

CHRISTIAN ETHICS

AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL MORAL REASONING

WAYNE GRUDEM

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The same arguments about the meaning of *arsenokoitēs* apply here. It refers to all kinds of male homosexual intercourse.

7. Jude 7. Jude makes this comment about the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19):

Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. (Jude 7)

The Greek phrase translated by “pursued unnatural desire” is *apelthousai opisō sarkos heteras*, literally, “went after other flesh,” meaning that it was “other” or different from the heterosexual immorality with women that Jude refers to earlier in the sentence by saying they had “indulged in sexual immorality.”²⁸ In other words, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah committed sin both through heterosexual adultery and through homosexual conduct.

In conclusion, at least seven passages show that Scripture consistently views all types of homosexual conduct as contrary to God’s moral will.

C. WHAT ABOUT HOMOSEXUAL DESIRES?

Does the Bible address the question of homosexual attitudes and desires? As I have mentioned in several previous chapters in this book, God ultimately requires moral perfection, not only in human actions, but also in attitudes of the heart, in all areas of our lives. Therefore, the Bible prohibits not only adultery but also the *desire* for adultery (Ex. 20:14, 17; cf. Matt. 5:28); not only theft but also *coveting* (Ex. 20:15, 17). This is because “the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7).

Therefore, Scripture teaches that any desire to break God’s commandments is also wrong in God’s sight. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). While an impulse to do what God expressly forbids is (by definition) an impulse contrary to God’s will, the Bible also recognizes that Christians will be “tempted” by their “own desire” (James 1:14), so it encourages Christians in such circumstances to “remain steadfast” (v. 11) and to “be doers of the word” (v. 22). This implies not actively entertaining the wrongful impulse (cf. Matt. 5:28) and not dwelling on it so that it “gives birth to sin” (James 1:15).

So it is not surprising that not only homosexual conduct but also homosexual desires are viewed as contrary to God’s will. Homosexual desires are regarded as “dishon-

²⁸ Extrabiblical Jewish literature similarly interpreted the sin of Sodom as homosexuality; see Josephus, *Antiquities*, 1.200–201; Philo, *On Abraham*, 134–36; *Testament of Naphtali*, 3.4. See the further discussion of this passage, with additional references to extrabiblical Jewish literature, in Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 451–53.

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orable passions” (Rom. 1:26), and Paul says that homosexual partners are “consumed with passion for one another” (v. 27), giving an image of a powerful but destructive inward craving.

This is not to say that homosexual *desire* is as harmful as homosexual *conduct*. Though all sin is wrong and brings legal guilt before God (cf. James 2:10–11), a distinction between wrongful desires and wrongful actions can be made with regard to many areas of life. Hatred of another person is wrong in God’s sight, but murdering the person is far more harmful. Coveting a neighbor’s farm animals is wrong, but actually stealing them is much more harmful. And lustful desires for adultery are wrong, but actually committing adultery is far more harmful. Similarly, homosexual desires are wrong in God’s sight, but actually committing homosexual acts is far more harmful.²⁹

Vines claims that the Bible does not talk about sexual desires for same-sex rather than opposite-sex people, what he calls same-sex “orientation.” He writes:

The bottom line is this: The Bible doesn’t directly address the issue of same-sex *orientation*—or the expression of that orientation. (p. 130; emphasis in original)

But two arguments show that claim to be incorrect: (1) the explicit mention of “dishonorable passions” in Romans 1:26 and (2) the consistent teaching of Scripture regarding all sin, that God requires not only purity of action but also purity of heart (see discussion in chap. 4, p. 138).

D. THE BIBLE’S SOLUTION FOR HOMOSEXUALITY

As with every other sin, the Bible’s solution for homosexuality is trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, the imputation of righteousness, and the power to change. After talking about the “sexually immoral . . . adulterers . . . men who practice homosexuality . . . thieves . . . [and] drunkards” (1 Cor. 6:9–10), Paul tells the Corinthian Christians, “*And such were some of you*” (v. 11). Then he adds, “But you were washed, you were *sanctified*, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (v. 11; cf. Rom. 6:23; Phil. 2:13; 1 John 1:9). This implies that some former homosexuals in the church at Corinth had left their previous homosexual lifestyle and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, were seeking to live lives of sexual purity, whether in celibacy or in faithful heterosexual marriages.

It is important that the Christian community always show love and compassion toward those engaged in homosexual conduct, and also extend friendship toward them where opportunities arise, though not in a way that signals approval of homosexual

²⁹ On the moral status of same-sex attraction, see Denny Burk and Heath Lambert, *Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible Says about Sexual Orientation and Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015). See also the Nashville Statement, p. 881.

practice. It is also important to extend hope for change, since many homosexuals will say that they long to establish a different pattern of life.³⁰

There are many testimonies of former homosexuals who now attest not only to a heterosexual, married lifestyle, but also to sexual desires that are now predominately heterosexual. Alan Sears and Craig Osten report several of these stories, such as the following:

[Long before leaving her lesbian lifestyle] she knew deep down about the sinfulness of her lesbian behavior and *wanted to escape*, but she felt nothing but anger and condemnation from individuals who called themselves Christians. The anger she felt repelled her from Christianity for many years. Despite this, God continued to work on her heart and eventually brought her to him.³¹

However, the conclusion of a number of studies and a frequent theme in personal testimonies is that long-term change from a homosexual lifestyle seldom occurs without a program of help and encouragement from others, often including the love and care of compassionate Christians and ministries devoted to helping those who engage in homosexual behavior.³²

E. OBJECTIONS

A number of objections are regularly raised against the biblical view that homosexuality is morally wrong. These include the following:

1. "Some People Are 'Born Gay' and Are Unable to Change." One objection is that some people are "born gay," that is, that many homosexuals do not choose their sexual orientation but it is part of their genetic makeup from the time of birth, and so ho-

³⁰ Erik Eckholm reports on interviews with several men who are part of an ex-gay movement in "Ex-Gay' Men Fight Back Against View That Homosexuality Can't Be Changed," *The New York Times*, Oct. 31, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/01/us/ex-gay-men-fight-view-that-homosexuality-cant-be-changed.html>.

³¹ Alan Sears and Craig Osten, *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today*, rev. and updated ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 8. The introduction to this book includes several personal testimonies of how individuals engaging in homosexual behavior were able to leave that lifestyle with help from Christian friends and/or Christian organizations.

³² Ministries that help people struggling with homosexuality include: Courage (<http://couragerc.net>); Desert Hope (<http://deserthope.com>); Desert Stream Ministries (www.desertstream.org); Genesis Counseling (<http://www.genescounseling.org>); Harvest USA (<http://www.harvestusa.org>); Healing for the Soul (<http://healingforthesoul.org>); Mastering Life Ministries (<http://www.masteringlife.org>); Pure Intimacy (<http://www.pureintimacy.org>); Regeneration (<http://regenerationministries.org>); Restored Hope Network (<http://www.restoredhopenetwork.com>); and Where Grace Abounds (<http://wheregraceabounds.org>). See also the resources at the Focus on the Family website: <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/social-issues/sexuality/leaving-homosexuality/resources-for-men-and-women-with-unwanted-homosexuality>.

See also the discussion of what such "change" means in Mark A. Yarhouse, *Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors, and Friends* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010), 81–98.

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homosexuals can never change, and therefore, for them, homosexual behavior cannot be wrong.

Vines writes:

Sexual orientation is not a choice and it is highly resistant to change. . . . Same-sex attraction is completely natural to me. It's not something I chose or something I can change. (pp. 28–29)

We must respond to such a claim with compassion and sympathy for the earnestness of his statement. But we must also recognize that this is not the way the Bible talks about any patterns of behavior or any heart desires that are contrary to God's moral will. As noted above, when Paul was talking about "men who practice homosexuality" (1 Cor. 6:9), he said to the Corinthian church, "And such *were* some of you" (v. 11), indicating that the church at Corinth had some former homosexuals who were no longer engaging in homosexual conduct. This is significant evidence that, according to the Bible, it is possible for homosexuals at least to change their actions and become former homosexuals.

In addition, several other passages in the New Testament provide hope that it is possible for people to change, not only in their pattern of sinful actions, but also in the desires of their hearts. Here are some of those passages:

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For *sin will have no dominion over you*, since you are not under law but under grace. (Rom. 6:12–14)³³

But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become *obedient from the heart* to the standard of teaching to which you were committed. (Rom. 6:17)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Cor. 5:17)

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (2 Cor. 7:1)

It is God who works in you, both *to will* and to work for his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:13)

³³ See discussion of this passage and related verses at p. 145.

As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:15–16)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins *and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. (1 John 1:9)

And in the Old Testament, David prayed:

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me. (Ps. 51:10)

This does not mean that homosexual desires will automatically or necessarily be eradicated for those who come to Christ. Becoming a Christian does not mean that people will no longer experience intense sinful urges (sexual or otherwise). But genuine faith does produce the fruit of obedience and real, substantive change, and Paul indicates that this is precisely what happened with some who had practiced homosexuality in Corinth.

The objection from advocates for committed same-sex relationships is that there is no evidence that people's "orientation" (that is, desire for same-sex affection and intercourse) can ever change. Vines says that the evidence from "ex-gay" organizations shows that they "did not claim to be changing anyone's sexual *orientation*. . . . None of the evidence seemed to show God was changing the people's sexual orientation" (p. 10; emphasis in original; see also pp. 28, 40, 130).

But a balanced examination of the literature on this topic shows quite a different picture. Jeffrey Satinover, a psychiatrist who is a graduate of MIT, Harvard, and the University of Texas, and who has lectured at both Yale and Harvard, tells how the ruling academic climate on homosexual studies has changed so much that the professional psychiatric literature operates under a kind of "censorship," so that most studies that show evidence of success in treatment programs that help homosexuals overcome homosexual conduct and orientation cannot even be published.³⁴ Still, Satinover points to many earlier studies in which "the composite of these results gives an overall success rate of over 50 percent—where success is defined as 'considerable' to 'complete' change. . . . *All the existing evidence suggests strongly that homosexuality is quite changeable.*"³⁵

An interesting example of research about homosexuals who have changed, and also an example of the immense pressure brought against researchers who claim that this has happened, is seen in the story of psychiatrist Robert Spitzer and his repudiation of

³⁴ See Jeffrey Satinover, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 168–78. This is an excellent book explaining the medical harm and addictive nature of homosexual conduct, and also the ability of homosexuals to change.

³⁵ Ibid., 186, emphasis in original. Satinover, who is himself Jewish, documents the particularly effective ministry of Christian programs that include healing prayer for homosexuals who wish to escape from their lives of homosexuality (pp. 196–209).

his earlier research for themselves.

In 2001, Spitzer published a study on only their behavior because in the early years from the American he presented a paper. He said his research to acknowledge the

Spitzer reported people. He interviewed people whose average age was 40, mostly heterosexual. He said they had used the most helpful strategies. He said a support group was helpful. He said the women reported

In spite of his previous work, Spitzer was attacked. David E. Bonior, a Washington, D.C., attorney, claimed, totally untrue, that three years before Spitzer's study, the sexual community had his study as not credible for his study.³⁹ But many of the answers determined if the study was outright lying.⁴⁰

³⁹Malcolm Ritter, "Washingtonpost.com/

⁴⁰Robert Spitzer, "C Reporting a Change fr (2005): 403–17 (the sp ciases/Psych130F201

³⁹Cited in Ritter, "S" ⁴⁰Benedict Carey, "http://www.nytimes.c on-gay-cure.html.

⁴⁰Cited in John M. "The-Gay Study," Truth

his earlier research. I mention the story here so that readers can evaluate its implications for themselves.

In 2001, Spitzer, a highly respected professor of psychiatry at Columbia University, published a study demonstrating that numerous gay men and lesbians had changed not only their behavior but also their pattern of sexual desires. This was especially significant because in the early 1970s Spitzer had led the efforts to have homosexuality removed from the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) list of mental illnesses. But in 2001 he presented a paper at the APA's convention claiming that homosexuals can change. He said his research "shows some people can change from gay to straight, and we ought to acknowledge that."³⁶

Spitzer reported that he had conducted 45-minute telephone interviews with 200 people. He interviewed 143 men, whose average age was 42, and 57 women, whose average age was 44. All claimed they had changed their orientation from homosexual to heterosexual. Each person answered 114 closed-ended questions about their sexual feelings and behavior before and after their efforts to change. The majority interviewed said they had used more than one strategy to change their orientation. About half said the most helpful step was work with a psychologist or a pastoral counselor. About a third said a support group helped, and a few mentioned such aids as books and mentoring by a heterosexual. Spitzer came to the conclusion that 66 percent of the men and 44 percent of the women reported functioning well heterosexually after therapy.³⁷

In spite of his prestigious standing in the field of psychiatry, Spitzer was immediately attacked. David Elliot, a spokesman for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in Washington, attacked his sample of interviewees, saying, "The sample is terrible, totally tainted, totally unrepresentative of the gay and lesbian community."³⁸ Then, in 2012, three years before his death and after more than a decade of attacks from the homosexual community (including one that cited the Nuremberg Code of Ethics to denounce his study as not only flawed but "morally wrong"), Spitzer recanted and apologized for his study.³⁹ But his brief letter of apology did not say that he had misrepresented any of the answers given to him in his interviews, but only that "there was no way to determine if the subject's accounts of change were valid" and "not self-deception or outright lying."⁴⁰

³⁶ Malcolm Ritter, "Study: Some Gays Can Go Straight," *The Washington Post*, May 9, 2001, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/aponline/20010509/aponline013921_000.htm.

³⁷ Robert Spitzer, "Can Some Gay Men and Lesbians Change Their Sexual Orientation? 200 Participants Reporting a Change from Homosexual to Heterosexual Orientation," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 32, no. 3 (2003): 403–17 (the specific details I cited are from pp. 406–7 and 411), <https://www.stolaf.edu/people/huff/classes/Psych130F2010/LabDocuments/Spitzer.pdf>.

³⁸ Cited in Ritter, "Study: Some Gays Can Go Straight."

³⁹ Benedict Carey, "Psychiatry Giant Sorry for Backing Gay 'Cure,'" *The New York Times*, May 18, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/19/health/dr-robert-l-spitzer-noted-psychiatrist-apologizes-for-study-on-gay-cure.html>.

⁴⁰ Cited in John M. Becker, "Exclusive: Dr. Robert Spitzer Apologizes to Gay Community for Infamous 'Ex-Gay' Study," *Truth Wins Out*, April 25, 2012, <http://www.truthwinsout.org/news/2012/04/24542/>.

My conclusion is that it still remains significant that Spitzer's 2001 study summarized the personal testimonies of so many people who *claimed* that they had experienced long-lasting change not only from homosexual conduct but also homosexual orientation. The only way to deny this, apparently, is to say that people who make such claims cannot be believed because they are self-deceived or lying.

Similar evidence of the ability of many homosexuals to change has come from other, more recent studies and reports of programs. One study by psychologists Stanton L. Jones of Wheaton College and Mark A. Yarhouse of Regent University and published in the *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy* assessed 98 individuals over six to seven years after therapy occurred. It found that 23 percent reported success in changing to heterosexual orientation and functioning, while an additional 30 percent reported no longer identifying as homosexual and remaining sexually chaste.⁴¹ The researchers were immediately attacked by CNN, which claimed that the authors were biased because of their affiliation with religious institutions.

Interestingly, in its criticism of the study, CNN quoted several academics who stated that they were aware that sexual behavior can change during one's lifetime, but they still disagreed with the results of the study. CNN quoted Eli Coleman, professor and director of human sexuality at the University of Minnesota Medical School: "I don't think we have anything really new here. We have known for some time that some people are able to shift their behavior and their perception of their sexual identity through these attempts at conversion." But he went on to claim, in direct contradiction to the results of the study, "You can get behavioral changes, but that's not orientation change. You can get short-term behavioral change. It's not sustained."⁴²

2. "Scientific Evidence Shows That Some People are Homosexuals by Genetic Makeup." Some argue that science supports the argument that homosexuality is determined by one's biological makeup from before the time of birth. In fact, studies have shown some indirect, congenital influences on homosexual development that may increase the *likelihood* of homosexual development. There are certain hereditary factors that give people a greater likelihood of developing all sorts of sinful behavior patterns (such as frequent wrongful anger, violence, adultery, alcoholism, and so forth), so it would not be surprising to find that some people, from certain hereditary backgrounds, have a greater likelihood of developing homosexual desires and conduct.

However, this is far different from proving congenital *determinism* of homosexuality, that is, that some people are genetically incapable of making any other choice than to entertain homosexual desires and engage in homosexual conduct. Especially significant

⁴¹ Kathleen Gilbert, "Major Study: Changing Sexual Orientation Is Possible," LifeSite News, Sept. 29, 2011, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/major-study-changing-sexual-orientation-is-possible>. The full study is available in Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays? A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007).

⁴² Cited in Madison Park, "Study Supporting Gay Conversion Challenged," CNN, Oct. 4, 2011, <http://thechart.blogs.cnn.com/2011/10/04/study-supporting-gay-conversion-challenged/>.

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⁴⁵ Mike Haley, "one-man-found

are studies of identical twins, one of whom has become a homosexual while the other has not, even though they have identical genetic makeups. For example, in 2015 researchers at the University of California studied 37 sets of identical male twins. In each pair, one of the twins was homosexual. They found that in only 20 percent of the sets were *both* twins homosexual—though they were genetically identical.⁴³

Twenty-five years ago, J. Michael Bailey and Richard C. Pillard examined identical and fraternal twin brothers and adopted brothers in an effort to establish a genetic link to homosexuality. Fifty-two percent of the identical twins were reportedly homosexual, while only 22 percent of fraternal twins fell into the same category. The authors noted that since identical twins have identical genetic material, the fact that nearly half of the identical twins were *heterosexual* effectively refutes the idea that homosexuality has a genetic basis.⁴⁴

Finally, the moral teachings of God's Word, not people's inward desires, must be our final standard of right and wrong. It is important to recognize that (1) virtually all behavior is, at some level, biologically influenced and (2) no command of God depends for its validity on humans first losing all desire to violate the command in question.

3. "Some Environmental Factors Dispose Some People toward Homosexuality." This is not exactly an objection to the view I have advocated, but is a factor that should be taken into account. Some studies have shown that some environmental factors increase the *likelihood* (but not the necessity) of homosexual behavior. Two of the most significant, particularly for male homosexuals, are the physical or emotional absence of a caring father during a boy's childhood years and sexual abuse sometime during childhood or adolescence. The University of California research cited above indicates this, and it is confirmed by numerous personal testimonies.

For example, Mike Haley, a former homosexual who later joined the staff of Focus on the Family, recounted how he was raised by a father who called him "worthless" when it became evident that he was not going to become a "macho" athlete. He became a victim of sexual abuse from ages 11 to 18, and then entered into a homosexual lifestyle, eventually becoming a male prostitute. After living as a homosexual for 12 years, through the influence of a friend who shared Christ's love with him, Mike left his homosexual life, and later married and became the father of two sons.⁴⁵

To take another example, Teresa Britton traced her struggle with lesbianism to her father's alcoholism and physical abuse. She would say to herself, "I will never, ever let

⁴³ Sarah Knapton, "Homosexuality 'May Be Triggered by Environment after Birth,'" *The Telegraph*, Oct. 8, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2016/03/15/homosexuality-may-be-triggered-by-environment-after-birth/>.

⁴⁴ J. Michael Bailey and Richard C. Pillard, "A Genetic Study of Male Sexual Orientation," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 48 (1991): 1089–96.

⁴⁵ Mike Haley, "How One Man Found Freedom in Christ," <https://www.focusonthefamily.ca/content/how-one-man-found-freedom-in-christ>; see also <http://exgayisok.wixsite.com/mhaley>.

Further discussion of the legal and political issues involved can be found in my book *Politics—According to the Bible*.⁵⁸

H. CONCLUSION ON HOMOSEXUALITY

Homosexual conduct of all kinds is consistently viewed as sin in the Bible, and recent interpretations of the Bible that have been raised as objections to that view do not give a satisfactory explanation of the words or the contexts of the relevant passages. Sexual intimacy is to be confined to marriage, and marriage is to be only between one man and one woman, following the pattern established by God in creation. The church should always act with love and compassion toward homosexuals, yet never affirm homosexual conduct as morally right. The gospel of Jesus Christ offers the “good news” of forgiveness of sins and real hope for a transformed life to homosexuals, just as it does for all sinners.

I. THE TRANSGENDER QUESTION: CAN PEOPLE CHOOSE THEIR GENDER?

Some people today claim to be “transgender”—that is, they think of themselves (or “identify”) as having a gender that is different from their biological sex. Someone who is biologically a male may claim to identify as a female, and someone who is biologically a female may claim to identify as a male. These claims are based on an assumption that “gender” is something that people can choose, not something that is determined by the biological sex of their bodies. In the material that follows, I attempt to provide a biblical perspective on this question.

1. God Created Only Two Sexes, Male and Female. At the very beginning of creation, God made men and women equal in value and personhood but distinct in their sexuality:

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

While men and women are similar in many ways, we are also different in many ways. There are about 37.2 trillion cells in the human body,⁵⁹ and these cells (except for red blood cells)⁶⁰ are different in men and women, because men have an X chromosome

⁵⁸ See Grudem, *Politics—According to the Bible*, 221–38.

⁵⁹ Nicholas Bakalar, “37.2 Trillion: Galaxies or Human Cells,” *The New York Times*, June 19, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/23/science/37-2-trillion-galaxies-or-human-cells.html>; see also Rose Eveleth, “There Are 37.2 Trillion Cells in Your Body,” *Smithsonian*, Oct. 24, 2013, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/there-are-372-trillion-cells-in-your-body-4941473/>.

⁶⁰ Red blood cells do not have a nucleus and therefore do not have XX or XY chromosomes. Red blood cells constitute about one-fourth of the cells in a normal human body. See “Blood Basics,” American Society of Hematology, <http://www.hematology.org/Patients/Basics/>; Ananya Mandal, “What Are Genes?” *News Medi-*

and a Y chromosome in each cell, while women have two X chromosomes in each cell. In other words, if we count all the cells except for (an estimated) 10 trillion red blood cells, at the cellular level, there are still over 27 *trillion* biological differences between men and women.

There are other physical differences. Men and women differ in the “wiring” of their brains—the arrangement of various connections between different parts of the brain, resulting in differences in the way men and women process information. Neuropsychiatrist Louann Brizendine of the University of California, San Francisco, writes:

Scientists have discovered an astonishing array of structural, chemical, genetic, hormonal, and functional brain differences between men and women. . . . The female and male brains process stimuli, hear, see, “sense,” and gauge what others are feeling in different ways.⁶¹

Other interesting differences (using *averages* for men and women) include:

- An average man is taller and heavier than an average woman.
- Girls, on average, enter into puberty approximately two years before boys.
- Men have larger hearts and lungs, and their higher levels of testosterone cause them to produce greater amounts of red blood cells.
- Men have better distance vision and depth perception. Women have better night vision and better visual memory.
- Women are more sensitive to sound than men.
- Men, on average, are over 30 percent stronger than women, especially in the upper body.
- Female fertility decreases after age 35, ending with menopause, but men are capable of fathering children even when very old.
- Men’s skin has more collagen and sebum, which makes it thicker and oilier than women’s skin.
- Women generally have a greater body fat percentage than men.⁶²

2. God Intends That a Person’s Gender Identity Should Be Determined by That Person’s Biological Sex. There is no hint anywhere in Scripture that a biological woman should “identify” as a man or attempt to act in ways that are perceived as appropriate only for men. And there is no hint anywhere in Scripture that a biological man should “identify” as a woman or attempt to act in ways that are perceived as appropriate only for women. Instead, there are multiple passages *that assume that someone is either a man*

cal, <http://www.news-medical.net/life-sciences/What-are-Genes.aspx>; and “Red Blood Cell Count—Types,” Symptoms, <http://www.symptoms.in/red-blood-cell-count.html>.

⁶¹ Louann Brizendine, *The Female Brain* (New York: Morgan Road Books, 2006), 4.

⁶² Heidi Miller, “Difference Between Male and Female Structures (Mental and Physical),” SteadyHealth, March 19, 2007, http://www.steadyhealth.com/articles/difference-between-male-and-female-structures-mental-and-physical?show_all=1.

or woman, and that society regularly will be able to know the difference between them. Here are some of the passages:

If a woman conceives and bears a *male child*, then she shall be unclean seven days. . . . But if she bears a *female child*, then she shall be unclean two weeks. (Lev. 12:2–5)

You shall not lie with a *male* as with a *woman*; it is an abomination. (Lev. 18:22)

If a man lies with a *male* as with a *woman*, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. (Lev. 20:13)

If anyone makes a special vow to the LORD involving the valuation of persons, then the valuation of a *male* from twenty years old up to sixty years old shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. If the person is a *female*, the valuation shall be thirty shekels. (Lev. 27:2; the difference probably reflected the common price for slaves and the expected value of their labor)

If a man dies and has no *son*, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his *daughter*. And if he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. (Num. 27:8–9)

If a *man* vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge. . . . If a *woman* vows a vow to the LORD and binds herself by a pledge . . . (Num. 30:2–3)

[With reference to a conquered city in warfare:] And when the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its *males* to the sword, but the *women* and the little ones, the livestock, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as plunder for yourselves. (Deut. 20:13)

A *woman* shall not wear a *man's* garment, nor shall a *man* put on a *woman's* cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God. (Deut. 22:5)

For their *women* exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the *men* likewise gave up natural relations with *women* and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. (Rom. 1:26–27)

Every *man* who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but every *wife* who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head. . . . For a *man* ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but *woman* is the glory of man. For *man* was not made from *woman*, but woman from man. Neither was *man* created for *woman*, but woman for man. That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman. (1 Cor. 11:2–11)

I desire then that in every place the *men* should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; likewise also that *women* should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. Let a *woman* learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a *woman* to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. (1 Tim. 2:8–12)

Do not rebuke an *older man* but encourage him as you would a father, *younger men* as brothers, *older women* as mothers, *younger women* as sisters, in all purity. (1 Tim. 5:1–2)

Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. *Older women* likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the *young women* to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the *younger men* to be self-controlled. (Titus 2:2–6)

While Christians today may ponder the meaning of these passages and may disagree over their proper application in the new covenant age, the only point I'm seeking to establish here is that Scripture *repeatedly distinguishes between men and women*, assumes that people will always be able to tell the difference between them, and assumes that in several ways men and women will act differently, in ways appropriate to their sex. In all of these passages, it is assumed that a person's biological sex determines how the person should act—that is, in ways appropriate to each person's sex, whether male or female. Every person's sense of his or her own "gender identity" should be the same as that person's biological sex.⁶³

⁶³ I do not discuss here the various kinds of disorders of sex development that are collectively referred to as "intersex." Such cases involve various ambiguities in physical markers of sexuality, and therefore they differ from transgenderism, which concerns psychological ambiguities in a person's feelings and preferences. For a biblically based analysis of intersex, see Denny Burk, *What Is the Meaning of Sex?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway,

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3. Deuteronomy 22:5: A Passage of Special Importance in the Transgender Debate.

One passage in the Mosaic Law has particular relevance to this discussion:

A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.
(Deut. 22:5)

Old Testament professor Jason DeRouchie published an especially perceptive analysis of this verse and its relevance for transgender questions today, and my discussion here depends significantly on his work.⁶⁴

DeRouchie recognizes that this law is found in the Mosaic Law, and that we are no longer under the Mosaic covenant. He says, "While Christians are not legally bound to the Mosaic law, we do not throw out the law itself," and he carefully analyzes the meaning of this commandment in the light of Christ's redemptive work and our position in the new covenant age. The Mosaic law still has theological significance and we can still learn from it "about God and his ways."

With this background, DeRouchie says that "on the surface, the prohibition relates to what the APA terms 'gender expression'—'the way a person acts to communicate gender within a given culture' through things like dress." Then he says:

At a deeper level, however, the law assumes a more fundamental rule—that there are only two biological sexes—male and female—and that what is gender normative in God's world is that one's biological sex should govern both one's gender identity and expression. Before divine wrath is poured out, this text provides a kind corrective to gender confusion and transgender identity.⁶⁵

Because the Hebrew term translated "man" in Deuteronomy 22:5 is not *'ish*, which can often mean "husband," but rather *geber*, which means "man" or "strong man" but never means "husband," DeRouchie concludes:

From God's perspective, maleness and femaleness bears implications beyond the home or gathered worshiping community. It also impacts daily life in society. . . . Within Israelite culture, then, there were certain styles of dress, ornaments, or items that distinguished men and women. As such, two things

2013), 157–83. Burk concludes, I think rightly, that the decision of whether to treat an intersex child as male or female should be determined by the child's chromosomal pattern, whether XX or XY, wherever that is possible to determine.

⁶⁴ Jason DeRouchie, "Confronting the Transgender Storm: New Covenant Reflections from Deuteronomy 22:5," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 21, no. 1 (May 25, 2016), <http://cbmw.org/topics/transgenderism/jbmw-21-1-confronting-the-transgender-storm-new-covenant-reflections-from-deuteronomy-225/>. Another perceptive article on this passage, which discusses and rejects several alternative interpretations, is P. J. Harland, "Menswear and Womenswear: A Study of Deuteronomy 22:5," *Expository Times* 110, no. 3 (1998): 73–76.

⁶⁵ DeRouchie, "Confronting the Transgender Storm."

appear to be at stake in this law: (1) everyone needed to let their gender expression align with their biological sex, and (2) everyone needed to guard against gender confusion, wherein others could wrongly perceive a man to be a woman and a woman to be a man based on dress.⁶⁶

With respect to the last phrase of Deuteronomy 22:5, “for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God,” DeRouchie concludes that blurring the distinctions between men and women in society undermines the ability of men and women to rightly reflect the nature of God: “what makes transgenderism abominable is that it maligns humanity’s ability to reflect, resemble, and represent God rightly in this world.”⁶⁷ Why is this? It is because both Old and New Testaments picture the relationship between God and his people as a relationship between a husband and his bride, an analogy in which the man represents God and the woman represents God’s people. The God-given differences between men and women are necessary for that reflection of God’s glory to be seen in human activity.

Gender identity and gender expression is about God’s glory and about maintaining the God-created distinctions on earth that in turn point to the ultimate distinction between God and his bride. Just as husbands and wives in the human household and men and women in the collective household of God bear distinct roles and, by this, uniquely display God’s image, so too the creator and Lord of all things is rightly magnified in the lives of males and females when our gender identity and gender expression align perfectly with our God-ordained biological sex. Those born boys are to live and thrive as boys, and those born girls are to live and thrive as girls.⁶⁸

Finally, by way of practical application, DeRouchie says:

As believers, we should be among those who celebrate men being masculine and women being feminine, both in the way we act and in the way we dress.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid. However, DeRouchie recognizes that clothing styles for men and women change over time, so that some forms of dress that previously were worn only by men or by women are no longer viewed as gender-specific: “in our present culture ladies can wear slacks . . . and even ties with none questioning their femaleness. . . . Guys too could have ear rings or long hair with none questioning their maleness.” Ibid. I agree with his assessment of current cultural opinions of these things, but his comments about the appropriateness of distinctly masculine and distinctly feminine clothing gave me new appreciation for the widespread, instinctive suspicion of long hair for men that millions of parents felt in the 1960s, when, to the parents, long hair made their sons “look like girls.”

This article also helped me understand why, after 48 years of marriage, I still feel uncomfortable if for some reason an occasion arises when I have to carry Margaret’s purse even for a short time in a public place. In the United States in 2017, men don’t carry purses—that is something that belongs to femininity and womanhood. Someone might ask, “Does it threaten your manhood to carry a purse?” My response is yes,

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⁷¹ Ibid.
⁷² Ibid.

4. What about Sex-Reassignment Surgery? For people who claim to be transgendered, some surgical procedures are available to alter their sexual organs and sometimes other physical characteristics, such as breast size and facial hair. Such surgeries are far more invasive and long-lasting than such activities as a woman wearing a man's garment or a man putting on a woman's cloak, which are prohibited in Deuteronomy 22:5, and they attack more deeply the God-given manhood of a man and the God-given womanhood of a woman.

And yet, such surgeries cannot change a man into a woman or change a woman into a man. A biological male, after such surgery, still has about 27 trillion male cells in his body with XY chromosomes, and a biological female, after such surgery, still has about 27 trillion female cells in her body with XX chromosomes. A biological male still has billions of typically male neurological connections in his brain, and a biological female still has billions of typically female neurological connections in her brain. Both before and after such surgery, a biological man is still a man and a biological woman is still a woman.

Paul McHugh, former psychiatrist in chief at Johns Hopkins Hospital, published a substantial objection to transgender surgery in *The Wall Street Journal* in 2014.⁷⁰ McHugh writes that transgenderism is “a mental disorder that deserves understanding, treatment and prevention.” He adds that “the idea of sex misalignment is simply mistaken—it does not correspond with physical reality. . . . It can lead to grim psychological outcomes.”⁷¹

McHugh compares people who claim to be transgender to “those who suffer from anorexia and bulimia nervosa, where the assumption that departs from physical reality is the belief by the dangerously thin that they are overweight.” He then says:

For the transgendered, this argument holds that one's feeling of “gender” is a conscious, subjective sense that, being in one's mind, cannot be questioned by others. The individual often seeks not just society's tolerance of this “personal truth” but affirmation of it. . . . Psychiatrists obviously must challenge the solipsistic concept that what is in the mind cannot be questioned.⁷²

He goes on to give some deeply troubling statistics about the results of sex-reassignment surgery, including a study by the Karolinska Institute in Sweden that

to a certain extent it undermines my sense of manhood. It feels uncomfortable to me because it appears that I am giving a signal that I would rather be a woman than a man, a signal that I'm uncomfortable in my manhood. And so I will carry it (if necessary) while holding it in a manner that doesn't resemble the way a woman normally holds a purse! It seems to me that such a human instinct to preserve some measure of distinctiveness in male and female clothing is a healthy one.

⁷⁰ Paul McHugh, “Transgender Surgery Isn't the Solution: A Drastic Physical Change Doesn't Address Underlying Psycho-Social Troubles,” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 12, 2014, updated May 13, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/paul-mchugh-transgender-surgery-isnt-the-solution-1402615120>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

followed 324 people for up to 30 years after they had sex-reassignment surgery. This study showed that “beginning about 10 years after having the surgery, the transgendered began to experience increasing mental difficulties,” and their suicide rate was nearly 20 times greater than the comparable nontransgender population.⁷³

As for children with transgender feelings, McHugh reports, “When children who reported transgender feelings were tracked without medical or surgical treatment at both Vanderbilt University and London’s Portman Clinic, 70%-80% of them spontaneously lost those feelings.” He disagrees with doctors who administer puberty-delaying hormones to young children, “even though the drugs stunt the children’s growth and risk causing sterility.”

He concludes:

“Sex change” is biologically impossible. People who undergo sex-reassignment surgery do not change from men to women or vice versa. Rather, they become feminized men or masculinized women. Claiming that this is a civil-rights matter and encouraging surgical intervention is in reality to collaborate with and promote a mental disorder.⁷⁴

In another, longer study that McHugh coauthored with Lawrence Mayer, they write:

The hypothesis that gender identity is an innate, fixed property of human beings that is independent of biological sex—that a person might be “a man trapped in a woman’s body” or “a woman trapped in a man’s body”—is not supported by scientific evidence.⁷⁵

5. Bathrooms, Locker Rooms, and Sports Teams. Recently a number of American governmental bodies at both the national and state/local levels have authorized or required schools to allow transgender children to use restrooms and locker rooms other than the ones that correspond to their biological sex, so that girls who are biologically female but claim to “identify as male” must be allowed into boys’ restrooms and locker rooms, and boys who are biologically male but claim to “identify as female” must be allowed into girls’ restrooms and locker rooms.

If parents object that such children could be allowed to use separate individual restrooms, transgender advocates reply that this is bullying and discrimination because

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Lawrence Mayer and Paul McHugh, “Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Science,” *The New Atlantis* 50 (2016): 8, <http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/preface-sexuality-and-gender>. The entire report is 143 pages long. The “Editor’s Note” with this special issue states that the report is written by “Dr. Lawrence S. Mayer, an epidemiologist trained in psychiatry, and Dr. Paul R. McHugh, arguably the most important American psychiatrist of the last half-century.” Ibid., 4.

See also Paul McHugh, “Surgical Sex: Why We Stopped Doing Sex Change Operations,” *First Things*, November 2004, 34–38, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2004/11/surgical-sex>.

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it does not allow these transgender children to use the same restrooms or locker rooms as other children in the gender with which they identify. Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) is working on several legal cases involving parents and children who have had no choice but to sue their local school districts in order to maintain opposite-sex restrooms, showers, and locker rooms.

In one case, a high school student and his parents sued the Boyertown Area School District in Pennsylvania for intentionally violating his right to bodily privacy after he was exposed involuntarily to an undressed female student while he was changing in his school's boys' locker room.

The school district had secretly opened its schools' sex-specific restrooms and locker rooms to students of the opposite sex, without notice to students or parents. When the student, identified in the lawsuit as "Joel Doe," was standing in his underwear about to put on his gym clothes, he suddenly noticed that a female student, also in a state of undress, was in the locker room.

When "Joel Doe" brought a complaint to school officials, they informed him that they now allow students who subjectively identify themselves as the opposite sex to choose whichever locker room they wish to use. He asked officials to protect his privacy, but they instead told him twice that he must "tolerate" it and make changing with students of the opposite sex as "natural" as he can.⁷⁶

In another ADF case in Minnesota, a biologically male student who identifies as a female was allowed to enter the girls' locker room under the district's policy. According to the complaint in the case, he went on to dance in the locker room "in a sexually explicit manner—'twerking,' 'grinding' and dancing like he was on a 'stripper pole' to songs with explicit lyrics, including 'Milkshake' by Kelis. On another occasion, a female student saw the male student lift his dress to reveal his underwear while 'grinding' to the music."⁷⁷

On sports teams, children who are biologically boys but who claim to "identify as girls" have been allowed to participate as members of girls' sports teams, and, because some (biological) boys will be larger and stronger than any girls in that sport, they have begun to beat all the girls they compete against.⁷⁸

In Texas, a 17-year-old female taking testosterone in an attempt to become male won the Texas girls' wrestling title after wrestling an undefeated season against girls.⁷⁹ In March 2017, a New Zealand transgender weightlifter who had formerly participated in

⁷⁶"Student Sues Pennsylvania School District for Sexual Harassment, Violation of Personal Privacy," Alliance Defending Freedom, March 21, 2017, <http://www.adfmedia.org/News/PRDetail/?CID=93267>. The case is *Doe v. Boyertown Area School District*.

⁷⁷"Families Sue Feds, Minnesota School District for Violating Student Privacy," Alliance Defending Freedom, Sept. 8, 2016, <http://www.adfmedia.org/News/PRDetail/?CID=91352>.

⁷⁸See Joy Pullmann, "Boys Will Keep Winning Girls' Sports Trophies Until We Are Willing to Re-Assert Sex Distinctions," *The Federalist*, April 11, 2017, <http://thefederalist.com/2017/04/11/boys-will-keep-winning-girls-sports-trophies-willing-re-assert-sex-distinctions/>.

⁷⁹Kristie Rieken, "Transgender Boy Wins Controversial Girls State Wrestling Title in Texas," *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 25, 2017, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/highschool/ct-transgender-wrestler-texas-20170225-story.html>.

the male division before “transitioning” to female dominated the international competition in “her” debut on the women’s circuit, setting four world records in the process.⁸⁰ In Alaska, a biologically male student competed as a female and captured all-state honors in girls’ track and field. One of the parents of the girls competing against the transgender athlete said his wins were “not fair and it is not right for our female athletes.”⁸¹

Such mistaken government policies are simply wrong because they are attempting to compel people to affirm a blatant lie. A child who is biologically male is a boy, not a girl, no matter how many thousand times he proclaims that he is a girl. A child who is biologically female is a girl, not a boy, no matter how many thousand times she proclaims that she is a boy. For a society to affirm such outright lies is (to use McHugh’s analogy mentioned above) similar to a society telling a severely underweight, anorexic girl who is near to starvation that what she sincerely believes about herself is true, that she is really too fat.

In addition, these governmental policies sow seeds of gender confusion among the boys and girls whose restrooms are invaded by members of the opposite sex, and who are forced by school policy to undress in the presence of members of the opposite sex. Such policies thus attempt to reinforce the lie that a person’s gender is something one can choose, not something determined by biological reality. In addition, such policies tend to undermine the God-given instinct of modesty regarding the exposure of the private parts of boys and girls, of men and women. “Our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require” (1 Cor. 12:23–24).

6. Pronouns: Shall We Call a Boy *She* and a Girl *He*? One further aspect of the transgender movement is the apparent determination by much mainstream media to refer to biological males and females with pronouns that do not correspond to the truth of who they are but reflect the “gender” that they have chosen for themselves. Thus, a transgender “woman” who is biologically a man will be referred to in media reports with the pronouns *she* and *her*, because that is what he prefers. For example, Bruce Jenner, the famous Olympic athlete (gold-medal winner in the decathlon in 1976), who now claims to be transgender and identifies himself as Caitlyn Jenner, will be referred to with the pronouns *she* and *her*.

This is something I do not think Christians should do, and something that I, in good conscience, cannot do. This is the pressure of society attempting to force me to affirm a lie, to affirm that Jenner is actually now a woman. But this is false. He is a man, he has

⁸⁰ Bradford Richardson, “Transgender Weightlifter Breaks Record in Women’s Competition,” *The Washington Times*, March 21, 2017, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/mar/21/transgender-weightlifter-breaks-womens-record/>.

⁸¹ Douglas Ernst, “Transgender Students’ All-State Honors in Girls’ Track and Field Ignites Backlash,” *The Washington Times*, June 6, 2016, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/jun/6/nattaphon-wangyot-transgender-student-riles-critic/>.

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J. APPENDIX 1: THE NASHVILLE STATEMENT

Several evangelical organizations have recently sought to formulate wise policy statements about homosexuality and transgenderism. Because every church and Christian organization will likely be asked about their position on these issues in the next few years, I decided to include as appendixes in this chapter two recent, biblically faithful sets of guidelines that churches and parachurch organizations might find useful in formulating their own policies.

The first is the Nashville Statement, published by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. The statement was finalized at a meeting of evangelical pastors, leaders, and scholars in Nashville, Tennessee, on Aug. 25, 2017. I was part of the drafting committee and also one of the more than 180 initial signers. Many thousands of others have subsequently signed it.⁸²

Nashville Statement

A Coalition for Biblical Sexuality

“Know that the LORD Himself is God;

It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves . . .”

Psalm 100:3

Preamble

Evangelical Christians at the dawn of the 21st century find themselves living in a period of historic transition. As Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian, it has embarked upon a massive revision of what it means to be a human being. By and large the spirit of our age no longer discerns or delights in the beauty of God’s design for human life. Many deny that God created human beings for his glory, and that his good purposes for us include our personal and physical design as male and female. It is common to think that human identity as male and female is not part of God’s beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an individual’s autonomous preferences. The pathway to full and lasting joy through God’s good design for his creatures is thus replaced by the path of shortsighted alternatives that, sooner or later, ruin human life and dishonor God.

This secular spirit of our age presents a great challenge to the Christian church. Will the church of the Lord Jesus Christ lose her biblical conviction, clarity, and courage, and blend into the spirit of the age? Or will she hold fast to the word of life, draw courage

⁸² See <https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement>.