

08 Transgender Identities

PARENT GUIDE

BIG IDEA:

Transgender identities can be confusing and misunderstood. This week is devoted to understanding the transgender conversation, especially the role that gender stereotypes play in that conversation, and to helping your child understand what the Bible says about our sexed (male and female) embodiment.

5 Minute Check-In with Yourself and/or Your Spouse:

1. Have you had any conversations about trans* people or the broader topic of gender identity in your home? How did that conversation go, and what aspects did you talk about?
 2. How would you define “transgender”? How would you define “nonbinary”?
 3. If a loved one (child, relative, friend) told you they were trans*, how would you respond?
 4. Do you think the church has handled this topic well? If so, what does this look like? If not, what would you like to see take place?
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5 Minute Check-In with Your Child:

1. What stood out to you in this week’s teaching and/or small group time?
2. Do you know anyone who publicly identifies as transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, or any other similar identity? How are they treated or viewed by others?
3. How would you define and understand each of these identities?

Tips for Further Conversation:

As with last week's conversation, language is very important as you seek to understand and engage the topic of transgender identities. Please review last week's list of terms to use and terms to avoid. And as we've said throughout this series, we want to uphold and believe the truth of the Bible *and* extend love and grace to everyone created in God's image. As you dialogue with your child about this topic, it's important to keep both grace and truth at the forefront of your conversations.

In last week's parent guide, I gave you several pieces of advice which also apply here: Be honest about your own mistakes in this conversation; be okay with the complexities of this conversation; this is about people; be consistent. I want to add a few more pieces of advice that are specific to the trans* conversation. ("Trans*," with the asterisk, is a catch-all identity term that includes transgender, nonbinary, genderfluid, and other similar gender identities.)

Trans* identities are becoming more and more common.

Not just transgender, but other related identities like nonbinary, genderqueer, genderfluid, pangender, and omnigender are increasingly prevalent. Teenage girls especially are coming out and embracing these identities at a much higher rate than ever before. It's much more common today that a teenage female will identify with one of these gender identities than that they will identify as a lesbian (which is becoming much less common, though bisexuality is on the rise among teen girls).

It's likely that your child will be more familiar with these identities than most adults are. This doesn't mean they actually know what these identities mean, but it does mean that we can learn from our kids about the current climate at school as it pertains to the trans* conversation.

Don't mock or be annoyed at some of the claims being made in the trans* conversation.

There are certainly some farfetched, even unscientific, claims being made in the broader trans* conversation, some of which your kids may hear at school or even be taught in the classroom. (For example, students might be taught that biological sex is a social construct, or that there is no difference between men



and women--neither of which is scientifically true.) But it's still important for you to be calm and inquisitive, ask your kids about what they're learning, and enter into the conversation as a wise and humble guide. Mocking, making fun of, or showing outrage over what seems like the latest fad or unscientific claim won't get you very far in your relationship with your kid. It can easily be interpreted as you mocking or making fun of their friends--or *them*. In short, help your child think critically and Christianly about this topic, always remembering that the conversation is about real people.

Be flexible with gender stereotypes.

One of the things emphasized in the video this week is that culturally driven gender stereotypes aren't mandated in the Bible. In other words, the Bible does not say all men *must be* stereotypically masculine, or all women stereotypically feminine. If you have a son who doesn't like sports or prefers art over action movies, this is perfectly fine. He hasn't violated any command in Scripture. And if your daughter would rather play paintball than wear pink dresses, she hasn't disobeyed God. Help your child see how they don't need to match up to some stereotype in order to be a faithful follower of Christ.



Additional Resources:

VIDEO: Full-length interview with Heather Skriba

BOOK: Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say*.

TOOL: Weekly devotional

Counselors Who Specialize in Gender Dysphoria

Dr. Charity Lane (Wheaton, IL) -

<https://www.heritageprofessional.com/staff/charity-r-lane-psy-d/>

Dr. Corey Gilbert (Salem, OR) - <http://healinglives.com>

Sasha Ayad (Houston, TX) - <https://inspiredteentherapy.com>

Dr. Mark Yarhouse (Wheaton, IL) -

<https://www.wheaton.edu/academics/faculty/mark-yarhouse/>

Dr. Juli Sadusky (Denver, CO) - <https://www.juliasadusky.com/about>

