“My Daughter Says She’s a Boy—What Do I Do?”

A real question from a real mom: “Sue, my daughter insists she’s a boy. She has rejected all things feminine since she was a toddler. Now as a 15-year-old she says there’s a mismatch between her brain and her body. She wants “top surgery” (a double mastectomy) and testosterone to bring her insides and outsides into alignment. She says God made her this way and He doesn’t make mistakes so she is embracing a transgender identity. What do I do?”

Oh sister. I am so sorry. I can only begin to imagine the pain, the chaos, and the conflict this is causing in your family.

Let’s start with, what do we know is true?

1. God loves her. She is very dear to Him. He made her in His image and likeness. He sent His Son to give His life for her, proving once and for all how infinitely precious she is. And He may just be especially tender toward her, when we consider Isaiah 42:3—”A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;”
2. The Creator God made her a girl. He has plans and purposes for her as a female.
3. She’s only 15, and her pre-frontal cortex won’t finish developing for another 10 years. She’s not in a position to judge accurately the long-term effects of choices she makes today.
4. You are an adult, and you can see the long-term effects. It’s essential that you not cave to pressure.
5. This issue is so rife with conflict and political correctness that everything I’m about to say will make someone furious.

What do you do? Well, first, you **love her well**. You stay focused on the wonderful gifts and talents and personality that you appreciate about her, and you keep affirming her for these aspects of who she is. Her sense of self, her sexuality, is not WHO she is, it's HOW she is. For right now.

Like any child or teenager (or adult, for that matter), she longs for her parents' acceptance—but acceptance is not the same as approval. Acceptance means acknowledging their experience, and their perception of reality, without endorsing the conclusions they come to or the choices they make. (Consider that God accepts us, Romans 14:18 and 15:7, but He certainly doesn't approve of everything we do!)

Loving her well means listening in order to communicate that you are seeking to understand her. It means showing compassion. Believing that one is transgender is *hard*. Those with internal conflicts about their gender are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, a sense of not belonging, and often have thoughts of suicide. She needs your tenderness.

What else do you do? **Educate yourself about this issue**, so you can speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) to your daughter and to friends and family as this comes into the light.

Gender Dysphoria is a thinking disorder, not a body disorder. If your daughter announced she were a cat, or a unicorn, how would you deal with that? Dr. Phil McGraw teaches that the first test that one's thinking is rational is that it has to be grounded in objective fact{1}. Our sex—male or female—is an objective truth that becomes apparent at birth. God, who knits us together in our mother's womb where we are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:13-14), is the one who chooses and then reveals His plan for our gender. That is objective fact. If someone thinks or feels that they are something other than what God has made them to be, it's their thinking that is skewed, not their body. Unfortunately, our culture is very good at elevating feelings above objective truth, and that is

at the core of the transgender issue.

I think that when children and adolescents claim to be the opposite sex, it's really about **not fitting into gender stereotypes**. You said your daughter "rejected all things feminine" since she was very small. That was about pink and purple sparkly princess dresses and bows in her hair, right? And she hated them? I respectfully suggest it wasn't femininity she was rejecting, it was a certain KIND of femininity, the stereotype we as a culture (particularly a culture infected with Disney princess images) label feminine. God also delights to make sporty, athletic, very physical and competitive girls who don't really care for frilly, girly-girl clothes. They can have a hard time playing house because nobody wins! These girls are still sensitive and compassionate, still emotional and verbal, but they'd rather be outside climbing trees and throwing perfect spirals to the neighborhood boys. These are not inferior girls, they're not lesser-than girls, they're just not in the majority. They are girls who love sports and are good at it, or girls who don't care for dresses or nail polish, or girls who just don't get the superficiality of many of their girl peers. They are the kind of girl God made them to be. When they are supported and celebrated for the kind of girl they are, their sense of disconnect with their femininity can decrease as their awareness of God's good creation of femininity increases.

Please see my post The Gender Spectrum for more information.

Sometimes, **the impact of various kinds of abuse** can make a girl think that it is neither good nor safe to be a girl. They can convince themselves that if they were a boy, they could protect themselves and they wouldn't be at risk because boys don't get abused or molested. (Which, of course, is not true!) The solution is not to impersonate a boy and mutilate her body, but to get help processing the deep soul wounds of abuse and molestation.

Just as depressed people can often take comfort and refuge in the idea of ending their pain through suicide, those who experience a sense of misalignment with their birth sex can put their hopes in transitioning to the opposite sex through cross-hormone therapy and ultimately surgery. But very few are aware of the testimonies of those who regret doing this. Walt Heyer of sexchangeregret.com has recently released a book, *Trans Life Survivors*, comprised of letters and emails from people who are very sorry for what they did to their bodies: the ongoing medical problems and the deep sense of loss at mutilating their bodies.{2}

I know you are afraid of your daughter committing suicide because that is the drum that is constantly beaten by the pro-trans side: "If you don't cooperate with your child's plans to transition, there's a high suicide rate when kids are not supported in their preferred gender identity." That is a bone-chilling fear, one my husband and I personally know in our family. But you should know two things: first, it's not necessarily true. See the article "The Suicide Myth" here: www.transgendertrend.com/the-suicide-myth/ Second, we do know that the suicide rate is 20 times higher in those who DO transition.

In a commentary titled "Sex Reassignment Doesn't Work: Here's the Evidence," Ryan T. Anderson writes,

> When 'the tumult and shouting dies,' it proves not easy nor wise to live in a counterfeit sexual garb. The most thorough follow-up of sex-reassigned people—extending over 30 years and conducted in Sweden, where the culture is strongly supportive of the transgendered—documents their lifelong mental unrest. Ten to 15 years after surgical reassignment, the suicide rate of those who had undergone sex-reassignment surgery rose to *20 times that of comparable peers*."{3} (Emphasis mine)

This means that the risk of suicide is far greater In those

who transition, than those who don't.

Be aware of the power of social media. One of my heroes is Collin Karchner, who is "on a crusade to save teens from social media's potential destruction to their self-esteem and mental health, and empowering parents to reconnect with their kids." (savethekids.us/) I am amazed at the number of young lives he is saving by showing them how destructive social media can be, and the good that happens when teens cut themselves off from the negativity online. The destructive forces of social media certainly manifest in the growing numbers of kids and teens thinking they are transgender.

Recently, my colleague Kerby Anderson had me on his Point of View radio program talking about Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria, which is a part of social contagion. He posted this article on the ministry website: pointofview.net/articles/rapid-onset-gender-dysphoria/

Tumblr is a magnet for young girls, who are extremely vulnerable to the ideas and images on social media, and it is egregiously pro-trans. You should know about this social contagion phenomenon on that platform here: 4thwavenow.com/tag/tumblr-trans-contagion/

As I said above, educate yourself. But know that the pro-trans activists have been extremely successful at shutting down the voices of those concerned about the full-steam-ahead transgender agenda. You'll have to do some digging.

Check out the work and the writings of psychologist Dr. Kenneth Zucker, who counseled over 560 children and teens with gender confusion at his clinic in Toronto over 35-40 years. He found that when kids were able to go through puberty naturally, Gender Identity Disorder (a phrase he coined) resolved in 98% of boys and 80% of girls. This is profound! Apparently, there is something about the rush of the correct hormones during puberty that resets things internally in the

vast majority of adolescents. The best treatment for those who feel at odds in their body is to wait and watch.

You should also know about Dr. Paul McHugh, for many years the Psychiatrist-in-Chief at Johns Hopkins University, who shut down the sex change clinic when he found that post-surgically, the patients still had their neuroses. In the article "Surgical Sex," he wrote,

> "When I became psychiatrist-in-chief at Johns Hopkins, I realized that by doing sex-change operations the hospital was fundamentally cooperating with a mental illness. We would do better for these patients, I thought, by concentrating on trying to fix their minds and not their genitalia."{4}

Be very skeptical of anything from WPATH, World Professional Association for Transgender Health. They are completely uninterested in providing any balance to their reports or articles, and their poorly designed studies have no control groups. (For more information, watch this video from pediatric endocrinologist Dr, Quentin Van Meter, "The Terrible Fraud of 'Transgender Medicine'" at youtu.be/6mtQ1geeD_c)

My last suggestion is the most important. ***PRAY.*** This is a spiritual warfare battle. The enemy prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8), and he is coming after our kids like nothing we've ever seen before. I have seen numerous people snatched from the enemy's claws as God does "spiritual cataract surgery," allowing them to see what they were blind to before, because of the faithful prayers of faithful parents and family members. Pray that the Lord will strengthen and protect your daughter from the evil one (2 Thessalonians 3:3). Pray for the eyes of her heart to be enlightened so she can see the truth about herself (Ephesians 1:18).

Pray and don't give up.

Notes

1. drphilintheblanks.com, Living by Design Worksheets.
2. sexchangeregret.com/bookstore/
3. www.heritage.org/gender/commentary/sex-reassignment-doesnt-work-here-the-evidence
4. www.firstthings.com/article/2004/11/surgical-sex

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/my-daughter-says-shes-a-boy-what-do-i-do
on June 11, 2019.

What I'd Love to Say to Bruce Jenner

In Bruce Jenner's recent TV interview with Diane Sawyer, the world-famous former athlete disclosed that "For all intents and purposes, I am a woman." He's being widely praised as a courageous hero for normalizing the T in LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender).

I have a few thoughts I would love to share with him over a cup of coffee:

Bruce, you said you've known since you were young that you felt a mismatch between your insides and your outsides: "My brain is much more female than it is male . . . that's what my soul is." I have no doubt this was confusing for you, as a boy so clearly athletically gifted.

May I share a different interpretation of your experience?

Most people think there is a single gender spectrum or continuum that runs from masculinity to femininity. Since God's Word says that in the beginning, He created humankind male and female (Genesis 1:27), I think there is one spectrum for masculinity and a separate spectrum for femininity, and God chooses what kind of masculine or feminine each baby starts out as. On one end of the masculinity spectrum are the rough-and-tumble, athletic boys who tend to emotional insensitivity—the ones often called "All-American boys." On the other end, equally masculine albeit a different kind of masculinity, are the creative, artistic, musical, emotionally sensitive boys. Boys and men can be anywhere along that spectrum. And with emotional and especially spiritual growth, they can start taking up more bandwidth. The athletic ones can learn to listen well and show empathy to others; the sensitive ones can learn to be more comfortable with their bodies and feel more like they actually belong to the world of males.

Some, like you, are given the rare gift of possessing almost the whole spectrum at once (like Jesus, I think—a "man's man" who drew other men to Himself, and the ultimate in creative, artistic and sensitive, since He was the Creator of the universe, of sunsets, and of women!). You were crazy-gifted physically, becoming arguably the world's best athlete in the 1976 Olympics. And at the same time, you said that you believed God gave you "the soul of a female."

I don't think your creative, sensitive soul is that of a female, but of a sensitive, gifted kind of male. This was understood better in earlier days. During the Civil War, General Joshua Chamberlain showed uncommon courage and leadership during the battle of Gettysburg, complemented by deep compassion and respect for others. He would walk the battlefield, seeking out and caring for the casualties. He sat down with the wounded General Sickles to try and cheer him up, who whispered, "General, you have the soul of the lion and the heart of the woman." Chamberlain, clearly honored by this

praise, returned the blessing to the one who gave it.

Bruce, I don't think God gave you the soul of a female. I think He gave you a body and soul very much like His Son. I think it would be fair to say you have the soul of the lion and the heart of the woman, and that does not detract one whit from your masculinity.

One Christian to another, I want to encourage you to develop an eternal perspective rather than only thinking about the here-and-now earthly life. In your interview, you said, "I couldn't take the walls constantly closing in on me. If I die. . . I'd be so mad at myself that I didn't explore that side of me." But the end of your earthly life is only the last step before entering the glory of eternity. We need to always put more weight on the unseen and eternal rather than the seen and temporal. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 says, "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Your unhappiness with your gender identity qualifies as "momentary, light affliction" according to the standard God uses. You will spend the rest of your (eternal) life in your new body, a resurrection body similar to the Lord Jesus'. God chose for you to be male, just as His Son was male, and is still male. So will you be, for all eternity. That should help put your earthly life into perspective.

Bruce, I say this really, really gently: your sense that you are male on the outside and female on the inside is an error of thinking and feeling, not an error based in reality. Dr. Paul McHugh is the psychiatrist who shut down the sex-change surgery program at Johns Hopkins University because they discovered that patients were actually no better off after surgery. According to Dr. McHugh, those who identify as transgender, like you, are like the 78-pound anorexic girl who looks in the mirror and sees a morbidly obese cow. It's your

thinking that needs to be adjusted, not your body. You look in the mirror with your male eyes in a male body, a body that has fathered six children, and you say, "I am really a female." But Bruce, you're not. God chose to create you as a male. He made you to be a man.

Like the story of the Emperor's New Clothes, brother, you are fooling yourself. You can't change your gender, you can only amputate perfectly healthy, functioning organs and tissue. If you move forward with surgery and continued hormone treatments, everyone will always know that you are Bruce Jenner The Once-Uber Male Athlete, trying to look like a woman.

I recently learned from a computer animator that due to the different bone structures of males and females, men can never walk like women because your hips don't move like ours do—male hips and pelvis were not created for pregnancy and childbirth. It's yet another evidence that true sex change is not biologically possible.

Please, Bruce, before going any further down this path, talk to those who have gone down the path you are on, and who deeply regret it. People like Walt Heyer of sexchangeregret.com. People like the very tall female-looking man who told me through tears, in a very long conversation, that he would give anything to go back to the day before his surgery because he now feels like a fraud.

Bruce, our Bible says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Since God chose to give you the gift of maleness, and He calls you to be a good steward of every gift He places in your hand (1 Corinthians 4:2), please reconsider how you can reject His gift of masculinity to the glory of God.

You can have "the soul of the lion and the heart of the

woman”—and be the man God made you to be.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/what-id-love-to-say-to-bruce-jenner/ on May 5, 2015.

“What Do You Say to Someone Who’s Had Sex-Change Surgery?”

I have heard of a man who has undergone a surgery to change his sexuality to female. After two years, “she” is married to another man.

What are the biblical references on sex-change surgery? How do we counsel if we meet someone like this? Furthermore, in an interview with this man, he said that inside him is a woman who is trapped in a man’s body. Please help me understand this issue.

This is a difficult situation since the developments of technology have made it possible to carry through on self-deception in ways the world has never seen before.

There is nothing in the Bible about sex reassignment surgery, but everything the Bible says about male and female pertains to those who are confused about their gender. The most important principle is that God chooses whether a child is boy or girl, and our bodies tell us what gender God intends for us. If someone feels that their gender is mismatched to their genitals, then the solution is not to mutilate one’s body, but to cooperate with God to change one’s confused thinking.

“I am a woman trapped in a man’s body” is a familiar statement made by a gender-confused person, but it’s not accurate. The feelings are real, but the interpretation of the feelings are faulty. Several years ago, here in the U.S., Johns Hopkins University stopped doing sex-change surgeries because they learned that several years after the surgery, people weren’t happy. That’s because having a doctor change the outside, did nothing to change the heart, and the wrong thinking continued. Here is a link to a powerful essay written by the doctor who made the decision to shut down the program: www.firstthings.com/article/2004/11/surgical-sex

Also, here is a website that I think you will find helpful in understanding the regret many people experience post-surgery: www.sexchangeregret.com

How do you counsel someone? Well, it depends on what they think. A person who is happy with their sex-change probably isn’t going to be interested in talking to someone who thinks differently about it. If they’re not happy, and suspect they made a colossal mistake, then I would suggest pointing them to the grace and mercy of God. Sometimes we make decisions we can’t fix, and the only solution for a regret-filled person is to invite God into the mess they’ve made and ask Him to bring glory to Himself through it. God can make all things work together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). He honors our choices, though, and a person who has chosen to mutilate their body will have to live with a mutilated body. But one can do it to the glory of God. The good news for the person who has trusted in Christ is that when they receive their new, glorified body in heaven (1 Corinthians 15), their original gender will be restored.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

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