

A weekly resource to spark biblically-centered conversations with your kids about the issues they face in today's youth culture.

NAVIGATING THE GENDER CONVERSATION

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Perhaps the biggest and most confusing youth culture shift of the last decade are beliefs and behaviors related to gender. Because gender is one of the most foundational realities of our lives as human beings, we must teach our children to understand and embrace the design of the Creator of gender, rather than the confusing and ever-changing cultural narrative.



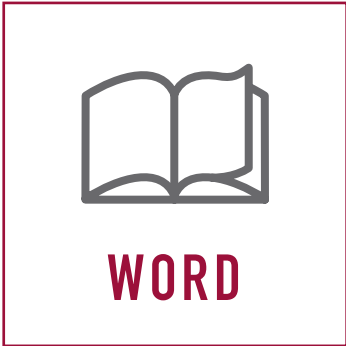
WORLD

What is Happening?

Our children and teens are living in world that's saturated with a cultural narrative (the world's story) on gender that's communicated 24/7 through media, schools, conversations, and the peer group. This narrative is compelling and convincing. As parents, we need to be familiar with these messages, which include...

- Your "gender identity" is what you *feel* about yourself. You could *feel* like you are male, female, some combination of both, or actually neither. Your gender identity has nothing to do with the sex organs you were assigned at birth. Your gender *is not* biologically determined. What's in your pants or under your shirt do not tell you who or what you really are.
- To think of gender as falling into the binaries (only two opposite options) of male and female is completely wrong. There are no binaries. To think that there is only one or the other is wrong. In fact, there is a spectrum. Gender exists on a continuum. Some people might be more masculine. Some people might be more feminine. Some people move back and forth on the spectrum, feeling one way today and another way tomorrow. Some would identify as not even on the spectrum. All of this is normal!
- So, how do you discover your gender identity? That's entirely up to you! There is no other authority on your gender but you. You choose based on how you feel. Whatever you feel and think you are, you are! Nobody - not your parents or even God himself - can tell you who or what you are. It's all a matter of your personal choice. Only you are sovereign over you!
- Your gender identity is at the foundation of *who* you are. It is your ultimate identity. Celebrate it. Live it out. You be you!





What Does God’s Word Say?

As followers of Jesus, we must go to and trust God’s Word as the spotlight that shines truth on our understanding of gender. Since the Bible is our authority, it communicates God’s plan, purpose, will and way for how things are supposed to be. What does the Bible (God’s story) tell us about God’s plan, purpose, will and way for gender? Here are just a few basic starting points from Scripture. Think about how they differ from the world’s story on gender.

God has revealed His grand and glorious plan for humanity in the Creation account which is found in Genesis 1&2. If we want to know what it means to be human. . . to be *fully* human. . . we find that plan and purpose “in the beginning.”

Everything God created He pronounced as “good!” But when He finished creating humans He said “very good!” And what He pronounced as very good was male and female. . . the binary genders He designed and assigned. . . male and female *only*, that are both fully human and equal in dignity. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were given complementary biological forms and purposes so that they might work together to care for God’s good creation, to be fruitful, and to multiply. God gave each of us anatomy and sex organs (and even genes in our DNA!) that tell us what gender we are, either male or female. This is the way things are supposed to be. Jesus affirms this in Matthew 19:4 when He says, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?”

Because of humankind’s fall into sin, everything and everyone are broken. Just like he did with our first parents in the Garden of Eden, the wrecker of this world (Satan) comes to us desiring to keep us from understanding and pursuing things as they are supposed to be. Satan wants us to cooperate with him in the destruction of God’s good order and design wherever that exists. . . including our understanding of gender. And just as he did in Genesis 3:1, Satan continues to get us to question, doubt, and turn from God’s order and design by getting us to distrust God’s authority. He deceives us, getting us to believe and live out lies so that all Creation and our own lives come undone. On gender and everything else he poses this doubt-inducing question: “Did God really say. . . ?” Ultimately, Satan will do anything he can to get us to join him in his rebellion against God.

Our primary identity as followers of Jesus is not to be found in our gender. In fact, it should rest in nothing other than who we are as adopted and dearly loved sons and daughters of our Rescuer, Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:15-17).





WALK

*“Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?”
(Jesus, in Matthew 19:4)*

For further reflection:

“We must evaluate our experiences by the Bible’s teaching, rather than the other way around.”

– James Montgomery Boice

Conversation Starters and Questions:

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to live counter-culturally, which means that when it comes to gender, we will follow the will of God rather than the rapidly-unfolding way of the world on gender. Here are some specific teaching points to share with your kids in order to help them remain faithful to Christ and live to the Glory of God . . .

- Never stop immersing yourself in God’s Word. Satan will always work to derail you from hearing God’s voice. He wants you to listen to and believe the 24/7 onslaught of the voices in the cultural soup that lull us into embracing “the course of this world.” Remember, whenever you find yourself asking the question, “Did God really say. . .?”, run to God’s Word to remind yourself of what God has *really* said.
- Continually ask God to root and grow your identity in who you are in Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ alone.
- Never allow your feelings to dictate and mis-shape your understanding of truth. The world wants you to “follow your heart” on all matters, including gender. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick.” Recognize that even though you are a child of God, you still have to battle your sinful nature. Take some time to read about the Apostle Paul’s struggle with sin in Romans 7. Yes, our struggle to know and do what’s right is real. But Paul reminds us that Jesus Christ delivers us from sin! (Rom. 7:24-25). We have great hope. Judge your feelings by Scripture, rather than judging Scripture by your feelings.
- If you are currently struggling to navigate issues of your gender, don’t despair. You are not alone. . . either in your experience nor in your effort to navigate your feelings and confusion. God is not calling you to walk through this alone. Go to a trusted Christian adult (parent, youth worker, pastor, etc) who will not only listen to you, pray for you, and walk with you, but who can connect you with a qualified Christian counselor who can help you get answers to your questions on gender and walk with you through your struggle.
- Even if you are not struggling with gender issues yourself, you no doubt will be given many opportunities to be the hands and feet of Jesus to those who are struggling with gender. Jesus gives us a clear example of how to engage with those who adopt worldly ideas and practices about gender. In John 8:1-22 He encounters the women caught in adultery. His interaction with her is marked by a perfect balance of grace and truth. He does not condemn her to death. He shows her grace. And, He loves her enough to tell her the truth. Her actions have been wrong and she needs to go and sin no more. Our friends struggling with gender issues need us to lovingly show that same balance of grace and truth.



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