

“What is a Biblical View of Transgendered People and Hermaphrodites?”

Hello, I would like to know the biblical insight on transgenderism *[Definition: appearing as, wishing to be considered as, or having undergone surgery to become a member of the opposite sex]* and other sexual defects of the human body. There are lots of issues like hermaphroditism and inter-sexualism *[a set of medical conditions where the sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or an internal reproductive system are not considered “standard” for either male or female]*. Please try to clear these issues up with sound doctrine.

There are really two issues here: 1) transgendered people and 2) the intersexed (new term) or hermaphrodites (older term).

The first is usually an emotional problem, not really a sexual one. The “transgendered” label reflects a sexual identity confusion and not a true condition. God doesn’t create a person with the genitals of a male and the consciousness and heart of a female. In Genesis 1:26, the Bible says, “And God created man in His image, in His likeness; male and female He created them . . . and it was very good.” In addition, 1 Corinthians 14:33 says that “God is not a God of confusion but of peace,” so deliberately creating someone with self-contradiction appears to go against the very nature of God.

Maleness and femaleness are God’s choice, determined at conception. But growing into one’s masculinity or femininity and *embracing* it can be thwarted by very early events that prevent children from having a clear sense of their gender. Gender identity is a developmental issue, and it starts at birth. All the many, many layers of affirmation and validation of one’s personhood that contribute to self-understanding (of which gender is a part) start getting laid down the moment one

is born, and they go on hour by hour, day by day, for years in childhood. No wonder so many people think they were born gay, lesbian, or transgendered! They can't remember all the way back to birth when the messages they received about who they were, had yet to be delivered. In addition, some people perceive the messages of parents and family differently than what was intended, and those perceptions ARE their reality.

The biblical view is that [God's intent](#) for every male is to grow into masculinity, and for every female to grow into femininity. When that doesn't happen, the culture has come up with new labels to describe something new and different: transgendered, transsexual. I believe God isn't affected by these new labels nor does He have to honor them: He sees the people behind the labels as His precious, broken children. It's only recently that the culture has tried to suggest that "a woman in a man's body" and vice versa is a variation of what is normal and right. The biology of sex alone tells us that homosexuality (under which these other categories of emotional/sexual dysfunction should be put) is not normal. The Bible tells us (Genesis 1:26) that God's intent is heterosexuality, with definite boundaries between men and women in both appearance and behavior. (I can give you more information on this concept if you want.)

I recently attended a national Exodus conference, a gathering of about 900 people who are walking out of homosexuality and those who minister to them. It was interesting to me to see people there who would call themselves transgendered, as well as transsexuals who had had sex-change surgery. They were at the conference because of a growing awareness that they had interfered with God's plan for their lives; God had revealed His intent for their gender at birth. They had been living as the opposite sex in a false self that was tragically far from what God had intended for them, and that explained why the great pains to which they had gone to fix their brokenness didn't bring the peace and relief they thought they would get

through assuming a new identity and/or having surgery.

Concerning intersexed people (hermaphrodites), allow me to share what my friend Rev. Mark Chalemin (now serving as Education Director at Coaches Outreach) and I collaborated on to answer this question for someone else:

By definition a hermaphrodite is “a person born with both male and female sex organs.” Within this definition there are three labels; true, female pseudo, and male pseudo. The first category is extremely rare with only 350-450 known cases. The second type, and the most common, is female pseudo resulting in 1 of every 14,000 births. The main cause for this is a condition known as Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia. In these cases there is an overproduction of testosterone causing some “masculinized” features in the female. This does not mean that there is any real gender confusion. There is not. As with any female, her chromosome is XX. Any slight mutation, that may accompany is treated early by corrective surgery. The same situation may occur in baby boys with the same treatment. (There is a movement to stop this surgery, which is being called genital mutilation by some of those who have had it, and allow children’s bodies to grow and develop naturally, even if they are different.) It seems that even with ambiguous genitalia, these kids “know” if they are intrinsically male or female.

In either situation, the sexual identity, given by God, may perhaps reveal traits normally associated with the opposite sex. For example, the baby girl may grow up to be naturally more athletic or aggressive than the average woman, but she is very much a woman. Similarly, the baby boy may have a naturally heightened sensitivity and/or affinity towards the arts. Nevertheless, he is still very much a man.

What is God’s take in all of this?

God views every individual as He made them. While He did not

make clones, he did create males and females with certain unique sexual characteristics. He also intended for males to manifest primarily masculine characteristics, and for females to manifest primarily feminine characteristics, although both sexes reflect aspects of both the masculine and the feminine in varying degrees. Along with those traits, He has provided direction on how we are to relate to one another. There is no prohibition regarding a slightly more “masculine” female or a slightly more “feminine” man. God views them as he does anyone else, with love and delight, and He desires that they experience all the freedom all He designed them to have, within the boundaries of the sexual identity God gave to them. The fact that some individuals are born with evidence of mutations in their sex-determining genes doesn’t change their value in God’s eyes any more than someone born with the mutation that causes cystic fibrosis or sickle-cell anemia.

You asked for sound doctrine; I can only respond with the wise and loving boundaries that God has established for sex (which is usually the issue here, right?). All sexual behavior is to be contained within marriage (see the many condemnations of fornication). Men are to act and appear as men, and women are to act and appear as women (Deuteronomy 22:5). Even those born with genital ambiguity are expected to submit to His boundaries. I realize this is a very politically incorrect perspective in a sex-saturated culture that declares sexual expression is a right for everyone. But it isn’t. God wants every person, regardless of their genital or chromosomal condition, to submit his or her sexuality to Him and to glorify Him in whatever state we find ourselves.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

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I was moved by this email I received from someone who lives with the challenges of intersex every day, and wanted to share it here:

A pastor friend was removed from being a pastor due to the nature of his birth (intersexed) in having both male and female parts, but condition helped with surgery, now married with children.

I am at the foundational level of intersexed in being an XXY male, was 53 before learning of my condition, but had gone through the change of life and also excessive breast tissue for a male.

I am always offended when we as intersexed people are spoken of in the same breath with homosexuals or added to their agenda when those of us who follow Jesus are as much opposed to the gay lifestyle as any other who will not compromise God's Word to validate sin or lust. I also believe that a true Eunuch is one who is unmarried and celibate which is only for those with the gift to remain that way.

To this day I have never heard a sermon or teaching regarding hermaphrodites in the church—covered by the same grace but forced into the basement due to ignorance and an imposed shame for being “so born from our mother's womb,” something we had no choice about, unlike those acting on their homosexual feelings or those with a mental condition rather than a genetic defect which is temporary.

Your article about “transgendered” was interesting but I am more concerned about attitudes we encounter for being who we are which to me is just unique. Scars today only say that healing happened and no more open wounds. . . Just as Jesus is proud of His scars that say healing happened.

To me there is just the Natural man, Spiritual man and the

carnal Christian, only three kinds of people on the planet with a variety of physical and mental differences. But attitudes we encounter as intersexed people would lead folks to think maybe there is an additional “type” who doesn’t fit any mold or classification or addressed in scripture. But again the only problem I see is attitudes springing from ignorance; one can not love God without loving all the people of God, yet the subject is rarely if ever addressed completely to make us at least feel as if we fully belong among other people more normal than we are and that we are not freaks. The real us is spirit!

I also received this email:

Hi Sue,

Just read your blog on transgendered issues. Agree wholeheartedly. There is a third category that appears as XY = Female. This occurs due to a hormone receptor deformity that renders the fetus insensitive to androgen hormones. The degree of sexual formation differs between females with vagina and partially formed males—though not hermaphrodite. This category is considered Partial Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (PAIS) and Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (CAIS). To your point, these children are fully female (perhaps extremely so) and there is no confusion regarding their design. Genetically, they test as XY, but physiologically they are female from birth. I should note that they are all sterile and many require a Y-V vaginoplasty to create a vaginal opening and open the musculature for the vagina itself. They also require hormone therapy to complete the appearance of a female (breasts), but remain without follicular body hair with the exception of their head. Most often, whatever gonads they possess are removed early due to the tendency to rapidly convert to cancerous tissue.

Again, I think your point is well made. God does things we may

not anticipate, and sin corrupts the gene pool, but His design is male and female. We do not have the option to decide we do not like what he created us to be.

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Homosexual Theology: A Biblically Sound View

Kerby Anderson helps understand the complete biblical perspective on homosexuality. As Christians, Kerby helps us understand the biblical truth and how to apply it with compassion in our dealings with those around us.

The Sin of Sodom—Genesis 19

Does the Bible condemn homosexuality? For centuries the answer to that question seemed obvious, but in the last few decades pro- homosexual commentators have tried to reinterpret the relevant biblical passages. In this discussion we will take a look at their exegesis.

The first reference to homosexuality in the Bible is found in Genesis 19. In this passage, Lot entertains two angels who come to the city to investigate its sins. Before they go to bed, all the men (from every part of the city of Sodom) surround the house and order him to bring out the men so that “we may know them.” Historically commentators have always assumed that the Hebrew word for “know” meant that the men of the city wanted to have sex with the visitors.

More recently, proponents of homosexuality argue that biblical commentators misunderstand the story of Sodom. They argue that

the men of the city merely wanted to meet these visitors. Either they were anxious to extend Middle-eastern hospitality or they wanted to interrogate the men and make sure they weren't spies. In either case, they argue, the passage has nothing to do with homosexuality. The sin of Sodom is not homosexuality, they say, but inhospitality.

One of the keys to understanding this passage is the proper translation of the Hebrew word for "know." Pro-homosexuality commentators point out that this word can also mean "to get acquainted with" as well as mean "to have intercourse with." In fact, the word appears over 943 times in the Old Testament, and only 12 times does it mean "to have intercourse with." Therefore, they conclude that the sin of Sodom had nothing to do with homosexuality.

The problem with the argument is context. Statistics is not the same as exegesis. Word count alone should not be the sole criterion for the meaning of a word. And even if a statistical count should be used, the argument backfires. Of the 12 times the word "to know" is used in the book of Genesis, in 10 of those 12 it means "to have intercourse with."

Second, the context does not warrant the interpretation that the men only wanted to get acquainted with the strangers. Notice that Lot decides to offer his two daughters instead. In reading the passage, one can sense Lot's panic as he foolishly offers his virgin daughters to the crowd instead of the foreigners. This is not the action of a man responding to the crowd's request "to become acquainted with" the men.

Notice that Lot describes his daughters as women who "have not known" a man. Obviously this implies sexual intercourse and does not mean "to be acquainted with." It is unlikely that the first use of the word "to know" differs from the second use of the word. Both times the word "to know" should be translated "to have intercourse with." This is the only consistent translation for the passage.

Finally, Jude 7 provides a commentary on Genesis 19. The New Testament reference states that the sin of Sodom involved gross immorality and going after strange flesh. The phrase “strange flesh” could imply homosexuality or bestiality and provides further evidence that the sin of Sodom was not inhospitality but homosexuality.

Contrary to what pro-homosexual commentators say, Genesis 19 is a clear condemnation of homosexuality. Next we will look at another set of Old Testament passages dealing with the issue of homosexuality.

Mosaic Law—Leviticus 18, 20

Now we will look at the Mosaic Law. Two passages in Leviticus call homosexuality an abomination. Leviticus 18:22 says, “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.” Leviticus 20:13 says, “If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable.” The word for “abomination” is used five times in Leviticus 18 and is a strong term of disapproval, implying that something is abhorrent to God. Biblical commentators see these verses as an expansion of the seventh commandment. Though not an exhaustive list of sexual sins, they are representative of the common sinful practices of nations surrounding Israel.

Pro-homosexual commentators have more difficulty dealing with these relatively simple passages of Scripture, but usually offer one of two responses. Some argue that these verses appear in the Holiness code of the Leviticus and only applies to the priests and ritual purity. Therefore, according to this perspective, these are religious prohibitions, not moral prohibitions. Others argue that these prohibitions were merely for the Old Testament theocracy and are not relevant today. They suggest that if Christians wanted to be consistent with the Old Testament law code in Leviticus, they should avoid eating rare steak, wearing mixed fabrics, and having marital

intercourse during the menstrual period.

First, do these passages merely apply to ritual purity rather than moral purity? Part of the problem comes from making the two issues distinct. The priests were to model moral behavior within their ceremonial rituals. Moral purity and ritual purity cannot be separated, especially when discussing the issue of human sexuality. To hold to this rigid distinction would imply that such sins as adultery were not immoral (consider Lev. 18:20) or that bestiality was morally acceptable (notice Lev. 18:23). The second argument concerns the relevance of the law today. Few Christians today keep kosher kitchens or balk at wearing clothes interwoven with more than one fabric. They believe that those Old Testament laws do not pertain to them. In a similar way pro-homosexual commentators argue that the Old Testament admonitions against homosexuality are no longer relevant today. A practical problem with this argument is that more than just homosexuality would have to be deemed morally acceptable. The logical extension of this argument would also have to make bestiality and incest morally acceptable since prohibitions to these two sins surround the prohibition against homosexuality. If the Mosaic law is irrelevant to homosexuality, then it is also irrelevant to having sex with animals or having sex with children.

More to the point, to say that the Mosaic law has ended is not to say that God has no laws or moral codes for mankind. Even though the ceremonial law has passed, the moral law remains. The New Testament speaks of the "law of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:2) and the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). One cannot say that something that was sin under the Law is not sin under grace. Ceremonial laws concerning diet or wearing mixed fabrics no longer apply, but moral laws (especially those rooted in God's creation order for human sexuality) continue. Moreover, these prohibitions against homosexuality can also be found in the New Testament as we will see next as we consider other

passages reinterpreted by pro-homosexual commentators.

New Testament Passages

In our examination of the Old Testament teachings regarding homosexuality, we found that Genesis 19 teaches that the men of Sodom were seeking the strangers in order to have sex with them, not merely asking to meet these men or to extend Middle Eastern hospitality to them. We also discovered that certain passages in Leviticus clearly condemn homosexuality and are relevant today. These prohibitions were not just for the Old Testament theocracy, but were moral principles binding on human behavior and conduct today.

At this point we will consider some of the New Testament passages dealing with homosexuality. Three key New Testament passages concerning homosexuality are: Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and 1 Timothy 1:10. Of the three, the most significant is Romans 1 because it deals with homosexuality within the larger cultural context.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Here the Apostle Paul sets the Gentile world's guilt before a holy God and focuses on the arrogance and lust of the Hellenistic world. He says they have turned away from a true worship of God so that "God gave them over to shameful lusts." Rather than follow God's instruction in their lives, they "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18) and follow passions that dishonor God.

Another New Testament passage dealing with homosexuality is 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. "Do you not know that the wicked will not

inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” Pro- homosexual commentators make use of the “abuse” argument and point out that Paul is only singling out homosexual offenders. In other words, they argue that the Apostle Paul is condemning homosexual abuse rather than responsible homosexual behavior. In essence, these commentators are suggesting that Paul is calling for temperance rather than abstinence. While this could be a reasonable interpretation for drinking wine (don’t be a drunkard), it hardly applies to other sins listed in 1 Corinthians 6 or 1 Timothy 1. Is Paul calling for responsible adultery or responsible prostitution? Is there such a thing as moral theft and swindling? Obviously the argument breaks down. Scripture never condones sex outside of marriage (premarital sex, extramarital sex, homosexual sex). God created man and woman for the institution of marriage (Gen. 2:24). Homosexuality is a violation of the creation order, and God clearly condemns it as unnatural and specifically against His ordained order. As we have seen in the discussion thus far, there are passages in both the Old Testament and the New Testament which condemn homosexuality.

“God Made Me Gay,” Part 1

At this point in our discussion, we need to consider the claim made by some homosexuals that, “God made me gay.” Is this true? Is there a biological basis to homosexuality? For the remainder of this essay, we will consider the evidence usually cited. Simon LeVay (a neuroscientist at the Salk Institute) has argued that homosexuals and heterosexuals have notable differences in the structure of their brains. In 1991, he studied 41 cadavers and found that a specific portion of the hypothalamus (the area that governs sexual activity) was consistently smaller in homosexuals than in heterosexuals. He

therefore argued that there is a distinct physiological component to sexual orientation. There are numerous problems with the study. First, there was considerable range in the size of the hypothalamic region. In a few homosexual men, this region was the same size as that of the heterosexuals, and in a few heterosexuals this region was as small as that of a homosexual.

Second is the chicken and egg problem. When there is a difference in brain structure, is the difference the *result* of sexual orientation or is it the *cause* of sexual orientation? Researchers, for example, have found that when people who become blind begin to learn Braille, the area of the brain controlling the reading finger actually grows larger. Third, Simon LeVay later had to admit that he didn't know the sexual orientation of some of the cadavers in the study. He acknowledged that he wasn't sure if the heterosexual males in the study were actually heterosexual. Since some of those he identified as "heterosexual" died of AIDS, critics raised doubts about the accuracy of his study.

In December 1991, Michael Bailey and Richard Pillard published a study of homosexuality in twins. They surveyed homosexual men about their brothers and found statistics they believed proved that sexual orientation is biological. Of the homosexuals who had identical twin brothers, 52 percent of those twins were also homosexual, 22 percent of those who had fraternal twins said that their twin was gay, and only 11 percent of those who had an adopted sibling said their adopted brothers were also homosexual. They attributed the differences in those percentages to the differences in genetic material shared.

Though this study has also been touted as proving a genetic basis to homosexuality, there are significant problems. First, the theory is not new. It was first proposed in 1952. Since that time, three other separate research studies come to very different conclusions. Therefore, the conclusions of the

Bailey-Pillard study should be considered in the light of other contrary studies. Second, most published reports did not mention that only 9 percent of the non-twin brothers of homosexuals were homosexuals. Fraternal twins share no more genetic material than non-twin brothers, yet homosexuals are more than twice as likely to share their sexual orientation with a fraternal twin than with a non-twin brother. Whatever the reason, the answer cannot be genetic.

Third, why aren't nearly all identical twin brothers of homosexuals also homosexual? In other words, if biology is determinative, why are nearly half the identical twins not homosexual? Dr. Bailey admitted that there "must be something in the environment to yield the discordant twins." And that is precisely the point; there is something (perhaps everything) in the environment to explain sexual orientation. These are two studies usually cited as evidence of a biological basis for homosexuality. Next we will consider a third study often cited to prove the claim that "God made me gay."

"God Made Me Gay," Part 2

Now let's look at another study often cited as proof of this claim. This study is often called the "gay gene" study. In 1993, a team of researchers led by Dr. Dean Hamer announced "preliminary" findings from research into the connection between homosexuality and genetic inheritance. In a sample of 76 homosexual males, the researchers found a statistically higher incidence of homosexuality in their male relatives (brothers, uncles) on their mother's side of the family. This suggested a possible inherited link through the X chromosome. A follow-up study of 40 pairs of homosexual brothers found that 33 shared a variation in a small section of the X chromosome. Although this study was promoted by the press as evidence of the discovery of a gay gene, some of the same concerns raised with the previous two studies apply here. First, the findings involve a limited sample size and are

therefore sketchy. Even the researchers acknowledged that these were “preliminary” findings. In addition to the sample size being small, there was no control testing done for heterosexual brothers. Another major issue raised by critics of the study concerned the lack of sufficient research done on the social histories of the families involved.

Second, similarity does not prove cause. Just because 33 pairs of homosexual brothers share a genetic variation doesn't mean that variation causes homosexuality. And what about the other 7 pairs that did not show the variation but were homosexuals?

Finally, research bias may again be an issue. Dr. Hamer and at least one of his other team members are homosexual. It appears that this was deliberately kept from the press and was only revealed later. Dr. Hamer it turns out is not merely an objective observer. He has presented himself as an expert witness on homosexuality, and he has stated that he hopes his research would give comfort to men feeling guilty about their homosexuality.

By the way, this was a problem in every one of the studies we have mentioned in our discussion. For example, Dr. Simon LeVay said that he was driven to study the potential physiological roots of homosexuality after his homosexual lover died of AIDS. He even admitted that if he failed to find a genetic cause for homosexuality that he might walk away from science altogether. Later he did just that by moving to West Hollywood to open up a small, unaccredited “study center” focusing on homosexuality.

Each of these three studies looking for a biological cause for homosexuality has its flaws. Does that mean that there is no physiological component to homosexuality? Not at all. Actually, it is probably too early to say conclusively. Scientists may indeed discover a clear biological predisposition to sexual orientation. But a predisposition is not the same as a determination. Some people may inherit a

predisposition for anger, depression, or alcoholism, yet we do not condone these behaviors. And even if violence, depression, or alcoholism were proven to be inborn (determined by genetic material), would we accept them as normal and refuse to treat them? Of course not. The Bible has clear statements about such things as anger and alcoholism. Likewise, the Bible has clear statements about homosexuality.

In our discussion in this transcript, we have examined the various claims of pro-homosexual commentators and found them wanting. Contrary to their claims, the Bible does not condone homosexual behavior.

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