your body doesn't match who you know yourself to be at your core. Picture the distress of being consistently addressed by the wrong name or pronouns, or being forced to use facilities that feel fundamentally wrong for your identity.

Now ask: Would *you* want to be called a "groomer" or "deviant"? Would you want medical care withheld from you? Would *you* want to be banned from public spaces or denied employment? Or would you want compassion, understanding, and access to treatments that could ease your suffering?

The Golden Rule doesn't come with terms and conditions exempting certain groups. When Jesus said "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12), he didn't add "unless they're transgender." Or "unless you are really grossed out by them."

In fact, Jesus had a particular fondness for those society pushed to the margins.

WHEN LOVE GETS COMPLICATED: ADDRESSING THE FALSE EQUIVALENCIES

Inevitably, someone raises their hand with what they think is a gotcha question:

"If we're supposed to love everyone unconditionally, does that mean we should just let murderers and child molesters go free? Where do we draw the lines?"

This objection reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of both Christian ethics and basic moral reasoning. It's textbook false equivalency that equates transgender people—who are simply trying to exist authentically—with those who cause active harm to others.

Let's break this down with some Philosophy 101: ethical frameworks across cultures and centuries consistently distinguish between *actions that harm others* and *actions that don't*. Murder violates consent in the most absolute way possible—it removes someone's agency permanently. Child abuse exploits power imbalances and causes psychological and physical harm.

Being transgender?

It harms literally no one.

When someone starts using a new name or pronouns appropriate to their identity, they're not violating anyone else's consent or causing harm to others. They're quite simply seeking alignment between their internal identity and external expression—something that affects their own wellbeing without infringing on anyone else's rights or safety.

The comparison is not just logically flawed; it's morally offensive. It takes a group of people who already face disproportionate rates of violence, discrimination, and suicide, and lumps them in with perpetrators of violence. It's like asking, "If we welcome children (also disproportionately susceptible to abuse and violence), why not welcome serial killers?" The question itself reveals prejudice masquerading as philosophical inquiry.

LOVE AS ETHICAL FOUNDATION, NOT MORAL RELATIVISM

Unconditional Christian love isn't wishy-washy moral relativism that says "anything goes." Biblical love consistently stands against harm, oppression, and injustice. It calls out systems that crush the vulnerable and challenges attitudes that dehumanize others. In fact, love often requires us to take strong stands—against racism, against poverty, against abuse of power.

But here's what Christian love doesn't do: it doesn't create arbitrary categories of people to exclude from community. It doesn't manufacture harm where none exists. It doesn't demand that people suppress fundamental aspects of their identity to make others comfortable.

When Jesus commanded us to love our neighbors, he was establishing a radical ethic that prioritizes human dignity and wellbeing over social conventions and religious gatekeeping. He consistently chose people over policies, relationship over rules, mercy over judgment.

THE SCANDAL OF JESUS'S TABLE

Consider who Jesus actually ate with: tax collectors (economic oppressors), prostitutes (sexual minorities), Samaritans (ethnic and religious outsiders), lepers (social outcasts), women (gender outsiders in a patriarchal society), children (often considered property with no personal rights). The religious establishment consistently criticized Jesus for his expansive table fellowship.

Sound familiar?

Jesus didn't require these folks to change their identities before offering acceptance. He didn't demand that the Samaritan woman become Jewish, or that Zacchaeus change his ethnicity, or that Mary Magdalene conform to conventional gender roles. He met people where they were and loved them as they were.

Some of those folks listed above did have real issues that needed addressing. And some where simply trying to exist in a society that demonized them out of prejudice.

The early Christian movement was revolutionary precisely because it refused to make conventional social categories the basis for inclusion.

"There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus."

— **GENESIS 3:28**

Paul wasn't just talking about spiritual equality—he was dismantling the social hierarchies that determined who got to be fully human.

PRACTICAL LOVE IN REAL TIME

So what does this look like practically? It means using people's correct names and pronouns—because names matter to God (just ask Simon Peter or Abraham or Israel). It means supporting policies that protect transgender people from discrimination, because justice is a Christian value. It means listening to transgender people's own stories about their experiences rather than theorizing about them from a distance.

It means recognizing that when we reduce suicide rates among transgender youth through family acceptance and community support, we're doing the work of the kingdom. When we stand against legislation that targets transgender people for simply existing, we're following in the footsteps of a Savior who consistently stood with the marginalized against the powerful.

Most of all, it means starting every conversation about transgender people with the assumption that they, like all humans, bear the image of God and deserve to be treated with dignity, respect, and love. Not because they've earned it or because we approve of their "lifestyle," but because they exist.

That's not moral relativism. That's not theological liberalism. That's basic Christianity—the kind Jesus modeled when he consistently chose love over law, mercy over judgment, and inclusion over exclusion.

The foundation is simple: love your neighbor. The application requires courage: loving neighbors whom society teaches us to fear, misunderstand, or exclude. But if we can't manage basic human dignity for transgender people—who harm no one by existing authentically—what does that say about our commitment to Christian love?

GENESIS AND THE BEAUTIFUL SPECTRUM OF CREATION



"So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

- GENESIS 1:27

his verse gets weaponized in debates about gender, but let's look closer—and more honestly—at what we're actually doing when we cite ancient texts to address modern questions.

THE HERMENEUTICAL HONESTY CHECK

First, let's acknowledge that using Genesis as a scientific manual for gender diversity is, frankly, foolhardy. The ancient Hebrew authors just weren't asking the same questions we're wrestling with today. They weren't conducting peer-reviewed studies on gender identity or mapping chromosomal variations. They were crafting **theological poetry** about God's relationship with creation, not writing a comprehensive guide to human sexuality and gender expression.

When we cherry-pick Genesis 1:27 to make definitive statements about transgender people, we're committing the same hermeneutical mistake as those who insist the earth was made in seven days. We're forcing an ancient text to answer questions it was never designed to address.

Consider this parallel: Genesis tells us about Cain and Abel—two sons. If we applied the same logic used against transgender people, we'd have to conclude that all families must have exactly two children, both sons, with the older one becoming a farmer and the younger a shepherd. After all, this is the biblical pattern for families, right?

Obviously, that's ridiculous. We understand that Cain and Abel represent archetypal roles in a theological narrative, not a mandate for family planning.

So why do we suddenly become biblical literalists when it comes to "male and female" while remaining perfectly comfortable with metaphorical interpretation everywhere else?

WHAT GENESIS ACTUALLY ACCOMPLISHES

Here's what Genesis 1:27 does beautifully accomplish: it establishes that all humans—regardless of how they express gender—bear God's image. Full stop. Not "only cisgender humans" or "only those whose gender identity matches their assigned sex at birth." The *imago Dei* doesn't come with terms and conditions, exclusions, or fine print.

The text is making a radical theological claim: humans are different from animals not because of their gender expressions but because they bear divine image. This was revolutionary in the ancient Near East, where other creation stories often depicted humans as afterthoughts or accidents. Genesis declares every human inherently sacred—a truth that should make us pause before excluding anyone from full community participation.

THE SPECTRUM OF CREATION'S BEAUTY

That said, there's something profound to notice about how Genesis presents creation itself. Biblical scholars have long recognized that Genesis 1 uses a literary device called **merism**— employing opposites to describe a totality. When God creates "day and night," we understand that dusk and dawn exist too. When God separates "the waters from the dry land," we know about beaches, marshes, and wetlands. The text presents creation as a vibrant spectrum, not a rigid binary.

Think about it: Would you tell someone born at twilight that they don't exist because Genesis only mentions day and night? Of course not. So why do we insist that "male and female" excludes anyone who doesn't fit neatly into those categories?

Creation itself reveals God's love for diversity and complexity. We have thousands of bird species, not just "day birds" and "night birds." We have countless flower varieties, not just "red flowers" and "blue flowers." Even biological sex exists on a spectrum—intersex conditions occur in roughly 1 in 2,000 births, meaning millions of people worldwide don't fit simple male/female categories at the chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical level.

THE RABBINIC IMAGINATION

Speaking of hermeneutical consistency, let's explore how Jewish tradition has actually interpreted these texts. Ancient rabbis weren't nearly as binary-obsessed as some modern Christians. The Talmud recognizes six different gender categories, and rabbinic literature includes fascinating speculation about the first human in Genesis 2.

Some rabbinic traditions suggest that the original *adam* was androgynous—containing both male and female characteristics before being separated into distinct beings. If we *wanted* to play

the "original design" game (which, let's be clear, we don't), we *could* argue that androgyny represents God's perfect intention for humanity, and binary gender is actually the result of divine surgery gone awry.

But that would be just as problematic as current "biblical gender" arguments, wouldn't it? It demonstrates how easily we can manipulate ancient texts to support whatever position we've already decided to take. The rabbis weren't trying to settle modern debates about transgender identity—they were exploring theological mysteries through creative interpretation.

THE DANGER OF PROOF-TEXTING

Here's the truth: every time we use Genesis to make absolute claims about gender, we're essentially time-traveling—imposing 21st-century questions onto Bronze Age texts and expecting definitive answers. It's like asking Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to resolve debates about artificial intelligence, or consulting the *Iliad* for guidance on space exploration.

This does *not* mean Genesis is irrelevant to contemporary discussions. It means we need to ask better questions: What does this text reveal about God's character? How does it shape our understanding of human dignity? What does it teach us about our responsibility to creation and each other?

When we approach Genesis this way, we discover themes that actually support transgender affirmation: the inherent worth of all humans, the beauty of diversity in creation, God's creative power that transcends our categories, and the danger of using religious authority to exclude people from community.

THE SPECTRUM AS DIVINE DESIGN

Perhaps most importantly, the spectrum of creation isn't an accident or deviation—it's part of the beauty and intentionality of God's design. From quantum mechanics to ecosystems, from neurological diversity to sexual orientation, creation reveals a God who delights in complexity, nuance, and variety.

In this light, transgender people aren't anomalies to be explained away or problems to be solved. They're part of the gorgeous diversity that characterizes all of God's creation. Just as we celebrate left-handed people, introverts, and those with different learning styles as reflecting divine creativity, we can celebrate gender diversity as another expression of the infinite imagination of our Creator.

The question isn't whether transgender people fit into Genesis—it's whether our interpretation of Genesis is big enough to honor the full spectrum of human experience that God has actually created. When we insist on rigid binaries that exclude real people, we're not defending Scripture; we're impoverishing it.

Genesis calls us to see the *imago Dei* in every person we meet. When we do that—really do that—the question stops being "Does God make transgender people?" and becomes "How can we better love and support the transgender people God has made?"

That's a much more faithful question, and it leads to much more faithful answers.

UNTANGLING SEX, GENDER, AND CULTURAL BAGGAGE



ere's where things get fascinating (and where your conservative relatives might need to sit down): gender is largely a social construct.

Wait, don't close the book or swipe away! Hear me out.

When we say gender is constructed, we're not saying biological sex doesn't exist. We're pointing out that the *meanings* we attach to sex—that boys should like trucks and girls should like dolls, that men wear pants and women wear dresses—are cultural, not biological.

THE SCIENCE ON SEX: IT'S COMPLICATED

Let's start with what science actually tells us about biological sex, because it turns out even that's more complex than your high school biology textbook suggested.

According to research published in *Scientific American*, the simple "XX = female, XY = male" formula that most of us learned is woefully inadequate for describing the full spectrum of human biology.

Biologists now recognize that sex exists on a spectrum. Some researchers estimate that as many as 1 in 100 people have some form of difference in sex development (DSD)—meaning their chromosomes, hormones, or anatomy don't align in the textbook way we expect. There are people with XY chromosomes who develop typically female characteristics due to hormone insensitivity. There are XX individuals who develop along male lines because of genetic variations. Some people are born with both ovarian and testicular tissue.

Even more mind-bending: scientists have discovered that **sex determination is an ongoing biological process, not a one-time event.** Studies in mice show that gonads have to actively maintain their sexual identity throughout life—meaning the biological "decision" between male and female requires constant molecular maintenance.

This isn't fringe science or ideological wishful thinking. These findings come from geneticists, endocrinologists, and developmental biologists at major research institutions. The medical consensus is clear: biological sex is far more complex and varied than the binary categories we use for social convenience.

THE CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

Now, if biological sex itself exists on a spectrum, gender—the social meanings we attach to biological differences—is even more obviously constructed. There's no gene that makes boys prefer blue. No chromosome that requires women to have long hair. These are social conventions that vary wildly across cultures and throughout history.

Consider the fascinating case of pink and blue, those supposedly "natural" gender markers that many people assume have always existed. According to research by historian Jo Paoletti documented in *Smithsonian Magazine*, the current color coding is

barely a century old. In 1918, a trade publication declared: "The generally accepted rule is pink for the boy and blue for the girl. The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl."

That's right—pink was considered the masculine color because it was closer to red, associated with passion and aggression. Blue was deemed feminine because it was seen as delicate and dainty. Even as late as 1927, major department stores like Filene's and Marshall Field's were telling parents to dress boys in pink.

The current blue-for-boys, pink-for-girls convention only solidified around the 1950s, driven largely by post-war marketing and the rise of consumer culture. What we now consider "natural" gender expression is actually the result of mid-20th-century advertising campaigns.

HISTORICAL GENDER-BENDING: A CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Speaking of historical perspective, let's talk about clothing. Scottish men in kilts? Ancient Roman men in togas? Jesus himself in what would look to modern eyes like a dress? All following the gender norms of their time and place.

Until the early 1900s, all children—regardless of sex—wore dresses until about age 6 or 7. There's a famous photograph of future president Franklin D. Roosevelt as a toddler in 1884, wearing a white dress with shoulder-length hair and patent leather shoes. This wasn't unusual or controversial—it was standard practice for both boys and girls.

The shift to gender-specific clothing for children didn't happen until the 1920s, and even then it took decades to become universal. The Smithsonian notes that gender-neutral clothing made a major comeback during the feminist movement of the 1960s and

70s, when parents deliberately chose unisex styles to avoid limiting their children's options.

Ironically, Christians who insist that "men shouldn't wear dresses" are the ones following "the ways of the world"—elevating temporary cultural preferences to the level of divine law. It's like claiming God ordained that real men only eat bacon because that's what American masculinity looks like in 2025.

THE GLOBAL GENDER BUFFET

If gender roles were truly biological imperatives, wouldn't they be consistent across all cultures? Instead, we find enormous variation in how different societies organize gender.

In Thailand, *kathoey* (sometimes called "ladyboys") represent a widely recognized third gender category. In India, *hijras* have been part of the cultural landscape for centuries, often serving important religious functions. Some Indigenous American tribes recognized "Two-Spirit" people who embodied both masculine and feminine qualities and were often considered spiritually gifted.

Albania has a tradition called *burrnesha*—women who take on male social roles, dress as men, and are accepted as men in their communities. In the Cook Islands, *akava'ine* are people assigned male at birth who express feminine gender roles. The list goes on and on.

These aren't modern inventions or Western imports—many of these traditions predate Christianity itself. If God only intended two rigid gender categories, why would divine image-bearers across cultures and centuries consistently develop more complex and nuanced systems?

THE SCIENCE ON GENDER IDENTITY

Modern neuroscience and psychology add another layer to our understanding. Gender identity—a person's internal sense of being male, female, both, or neither—appears to develop early in life and remain relatively stable. Brain imaging studies suggest that transgender individuals' brains often show patterns more similar to their experienced gender than their assigned sex at birth.

This isn't about "choosing" to be transgender any more than someone chooses to be left-handed or naturally introverted. Gender identity seems to be a fundamental aspect of human neurodevelopment, influenced by complex interactions between genetics, hormones, and brain development during gestation.

As we'll talk about later, the major medical and psychological organizations—the American Medical Association, American Psychiatric Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, and others—recognize gender dysphoria as a legitimate medical condition and support appropriate treatment. This represents the consensus of thousands of healthcare professionals based on decades of research and clinical experience.

THE CULTURAL BAGGAGE PROBLEM

Much of what we call "biblical gender roles" is actually cultural baggage from specific times and places, dressed up in theological language.

When someone insists that women must wear dresses and have long hair because that's "God's design," they're not defending eternal truths—they're defending 1950s American fashion preferences. When they argue that men must be the "head of household" while women stay home with children, they're not upholding biblical principles—they're sacramentalizing post-

industrial economic arrangements that didn't exist for most of human history.

The early church included prominent women leaders like Phoebe (called a "deacon" in Romans 16), Priscilla (who taught theology to Apollos), and Junia (whom Paul called "prominent among the apostles"). Women prophesied in public (1 Corinthians 11:5), led house churches, and funded missionary work. The rigid gender hierarchies that many Christians assume are "biblical" would have been foreign to the early Christian movement.

DISTINGUISHING BIOLOGY FROM IDEOLOGY

None of this means that biological differences between males and females don't exist or don't matter. On average, males and females differ in height, muscle mass, bone density, and various other physical characteristics. Hormones like testosterone and estrogen have real effects on development and behavior.

But here's the crucial distinction that statistics classes teach but culture often forgets: the variation within each gender far exceeds the average differences between genders. Yes, men are on average taller than women—but the tallest women are taller than most men. Yes, men on average have more muscle mass—but the strongest women are stronger than the average man. The fastest women runners outpace the vast majority of male runners.

In other words, knowing someone's gender tells you very little about their individual capabilities, interests, or characteristics. There's more difference between the strongest and weakest man than there is between the average man and average woman. The same applies to virtually every trait where we see gender differences—intelligence, empathy, spatial reasoning, verbal skills, you name it.

This renders gender-based assumptions not just unfair but factually unreliable. Acknowledging biological differences

doesn't require enforcing rigid social categories any more than acknowledging that basketball players are typically tall means we should ban short people from the sport. We don't insist that all tall people must play basketball or that all people with high testosterone must become soldiers. We recognize individual variation within broader patterns.

(In fact, there's plenty of research showing that women were forced out of athletics in the early 20th century because they were competing *too well* against men).

Similarly, recognizing that most people fall roughly into male or female categories doesn't mean we should force everyone into those boxes or deny care to those who don't fit neatly. The existence of biological trends doesn't justify social rigidity.

THE GOSPEL CHALLENGE TO GENDER POLICING

Here's what should challenge Christians: Jesus consistently subverted the cultural gender expectations of his time.

- He included women in his inner circle when rabbis didn't teach women.
- He praised Mary for choosing to learn theology instead of doing traditional women's work (Luke 10:38-42).
- He appeared first to women after his resurrection, making them the first evangelists in a culture that didn't accept women's legal testimony.

Paul declared that in Christ "there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female" (Galatians 3:28). This wasn't just about spiritual equality—it was a radical reimagining of social categories that had previously defined people's entire lives.

When we police gender expression more strictly than Jesus did, when we exclude people for not conforming to

cultural expectations that Jesus himself challenged, we're not defending the gospel—we're defending the very systems of social control that the gospel came to dismantle.

The question isn't whether gender differences exist—they obviously do. The question is whether we'll use those differences to build walls or bridges, to exclude or include, to control or liberate. And on that question, Jesus's example is crystal clear: he consistently chose inclusion, liberation, and love over the gender policing of his day.

That same spirit should guide our approach to transgender people today. Not because science and culture demand it, but because the gospel does.

WHAT SCRIPTURE ACTUALLY SAYS (SPOILER: LESS THAN YOU THINK)



et's address the elephant in the room: those "clobber verses" people use against transgender individuals.

They're fewer and weaker than you might expect.

DEUTERONOMY 22:5: THE CROSS-DRESSING CLAUSE

"A woman shall not wear a man's apparel, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for whoever does such things is abhorrent to the Lord your God."

Deuteronomy 22:5 prohibits wearing clothing of the "opposite" gender. But biblical scholars largely agree this prohibition likely addressed specific practices in ancient warfare or pagan worship, not everyday gender expression. Some scholars suggest it was meant to prevent deception in military contexts, where disguising one's identity could be tactically dangerous or dishonest.

Moreover, if we're taking Deuteronomy literally, hope you're not wearing mixed fabrics (Deuteronomy 22:11) or eating shrimp

(Deuteronomy 14:10). You probably shouldn't build a house without a parapet on the roof (Deuteronomy 22:8), and if you're a man, you better not be clean-shaven since trimming your beard is prohibited (Leviticus 19:27).

The inconsistency is staggering. The same people who cite Deuteronomy against transgender individuals cheerfully ignore verses about divorce, interest on loans, or dietary restrictions. They'll quote this verse while wearing cotton-polyester blends and eating bacon-wrapped shrimp. You can't cherry-pick which Old Testament laws to enforce based on modern prejudices and call it "biblical."

1 CORINTHIANS 11: HAIR LENGTH AND HEAD COVERINGS

"Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory?"

But this passage is about head coverings during worship, not gender identity. Paul is addressing specific cultural practices in first-century Corinth, where elaborate hairstyles and head coverings signaled social status and religious devotion. The "nature" Paul references isn't biological law but cultural convention—what seemed "natural" in his specific context.

If we applied this literally today, every long-haired man would be sinning. That would include most artistic depictions of Jesus himself, along with countless male musicians, athletes, and professionals. Orthodox Jewish men grow long sidelocks. Sikh men never cut their hair as a religious practice. Are we really going to declare all of them spiritually deficient based on a passage about first-century Corinthian worship etiquette?

1 TIMOTHY 2: WOMEN AND TEACHING

1 Timothy 2:12 says "I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet." Some extend this to argue for rigid gender roles that transgender people supposedly violate.

But context matters enormously here. Paul is addressing specific problems in the Ephesian church, where poorly educated women were apparently disrupting worship with questions and false teaching. This wasn't a universal prohibition on women's leadership—after all, Paul collaborated with numerous women leaders throughout his ministry.

Moreover, if we're enforcing this literally, then every female pastor, teacher, CEO, judge, or political leader is violating Scripture. Every woman who's ever spoken up in a church meeting or Bible study is in sin. Every mother who's taught her teenage son is overstepping biblical boundaries. Most Christians recognize this as cultural context, not eternal mandate.

ROMANS 1: THE "HOMOSEXUALITY" PASSAGE

While **Romans 1:26-27** discusses same-sex behavior, not transgender identity, it's often misapplied to transgender people. Paul describes people "exchanging natural sexual relations for unnatural ones."

But Paul is discussing pagan temple prostitution and the broader context of idolatry—people who "exchanged the truth about God for a lie" and worshiped created things rather than the Creator. He's not providing a systematic theology of sexuality or gender identity. He's describing the spiritual and moral corruption that flows from rejecting God entirely.

Furthermore, Paul uses the word "para physin" (against nature), the same phrase he uses in Romans 11:24 to describe God

grafting Gentiles into the covenant—a good thing that goes "against nature." Clearly, "natural" and "unnatural" don't automatically mean "good" and "evil" in Paul's usage.

Most importantly, transgender identity isn't about sexual behavior at all. Being transgender is about gender identity—one's internal sense of being male, female, both, or neither. Many transgender people are celibate, married, or in committed relationships that don't involve the behaviors Paul describes.

THE SODOM AND GOMORRAH RED HERRING

Some people invoke **Genesis 19** (Sodom and Gomorrah) as evidence against LGBTQ+ people generally, including transgender individuals. But biblical scholars across denominational lines agree that Sodom's sin was not homosexuality but rather violent inhospitality and attempted rape.

Ezekiel 16:49 explicitly identifies Sodom's sins: "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy." Jesus himself references Sodom in the context of hospitality, not sexuality (Matthew 10:14-15, Luke 10:10-12).

The men of Sodom wanted to gang-rape visitors, an act of violence and dominance that has nothing to do with loving relationships or gender identity. Using this passage to condemn transgender people is like using a story about murder to condemn people who own kitchen knives.

LEVITICUS: THE HOLINESS CODE CONUNDRUM

Leviticus 18:22 and **20:13** prohibit male same-sex behavior, though again, these don't directly address transgender identity. But let's examine what's happening here.

These verses appear in the Holiness Code, which includes prohibitions on wearing mixed fabrics (19:19), eating shellfish (11:9-12), getting tattoos (19:28), and planting different crops in the same field (19:19). It also permits slavery (25:44-46) and requires animal sacrifices for various offenses.

If someone wants to enforce Leviticus against transgender people, consistency demands they follow all of it. No more cotton-polyester shirts, shrimp cocktails, or bacon cheeseburgers. No tattoos, no polyculture farming, and definitely no charging interest on loans (25:35-37).

The early church wrestled extensively with which Old Testament laws applied to Gentile Christians, ultimately concluding that the ceremonial and civil laws were fulfilled in Christ. That's why Christians can eat pork, work on Sabbath, and ignore most of Leviticus—except, apparently, when it's convenient for modern prejudices.

MATTHEW 19: "GOD MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE"

Matthew 19:3-6 includes Jesus's statement "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?" This gets weaponized against transgender people, but Jesus is discussing divorce, not gender identity.

The Pharisees asked about divorce law, and Jesus responded by emphasizing the sanctity of marriage commitment. He's not providing a comprehensive theology of gender or sexuality—he's saying "Don't treat marriage lightly."

Using this passage to condemn transgender people is like using a conversation about speed limits to ban all automobiles. Jesus is addressing the specific question asked, not providing an exhaustive treatise on human sexuality.

THE DOG THAT DOESN'T BARK

Here's what's most striking about the biblical case against transgender people: how thin it actually is. For something that supposedly violates God's fundamental design for humanity, Scripture has remarkably little to say about it.

Jesus never mentions transgender people. Paul never discusses gender identity. The Hebrew Bible doesn't address the medical or psychological realities we now understand about gender dysphoria. If this were truly a central biblical concern, wouldn't it warrant more explicit attention?

Instead, we have a few verses about clothing, hair length, and sexual behavior that require increasingly creative interpretation to apply to modern transgender experience. Meanwhile, Scripture has volumes to say about justice, compassion, caring for the marginalized, and not judging others.

WHAT SCRIPTURE EMPHASIZES INSTEAD

While scrambling to find verses against transgender people, we often miss what Scripture actually emphasizes:

- Love your neighbor as yourself appears in some form over 100 times
- Care for the stranger, orphan, and outcast is mentioned more than 300 times
- **Do not judge** appears repeatedly throughout the New Testament
- God shows no partiality is a consistent biblical theme
- The Spirit gives gifts to all people regardless of social categories

If we spent as much energy following these clear biblical commands as we do hunting for obscure verses to exclude people, the church would look radically different.

THE HERMENEUTICAL HONESTY CHECK

Most "biblical" arguments against transgender people rely on proof-texting—yanking verses out of context to support predetermined conclusions. They demand wooden literalism for verses about clothing while embracing metaphorical interpretation for everything else.

Good biblical interpretation asks: What was the author's intent? What did this mean to the original audience? How does this fit with Scripture's broader themes? What's the cultural context? When we apply these principles honestly, the case against transgender people crumbles.

Scripture doesn't provide a systematic theology of gender identity because the authors weren't addressing our questions. They lived in different cultures with different understandings of sex, gender, and human psychology. Forcing ancient texts to answer modern questions often produces bad theology and harmful conclusions.

The biblical silence on transgender experience should humble us, not embolden us to fill the gaps with our own prejudices. When Scripture doesn't clearly address an issue, wisdom suggests we default to the principles it does emphasize: love, justice, compassion, and inclusion.

On those grounds, the biblical case for affirming transgender people is much stronger than the case against them.

SCRIPTURE'S GENDER-BENDING SAINTS



ere's something your Sunday School probably skipped: the Bible is full of people who don't fit neat gender categories. Far from being hostile to gender diversity, Scripture actually celebrates some of its most compelling characters precisely because they defied conventional expectations.

JOSEPH: THE BIBLE'S MOST FABULOUS CHARACTER

Take Joseph, he of the technicolor dreamcoat. Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg's brilliant midrashic analysis reveals layers of gender complexity that most English translations obscure. The Hebrew text uses terms suggesting he was what we might today call gender non-conforming, and rabbinic tradition has been fascinated by this for centuries.

First, there's the famous coat itself. The Hebrew phrase k'tonet passim appears in only one other place in Scripture—describing Princess Tamar's garment in 2 Samuel 13:18, explicitly identified as clothing worn by "maiden princesses." So Jacob gave Joseph what was essentially a princess dress, and Joseph wore it gladly.

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The Talmud notes that at seventeen, Joseph still behaved "like a youth," which puzzled ancient rabbis since seventeen was well into adulthood. Their explanation? "He behaved like a boy—penciling his eyes, lifting his heels, and curling his hair" (Genesis Rabbah 84:7). In other words, Joseph was *fabulous*—wearing makeup, styling his hair, and apparently rocking some impressive footwear.

Even more fascinating: Joseph is described using the exact same Hebrew words used for beautiful women. When Genesis 39:6 says Joseph was "well built and handsome," the Hebrew uses *yafeh-to'ar v'yafeh mar'eh*—the identical phrasing used to describe Rachel's beauty. Joseph is described in traditionally feminine terms.

Some rabbinic traditions even suggest that Joseph and his sister Dinah switched genders in utero, explaining why Dinah would later engage in "non-gender appropriate activities like leaving the house" while Joseph displayed such gender-variant characteristics. Whether you take this literally or metaphorically, it shows how ancient Jewish interpreters understood these characters as transcending simple gender categories.

Joseph's story becomes even more compelling when we consider the parallels to modern LGBTQ+ experience: rejected by family, kicked out, sent to prison for sexual crimes he did not commit, succeeding despite society's attempts to bring them down, and ultimately reconciling with family who finally realize he always had something valuable to offer.

THE EUNUCH TRADITION: BODIES THAT DON'T FIT BOXES

Then there are eunuchs—people who didn't fit standard categories of male or female. These aren't background characters; they play crucial roles throughout Scripture. Jesus himself acknowl-

edged their existence without condemnation, noting that "there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:12).

Let that sink in: Jesus recognized that some people are born with bodies that don't fit typical categories (what we'd now call intersex individuals), some have their bodies altered by others, and some choose body modification for spiritual reasons. Not exactly a ringing endorsement of the ugly-side of "God doesn't make mistakes" theology, is it?

The Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 provides another powerful example. This high-ranking official was reading Isaiah when Philip approached him. When he asked, "What prevents me from being baptized?" **Philip's answer was revolutionary: Nothing.**Nothing prevents you. No bodily difference, no gender variance, no social marginalization can separate you from God's love and community.

This is particularly radical given that Deuteronomy 23:1 excludes eunuchs from the assembly of the Lord. Yet here we see the gospel explicitly overturning that exclusion, declaring that the kingdom of God has room for bodies and identities that don't fit conventional categories.

Isaiah 56:3-5 had already begun this reversal, promising eunuchs "a monument and a name better than sons and daughters" and "an everlasting name that will endure forever." By the time we reach the New Testament, eunuchs aren't just included—they're among the first gentile converts, suggesting that gender-variant people have a special place in God's expanding kingdom.

THE EUNUCHS OF ESTHER: POWER BEYOND GENDER

The book of Esther features several eunuchs in positions of significant power and influence in the Persian court. These aren't marginal figures—they're key players in the royal administration. Hegai, a eunuch, is put in charge of the king's harem and plays a crucial role in Esther's rise to queen (Esther 2:3, 8).

Most significantly, these eunuchs aren't portrayed as lesser or deficient because of their gender status. They hold positions of trust, authority, and access to the king himself. In a culture where masculinity was often tied to reproductive capability and traditional gender roles, these individuals transcended those categories to achieve remarkable influence.

The casual way Scripture presents these eunuchs in leadership roles suggests that gender-variant people holding power wasn't seen as problematic or noteworthy—it was simply part of how God's people navigated complex political situations. If eunuchs could be trusted with royal administration and the safety of the Jewish people, what does that say about rigid gender requirements for leadership?

THE INCLUSIVE VISION OF GALATIANS

It bears repeating: Paul's declaration that "there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female" in Christ (Galatians 3:28) isn't just about spiritual equality. It's a radical reimagining of the social categories that defined ancient life. If ethnic, economic, and gender distinctions are transcended in Christ, then rigid gender roles and binary thinking are precisely what the gospel comes to dismantle.

This vision aligns perfectly with Isaiah's prophecy about eunuchs receiving "an everlasting name" and foreigners being welcomed

into God's house. The arc of Scripture bends toward inclusion, particularly for those who don't fit conventional categories.

WHAT THESE STORIES TELL US

These aren't isolated anomalies or exceptions that somehow prove the rule. They're central biblical narratives featuring people whose gender expression, relationships, or life choices transcended the conventions of their time. More importantly, these characters are consistently portrayed as blessed, chosen, and used by God for crucial purposes.

If Scripture truly demanded rigid gender conformity, wouldn't these stories be cautionary tales rather than celebration narratives? Instead, we find the opposite: God consistently chooses and blesses people who defy gender expectations, suggesting that diversity and authenticity are features, not bugs, of divine creation.

THE PATTERN OF DIVINE PREFERENCE

There's actually a clear biblical pattern here: God repeatedly chooses younger siblings over older ones (Jacob over Esau, David over his brothers), outsiders over insiders (Ruth the Moabite, Rahab the prostitute), and those who don't fit conventional expectations over those who do.

This "divine preferential option for the unexpected" extends to gender-variant people throughout Scripture. Rather than conforming to human categories, God seems to delight in transcending them, using precisely those people whom society might marginalize to accomplish the most important work.

For contemporary Christians grappling with transgender affirmation, this pattern should be instructive. If God has consistently

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chosen gender-nonconforming people for crucial roles throughout biblical history, maybe our task isn't to enforce conformity but to recognize and celebrate the gifts that gender-diverse people bring to the community of faith.

After all, if Scripture's gender-bending saints are good enough for God's redemptive purposes, shouldn't they be good enough for our churches too?

MODERN MEDICINE AND ANCIENT WISDOM



et's talk facts: Every major medical and psychological organization—the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics—recognizes gender dysphoria as a real condition and supports appropriate treatment, including hormone therapy and surgery when indicated.

This isn't "mutilating God's creation" any more than getting glasses, having a tumor removed, or taking insulin for diabetes. We routinely use medical intervention to address mismatches between how our bodies are and how they need to be for our wellbeing. Why should gender dysphoria be different?

THE MEDICAL CONSENSUS IS CLEAR

The American Medical Association, representing over 240,000 physicians, explicitly supports gender-affirming care and opposes the use of so-called "conversion therapy" for transgender individuals. Their position is unambiguous:

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"The AMA supports public and private health insurance coverage for treatment of gender dysphoria and opposes the denial of health insurance based on sexual orientation or gender identity."

The AMA recognizes that gender-affirming care "has been linked to dramatically reduced rates of suicide attempts, decreased rates of depression and anxiety, decreased substance use, improved HIV medication adherence and reduced rates of harmful self-prescribed hormone use." In other words, this medical care saves lives.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, representing 67,000 pediatricians, is equally clear in their 2018 policy statement (reaffirmed in 2023):

"The AAP works toward all children and adolescents, regardless of gender identity or expression, receiving care to promote optimal physical, mental, and social well-being."

Their research shows that "children who identify as transgender and socially affirm and are supported in their asserted gender show no increase in depression and only minimal (clinically insignificant) increases in anxiety compared with age-matched averages." Meanwhile, family rejection dramatically increases suicide risk—with suicide attempt rates climbing from 4% among transgender youth with strongly supportive parents to as high as 60% among those whose parents aren't supportive.

WHAT GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

The "protect the children" rhetoric falls apart under scrutiny. Gender-affirming care for minors is heavily regulated, following strict guidelines developed by medical professionals based on decades of research and clinical experience.

For young children, "gender-affirming care" typically means social affirmation—using chosen names and pronouns, allowing gender-appropriate clothing and hairstyles. This is completely reversible and, according to research, significantly improves mental health outcomes.

For adolescents experiencing puberty, treatment might include puberty blockers—medications that have been used safely since the 1980s to treat precocious puberty. These are reversible interventions that simply pause puberty to give young people and their families time to make informed decisions. As the AAP notes, "If pubertal suppression treatment is suspended, then endogenous puberty will resume."

Cross-sex hormones are typically not considered until mid-to-late adolescence, and surgical interventions are rarely pursued before adulthood. The claim that doctors are performing genital surgeries on young children is simply false—it's a manufactured moral panic designed to generate outrage, not reflect medical reality.

THE STRAWMAN OF "MUTILATING GOD'S CREATION"

When Christians claim that gender-affirming medical care constitutes "mutilating God's creation," they reveal a profound inconsistency in their theology of medicine. Do they refuse chemotherapy for cancer patients? Do they oppose cochlear implants for deaf children? Do they condemn corrective surgery for cleft palates or heart defects?

We routinely use medical intervention to address mismatches between how our bodies are and how they need to be for our wellbeing. Type 1 diabetics inject insulin daily—are they "mutilating God's creation" by artificially regulating their blood sugar? People

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with poor vision wear glasses or undergo LASIK surgery—are they rejecting God's design for their eyes?

The "God doesn't make mistakes" theology is both bad medicine and bad theology. It assumes that every aspect of our current physical state represents God's perfect will, which would mean treating any medical condition constitutes rebellion against divine design. This leads to absurd conclusions: cancer must be God's will, so chemotherapy is ungodly. Depression must be part of God's plan, so antidepressants are sinful.

Most Christians recognize this logic as nonsensical when applied to other medical conditions. Why should gender dysphoria be different?

(I should note that there are also folks in the transgender community who do not see medical intervention as "removing a disfunction of their body," but rather as an expression of creativity and self-determination. But this might be difficult for someone opposed to gender-affirming care to accept).

THE REALITY OF MEDICAL STANDARDS

Gender-affirming care follows rigorous medical protocols developed by organizations like the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) and the Endocrine Society. These aren't ideological organizations—they're professional medical societies focused on evidence-based treatment.

The AAP's guidelines require comprehensive assessment involving "the patient and family, may include the pediatric provider, a mental health provider (preferably with expertise in caring for youth who identify as TGD), social and legal supports, and a pediatric endocrinologist or adolescent-medicine gender specialist, if available."

Nobody's handing out hormones "willy-nilly" or performing irreversible surgeries on confused children. The process involves extensive counseling, family involvement, mental health support, and careful medical monitoring. The goal is always the wellbeing of the child, not advancing any ideological agenda.

ANCIENT WISDOM ABOUT HEALING

Ironically, opposition to gender-affirming care contradicts some of Christianity's oldest and most treasured traditions about healing. The traditional Christian understanding sees medicine as a way of participating in God's healing work in the world. When we help people align their bodies with their authentic selves, when we relieve suffering and promote flourishing, we're continuing Jesus's healing ministry.

THE FALSE WITNESS PROBLEM

When Christians spread misinformation about transgender healthcare, they're bearing false witness—breaking one of the Ten Commandments. The claims that doctors are "grooming" children, that gender-affirming care is "experimental," or that medical professionals are pushing ideology over evidence are demonstrably false.

The American Medical Association and American Academy of Pediatrics don't take political positions—they follow the research. When they support gender-affirming care, it's because decades of clinical experience and peer-reviewed studies demonstrate its effectiveness. When they oppose "conversion therapy," it's because the evidence shows it doesn't work and causes immense harm.

Surely honesty matters more than maintaining prejudice? If we claim to follow Jesus—who called himself "the truth"—shouldn't we be committed to truthful representation of medical facts, even when those facts challenge our preconceptions?

THE LIFE-SAVING EVIDENCE

The research on gender-affirming care is overwhelming: it saves lives. A 2022 study published in *JAMA Pediatrics* found that access to gender-affirming care was associated with a 60% reduction in moderate to severe depression and a 73% reduction in suicidality among transgender youth.

The AAP notes that "among 433 adolescents in Ontario who identified as 'trans,' suicide attempt rates were 4% among those with strongly supportive parents and as high as 60% among those whose parents were not supportive." Family acceptance literally means the difference between life and death.

When medical organizations support gender-affirming care, they're not promoting an ideology—they're trying to keep children alive. When they oppose "conversion therapy," it's because research shows it increases suicide risk rather than reducing it.

THE THEOLOGICAL BOTTOM LINE

Here's what faithful Christians need to understand: opposing evidence-based medical care for transgender youth isn't "defending biblical values"—it's contributing to preventable suffering and death. When we make it harder for transgender young people to access appropriate care, when we shame their families for seeking help, when we spread medical misinformation in the name of faith, we become complicit in harm.

The medical consensus supporting gender-affirming care isn't based on cultural trends or political correctness—it's grounded in rigorous research and clinical experience. These aren't ideological activists; they're healthcare professionals who've dedicated their careers to helping children thrive.

If we trust medical professionals to treat cancer, diabetes, and depression, why wouldn't we trust them to treat gender dysphoria? If we believe God works through doctors to heal other conditions, why would gender-related care be different?

The ancient Christian commitment to healing and the modern medical consensus on gender-affirming care point in the same direction: toward compassionate, evidence-based treatment that reduces suffering and promotes human flourishing. That sounds like exactly the kind of work Jesus would support.

When we choose medical misinformation over medical science, when we prioritize cultural prejudices over children's wellbeing, when we let ideology override evidence, we're not defending the faith—we're abandoning it. The Jesus who healed the sick and welcomed the marginalized calls us to something better: to love our transgender neighbors as ourselves, and to support the medical care that helps them thrive.

After all, if gender-affirming care saves lives—and the evidence overwhelmingly shows that it does—how is opposing it anything other than a fundamental betrayal of Christian values?

THE INCONSISTENCY PROBLEM: A Q&A GUIDE TO COMMON OBJECTIONS



he arguments against transgender affirmation collapse under their own contradictions. Here are the most common objections you'll hear, along with responses that reveal the logical inconsistencies:

"WE SHOULDN'T ALTER GOD'S CREATION!"

Wait, do you wear glasses? Take medication? Have you ever had surgery? Dental work? Used a wheelchair or crutches? Congratulations, you've "altered God's creation."

What about... cochlear implants for deaf children? Insulin for diabetics? Chemotherapy for cancer patients? Heart surgery for congenital defects? Are all of these ungodly interventions in divine design?

The real question is: Why is treating gender dysphoria different from treating any other medical condition that causes distress? If God works through doctors to heal broken bones, why wouldn't God work through doctors to address the profound disconnect between someone's brain and body?

Bottom line: Either all medical intervention is "altering God's creation" (which would shut down every hospital), or medical care—including gender-affirming care—can be part of God's healing work in the world.

"BIOLOGY IS DESTINY!"

Then why do we treat depression? It's often rooted in brain chemistry—pure biology. Why not tell people with clinical depression to just accept their brain's natural state?

What about cleft palates? That's biological. Should we refuse to fix them because "biology is destiny"?

How about cancer? Cancer is a completely natural biological process. If biology is destiny, shouldn't we accept tumors as God's will rather than fighting them with surgery and chemotherapy?

The real question is: Why does "biology is destiny" only apply to gender dysphoria and not to any other condition that causes human suffering?

Bottom line: We don't accept biological conditions as unchangeable when they cause distress or dysfunction. That's literally what medicine is for—helping our bodies work better and align with our wellbeing.

"GENDER ROLES ARE ORDAINED BY GOD!"

Which gender roles exactly? The ones from ancient Palestine where both men and women wore robes and men had long hair? Victorian England where "real men" wore makeup, wigs, and high heels? 1950s America where women couldn't have their own bank accounts?

Should women be silent in church as 1 Timothy suggests, or can they pray and prophesy as 1 Corinthians allows? Should men

never eat with women as some ancient cultures required, or should they follow Jesus's example of inclusive table fellowship?

What about work roles? Should we force all women to return to subsistence farming and textile production since that's what "biblical women" did? Should we prohibit men from being nurses, teachers, or stay-at-home dads because those weren't "biblical male roles"?

The real question is: If God ordained specific gender roles, why are they completely different across cultures and throughout history? Wouldn't divine commands be universal and consistent?

Bottom line: What we call "biblical gender roles" are usually just cultural preferences from specific times and places, dressed up in theological language.

"THIS IS ABOUT PROTECTING CHILDREN!"

Then why oppose medical treatments that dramatically reduce suicide rates among transgender youth? Study after study shows that family acceptance and gender-affirming care save lives.

Why support legislation that forces transgender kids to use facilities where they're more likely to be harassed or assaulted? How does that protect anyone?

Why ban books and discussions that help LGBTQ+ youth feel less alone? Information and representation reduce isolation and suicide risk—isn't that protective?

The real question is: If you really care about protecting children, wouldn't you support evidence-based interventions that reduce their risk of depression, anxiety, and suicide?

Bottom line: "Protecting children" that involves making their lives more dangerous, isolated, and hopeless isn't protection—it's harm disguised as virtue.

"THIS IS JUST A TREND/SOCIAL CONTAGION!"

What about all the historical evidence of gender-variant people throughout history? Were ancient cultures experiencing "social contagion" too?

Why do we see consistent rates of gender dysphoria across different cultures and time periods? Trends tend to be culturally specific, but transgender people exist everywhere.

If it's just social influence, why doesn't conversion therapy work? Why can't families, schools, and churches successfully convince transgender kids to be cisgender?

The real question is: If gender diversity is just a modern invention, why do we find evidence of it in virtually every human culture throughout history?

Bottom line: Increased visibility isn't the same as increased prevalence. We're not creating more transgender people—we're finally creating environments where they feel safe to be honest about who they are.

"THEY'LL REGRET IT LATER!"

What does the research actually show? Multiple studies indicate that regret rates for gender-affirming surgeries are extremely low—often less than 1%. That's lower than regret rates for many other medical procedures.

What about the alternative? The regret rate for *not* receiving gender-affirming care is much higher, often measured in suicide attempts rather than just disappointment.

Why this double standard? We don't ban other medical treatments because some people might regret them. We improve informed consent processes and support systems.

The real question is: Are you more concerned about the tiny percentage who might regret transition, or the much larger percentage who regret being denied appropriate care?

Bottom line: Perfect outcomes aren't the standard for any other medical treatment. The question is whether the benefits outweigh the risks—and for gender-affirming care, they clearly do.

"WHAT ABOUT RAPID ONSET GENDER DYSPHORIA?"

Where's the peer-reviewed research? The concept of "rapid onset gender dysphoria" comes from a flawed study that surveyed parents on anti-transgender websites—not from clinical data or patient interviews.

Why trust parents over patients? Would we diagnose depression, anxiety, or eating disorders based solely on what parents report, especially parents who are already skeptical of the condition?

What's more likely: that teenagers suddenly "catch" gender dysphoria like a virus, or that they finally feel safe enough to share feelings they've had for years?

The real question is: Why are we so eager to embrace pseudoscientific concepts that validate our prejudices while ignoring actual research conducted by medical professionals?

Bottom line: "Rapid onset gender dysphoria" isn't recognized by any major medical or psychological organization because it's not based on credible research.

"THIS VIOLATES RELIGIOUS FREEDOM!"

Whose religious freedom? What about the religious freedom of Christians who believe in affirming transgender people? What about transgender people's own religious freedom?

Are you being forced to undergo medical transition yourself? To perform these procedures? To change your own pronouns? If not, how is your religious freedom being violated?

What's the difference between this and other medical treatments you might personally disagree with? Can Catholic hospitals refuse to treat divorced people because they don't believe in divorce?

The real question is: When does your religious freedom become an excuse to deny other people's civil rights and medical care?

Bottom line: Religious freedom doesn't include the right to control other people's medical decisions or force them to live according to your theological interpretations.

"BUT WHAT ABOUT SPORTS/BATHROOMS/PRISONS?"

Why are we so obsessed with these edge cases while ignoring the daily discrimination transgender people face in employment, housing, and healthcare?

What's the actual evidence of problems? Despite decades of inclusive policies in many places, there's virtually no documented evidence of the harms people claim to fear.

Why this sudden concern for women's spaces when many of the same people opposing transgender inclusion also oppose women's equality in other areas?

The real question is: Are these genuine concerns about fairness and safety, or are they just convenient excuses to exclude transgender people from public life?

Bottom line: These complex policy questions deserve thoughtful solutions, but they shouldn't be used as pretexts to deny transgender people basic dignity and civil rights.

THE PATTERN EMERGES

Notice the pattern? Every argument against transgender affirmation either:

- Applies a standard to transgender people that we don't apply anywhere else
- Assumes things about gender, medicine, or theology that aren't actually true
- Prioritizes theoretical concerns over real human suffering
- Uses religious language to justify cultural prejudices

The inconsistencies aren't accidental—they reveal that these aren't really principled positions based on theology, science, or child welfare. They're rationalizations for discomfort with people who don't fit traditional categories.

The good news? Once you see the logical contradictions, it becomes much easier to respond with both truth and grace. You're not attacking someone's faith—you're helping them see how their current position actually contradicts their deeper values.

And sometimes, that's exactly what people need to change their minds and open their hearts.

BUILDING A THEOLOGY OF AFFIRMATION



o what does faithful Christian support for transgender people look like? How do we move beyond defensive arguments to construct a positive, life-giving theology that celebrates rather than merely tolerates gender diversity?

Queer theology offers us a roadmap. This growing field of theological reflection, pioneered by scholars like Marcella Althaus-Reid, Patrick Cheng, and Linn Marie Tonstad, doesn't just argue that LGBTQ+ people can be tolerated by Christianity—it suggests that queer experience has something essential to teach the church about God's nature and grace.

After all, Christianity itself is fundamentally queer. Here, "queer" doesn't just mean LGBTQ+—it means anything that disrupts, challenges, or transcends conventional categories and expectations. Queer theology recognizes that God's nature consistently defies human attempts to contain the divine within neat boundaries.

We worship a God whose love transcends categories, who became incarnate as a boundary-crossing figure who consistently chose relationship over respectability. Jesus associated with people

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deemed sexually immoral by religious authorities, challenged gender expectations of his time, and promised a kingdom where "the last shall be first"—a radically subversive reordering of social hierarchies. The very concept of the Trinity—three persons in one God—queers our understanding of identity and relationship in ways that defy logic.

Building on this foundation, a theology of transgender affirmation might include these essential elements:

RECOGNITION: SEEING THE IMAGE OF GOD

Acknowledge that transgender people exist, that gender dysphoria is real, and that diverse gender identities have existed throughout history and across cultures. This isn't about accepting a "new" phenomenon—it's about finally recognizing what has always been true.

Recognition means moving beyond the exhausting debate about whether transgender people are legitimate and embracing the more interesting theological question: What does gender diversity teach us about the expansive creativity of our Creator? If humans are made in God's image, and humans express gender in beautifully varied ways, what does this reveal about the divine nature that transcends our binary categories?

RESPECT: THE SACRED POWER OF NAMES

Use people's chosen names and pronouns. It costs you nothing and means everything. God renamed people all the time—Simon to Peter. Abram to Abraham, Jacob to Israel. Names matter because they reflect identity, calling, and belonging.

In biblical tradition, naming is an act of love and recognition. When God calls Abraham by name, when Jesus gives nicknames to his disciples, when the prophet Isaiah promises that God knows us by name—these aren't casual social conventions but profound theological statements about being known and valued.

Refusing to use someone's chosen name isn't protecting truth—it's denying their fundamental dignity as an image-bearer of God. Respect is the minimum threshold for relationship, and relationship is where transformation happens.

RIGHTS: JUSTICE AS LOVE IN ACTION

Support equal rights and protections for transgender people. Justice is a biblical value, and "the least of these" deserve our advocacy. The Hebrew prophets consistently judged societies not by their religious observance but by how they treated the vulnerable and marginalized.

This means supporting non-discrimination laws, opposing legislation that targets transgender people, and advocating for policies that protect their safety and dignity. It means following Jesus's example in John 8, where he didn't just refuse to stone the woman caught in adultery—he positioned himself between her and her accusers, actively protecting her from violence.

We're called not only to refrain from throwing stones at transgender people but to get in the way when others try to throw them. This means interrupting transphobic jokes, challenging discriminatory policies, and creating protective spaces where transgender people can exist safely.

Rights aren't just political issues—they're theological necessities. If we believe every person bears God's image, then advocating for their equal treatment under law is a form of worship.

RESOURCES: HEALING AS HOLY WORK

Support access to appropriate healthcare, including genderaffirming treatments. If we believe in healing ministries, why

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exclude this form of healing? If we pray for God to comfort the suffering, why oppose medical interventions that demonstrably reduce suffering?

This challenges us to expand our understanding of what healing looks like. Sometimes healing means miraculous cures that restore people to conventional normalcy. But sometimes healing means helping people live authentically as God created them to be, even when that authenticity challenges social expectations.

Gender-affirming care isn't about rejecting God's creation—it's about helping people align their bodies or social presentation with their authentic selves in ways that promote flourishing and reduce harm. Supporting these resources is a concrete expression of Christian love.

RELATIONSHIP: THE SCANDAL OF PROXIMITY

Actually get to know transgender people. Nothing breaks down prejudice like personal relationships. Jesus didn't theorize about marginalized people from a distance—he ate with them, learned from them, and allowed them to change his understanding of God's kingdom.

This is perhaps the most challenging and transformative element of a theology of affirmation. It requires moving beyond abstract debates about transgender experience to actually listening to transgender voices, centering their stories, and allowing their witness to shape our faith.

Relationship means creating spaces where transgender people can bring their whole selves to Christian community—not as projects to be fixed or minorities to be tolerated, but as full participants in the body of Christ whose gifts and perspectives enrich everyone.

THE DEEPER TRUTH

Ultimately, a theology of transgender affirmation isn't really about transgender people—it's about the kind of God we worship and the kind of church we want to be. Do we serve a God whose love is conditional on conformity, or a God whose grace is big enough to embrace the full spectrum of human experience?

The scandal of the gospel has always been its radical inclusivity, its insistence that God's love extends to people religious authorities deemed unworthy. Building a theology of affirmation means reclaiming that scandal and allowing it to transform not just our attitudes toward transgender people, but our understanding of what it means to follow Jesus in a world that desperately needs both truth and grace.

This doesn't in any way compromise our faith. It lets our faith be what it was always meant to be: good news for everyone, especially those whom the world has told they don't belong.

WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE: PRACTICAL RESPONSES



heory is helpful, but rubber meets road at the dinner table. When Aunt Martha starts quoting Leviticus at Thanksgiving, when your small group leader makes casual transphobic comments, when your pastor preaches about "God's design for gender"—you need more than good intentions. You need actual words.

THE GREATEST HITS (AND HOW TO RESPOND)

"The Bible says God doesn't make mistakes!"

"I agree completely! And God made transgender people too. Maybe the mistake is assuming we understand God's infinitely creative plans. After all, God also made left-handed people, people with different learning styles, and people who need glasses. Diversity seems to be part of the design, not a departure from it."

"It's unnatural!"

"So are eyeglasses, chemotherapy, and air conditioning. 'Natural' isn't always good—cancer is natural, so are earthquakes and predators. 'Unnatural' isn't always bad—medicine is unnatural, but it

heals. Compassion often goes against our natural instincts, but it's the most Christian thing we can do."

"You're corrupting children!"

"Actually, I'm supporting the medical consensus that saves children's lives. Transgender youth with supportive families have dramatically lower suicide rates—we're talking about reducing suicide attempts from 60% to 4%. Isn't preserving life a Christian value? What's truly corrupting is telling kids they're abominations for being honest about who they are."

"You can't change your biological sex!"

"Good thing gender identity isn't the same as biological sex. Even biological sex is more complex than we learned in school—intersex people exist, hormones vary, chromosomes don't always match external appearance. God's creation is wonderfully complex. Plus, we're not talking about changing sex—we're talking about recognizing that someone's internal sense of self matters."

"This is just a liberal agenda!"

"Since when is loving our neighbors a partisan issue? I'm following Jesus, who consistently stood with marginalized people against religious authorities who claimed to know God's will. If caring about transgender people makes me liberal, then Jesus was pretty liberal too."

"They're just confused/it's a phase!"

"The average age that transgender people first recognize their gender difference is 8.5 years old. They don't disclose it until much later because of reactions like this. That's not confusion—that's courage. And even if someone's understanding of themselves evolves, shouldn't we support them through that journey rather than shame them for it?"

WHEN THINGS GET HEATED

Sometimes conversations escalate beyond polite theological disagreement. Here are strategies for those moments:

Set boundaries: "I understand we disagree, but I won't sit here while you describe people I care about as abominations. Can we either have a respectful conversation or change the subject?"

Redirect to relationship: "Have you ever actually gotten to know a transgender person? Because I have, and they're not the monsters you're describing. They're people trying to live authentically while facing incredible challenges."

Appeal to shared values: "We both love Jesus. We both want to follow God faithfully. Can we at least agree that our response should be characterized by love rather than fear?"

Know when to walk away: "I can see this conversation isn't productive right now. I love you, but I can't continue a discussion that dehumanizes people I care about."

FOR CHURCH SETTINGS

Church conversations require special sensitivity since relationships and community are at stake:

With church leadership: "I'm concerned about how our church's current stance affects LGBTQ+ people in our community. Could we study this issue together, maybe bring in some outside perspectives? I'd love to share some resources that have been helpful to me."

In Bible studies: "That's an interesting interpretation. I've been studying this passage too, and I've found some other perspectives worth considering. Could we take some time to look at the original context and see what biblical scholars are saying?"

With fellow members: "I hear your concerns, and I used to think similarly. But my study of Scripture and my relationships with transgender people have led me to a different conclusion. Would you be open to hearing why?"

THE EMOTIONAL LABOR REALITY

Here's something no one tells you: these conversations are exhausting. You're not just debating theology—you're defending people's right to exist with dignity. That takes a toll.

Give yourself permission to:

- Take breaks from these discussions
- Feel frustrated when people seem determined to misunderstand
- Set limits on how much emotional energy you invest
- Seek support from like-minded friends and communities

Remember:

- You're not responsible for changing everyone's mind
- Planting seeds is often more important than winning arguments
- Your advocacy matters even when it doesn't feel effective
- Some people need time to process new ideas

THE LONG GAME

At the end of the day, this isn't really about complex theology or culture wars. It's about how we treat people made in God's image who are suffering.

When transgender people face discrimination, violence, and rejection—often from their own families—where is the church? Are

we standing with the marginalized as Jesus did? Or are we the ones casting stones?

The fruits of anti-transgender theology are clear: increased suicide rates, family rejection, violence, and despair. The fruits of affirmation? Lower suicide rates, stronger families, and people able to live authentically as God created them to be.

Jesus said we'd know good theology by its fruits (Matthew 7:16). The evidence is overwhelming: affirmation saves lives, rejection destroys them. Which sounds more like the Gospel to you?

Most people aren't looking for theological arguments—they're looking for permission to love. Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is simply say: "It's okay to support transgender people. It's okay to believe that God's love is bigger than our categories. It's okay to choose compassion over condemnation."

In a world full of division and dehumanization, choosing to see the image of God in transgender people isn't a compromise of faith—it's the most faithful thing you can do. And sometimes, that choice changes everything.

LIVING THE LOVE WE PREACH AND FURTHER RESOURCES

Supporting transgender people as a Christian is about taking seriously our call to love our neighbors—all of them—as ourselves. It's about seeing the *imago Dei* in every person, even (especially) those who don't fit our tidy categories.

The next time someone challenges your support for transgender people, remember: you're not abandoning your faith. You're living it out. You're choosing love over law, compassion over condemnation, and the radical inclusivity of Jesus over the rigid exclusivity of the Pharisees.

And honestly? That's the most Christian thing you can do.

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

This resource is a starting point for dialogue, not a weapon for debate. The goal isn't to "win" arguments but to bear witness to God's expansive love for all people.

Remember that changing hearts and minds takes time. Most importantly, center the voices and experiences of transgender people themselves. This resource can provide theological and practical tools, but nothing replaces actually listening to and learning from transgender Christians who are living out their faith authentically.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

Your journey toward deeper understanding doesn't end here. These organizations and resources can help you continue growing in knowledge and advocacy:

CHRISTIAN TRANSGENDER RESOURCES

Queer Theology (QueerTheology.com) - Accessible resources for LGBTQ+ Christians and supporters, offering biblical scholarship, community, and practical tools for navigating faith and identity.

Transmission Ministry Collective (TransmissionMinistry.com)

- Created by and for transgender people, this organization builds community and supports healing for trans and gender-expansive Christians worldwide through virtual support groups, workshops, and faith formation programs.

Austen Hartke's "Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians" - Essential reading that explores transgender identity through Scripture with scholarly insight and personal vulnerability.

FAMILY SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

PFLAG (PFLAG.org) - The nation's largest organization supporting LGBTQ+ people and their families, with local chapters nationwide and extensive resources for families with transgender children.

Family Acceptance Project (FamilyProject.sfsu.edu) - Research-based resources showing how family acceptance dramatically

improves outcomes for LGBTQ+ youth, including evidence-based intervention programs.

Gender Spectrum (GenderSpectrum.org) - Creates gendersensitive environments for children and teens, providing educational resources and support for families navigating gender diversity.

Human Rights Campaign (HRC.org) - Offers comprehensive resources for transgender children and families, including guides for parents, schools, and healthcare providers.

FAITH-BASED SUPPORT NETWORKS

Q Christian Fellowship - Diverse community of LGBTQ+ Christians and allies working toward inclusion in Christian communities.

Believe Out Loud - Helps Christian leaders create welcoming and affirming congregations through education and advocacy resources.

New Ways Ministry (New Ways Ministry.org) - LGBTQ-positive ministry for Catholics, focusing on advocacy and reconciliation.

Reconciling Ministries Network - Works within United Methodist communities to transform churches toward full LGBTQ+ inclusion.

EDUCATIONAL AND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

National Center for Transgender Equality (TransEquality.org) - Policy advocacy and educational resources about transgender rights and issues.

GLSEN (GLSEN.org) - Works to create safe and inclusive schools for LGBTQ+ students through education, advocacy, and student support.

Trans Families - Online support groups and resources specifically for parents of transgender children.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

"Queer & Christian: Reclaiming the Bible, Our Faith, and Our Place at the Table" by Brandan Robertson (May 2025) - Explores how LGBTQ+ people belong fully in Christian community.

"The Widening of God's Mercy: Sexuality Within the Biblical Story" by Christopher B. Hays and Richard B. Hays - Father-son biblical scholars explain how Scripture calls for full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people.

"Stories of Change: Religious Leaders and LGBTIQ Inclusion in East Africa" - Documents how faith leaders around the world are embracing affirmation.

A NOTE ON SAFETY

If you're reading this resource because you're transgender yourself, please know that your safety and wellbeing matter above all else. While we hope this resource helps you engage with non-affirming family members and church communities, never feel obligated to educate others at the expense of your own mental health and safety.

Organizations like The Trevor Project (TrevorProject.org) provide 24/7 crisis support specifically for LGBTQ+ youth, and Trans Lifeline (TransLifeline.org) offers peer support from transgender people for transgender people.

THE CALL FORWARD

The work of building a more inclusive church and world requires all of us—transgender people, their families, allies, and even those who are still questioning. It requires courage to speak up when we hear harmful rhetoric, wisdom to know when to engage and when to step back, and persistence to keep working for change even when progress feels slow.

Most of all, it requires love—the scandalous, boundary-crossing, category-defying love that Jesus embodied and calls us to practice. This love doesn't always feel comfortable or safe. It challenges our assumptions, stretches our hearts, and sometimes costs us relationships or reputation.

But it's the same love that welcomed outsiders into God's family, that broke down walls between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female. It's the love that sees the image of God in every person and refuses to let anyone be cast out or cast aside.

When we choose this love—when we stand with our transgender neighbors, when we advocate for their dignity and rights, when we create spaces where they can flourish—we're not being faithful despite our Christianity. We're being faithful because of it.

That's the most beautiful thing about the gospel: it doesn't just tolerate our differences—it celebrates them as part of God's infinitely creative design. In a world that often demands conformity, the church is called to be a place where diversity is not just welcomed but seen as essential to understanding the fullness of God's love.

May we have the courage to live into that calling, one conversation, one relationship, one act of love at a time.

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