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CARING FOR SEXUALLY-HURTING PEOPLE IN JESUS' NAME

**GENDER CONFUSION:
What Do We Say to Someone?**
R. Nicholas Black

**RAISING A CHILD WITH
GENDER BROKENNESS**
Chuck and Nancy Snyder

**THE GREAT TRANSGENDER
CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY**
Dr. Sam A. Andreades

**TRANSGENDERISM:
THE RESHAPING OF REALITY**
Tim Geiger



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WHAT'S INSIDE

**PAGE 1: FROM THE PRESIDENT:
TRANSGENDER AND THE CHURCH**

Tim Geiger

**PAGE 2: TRANSGENDERISM:
THE RESHAPING OF REALITY**

Tim Geiger

**PAGE 6: ON THE ROAD:
TALKING TO MILLENNIALS
ABOUT TRANSGENDERISM**

R. Nicholas Black

**PAGE 8: GENDER CONFUSION:
WHAT DO WE SAY TO SOMEONE?**

R. Nicholas Black

**PAGE 10: THE GREAT TRANSGENDER CASE
OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY**

Dr. Sam A. Andreades

**PAGE 12: RAISING A CHILD WITH
GENDER BROKENNESS**

Chuck and Nancy Snyder

**PAGE 14: YOU ARE NOT ALONE:
THERE IS HOPE IN CHRIST**

Tim Geiger

**PAGE 16: Real Life Conversations
CHURCH LEADERS: DON'T RUN AWAY
FROM THE MINEFIELD!**

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HARVEST USA brings the truth and mercy of Jesus Christ by:

- Helping individuals and families affected by sexual struggles
- Providing resources that address biblical sexuality to individuals and churches

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FROM THE PRESIDENT: TRANSGENDER AND THE CHURCH

The complex issues of gender, transgender, and civil rights are prominent in the culture. They are an issue in the 2016 election. They are before the federal courts, and soon to be considered before the U.S. Supreme Court. Transgender characters have begun to appear in TV series. Our local school district has set aside restrooms in the elementary school for transgender students. I did a Google search for “how do I transition if I’m transgender” and was provided 716,000 results.

Transgender theory, a subset of the broader “queer theory,” has come a very long way in a relatively short time. At its center the whole notion of transgenderism questions the very notion of gender itself—it is the topic of our time.

As Christians, we err in two ways concerning this debate on gender. One view sees this revolution against the traditional (biblical) understanding of gender as an issue of enlightened thinking. It is not. This idea is nothing short of an assault against God, and God’s authority to create people in his image, “male and female” (Genesis 1:27). Once again fallen man wants to be in complete control of his destiny. The issues here are infinitely bigger than bathrooms. The real question is: “Why should we trust God and what he says about his creation?”

The second issue is this: unbiblical views of gender aren’t just present in the unbelieving culture. They are finding their way into the church, particularly among millennial Christians. A 2014 study of Americans, ages 18-34, showed that 50% believe that “gender is a spectrum” and that “some people fall outside conventional categories [of male and female].”¹ Granted, this study of millennials represented a cross-section of people, but Christians were a part of that cross-section. If you have honest conversations with millennials, you’ll find that many think that gender is mutable.

In short, the church must call its members to understand and embrace Scripture’s declaration of two and only two immutable genders, male and female. Scripture’s truth about who we are as male and female answers the big questions the transgender movement asks about the nature of personhood: Who are we? What is a human being? The church must see this issue for what it is: it is nothing short of fighting for the beauty and dignity of who we are as human beings made in God’s image.

We have seen the growing need for resources to to disciple Christians about these gender issues. We are developing teaching presentations, video, and electronic/print resources, including what you’ll find in this issue of *HARVEST USA Magazine*.

HARVEST USA’s resources are not limited to this magazine. Go to our websites, harvestusa.org and thestudentoutreach.org for additional articles, videos and other resources that will help you grow in your understanding of God-created gender. We have a page on our website that lists a compilation of articles and resources to help you understand this issue (go to harvestusa.org > Learn > Explore our Resources > Transgenderism: Resources).

In the Lord,



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¹ Cited in “50 Percent of Millennials Believe Gender Is A Spectrum, Fusion’s Massive Millennial Poll Finds,” *The Huffington Post*, 02/05/2015, updated 02/02/2016, last accessed 10/05/2016

TRANSGENDERISM:

**The Reshaping
of Reality**

**A COMPASSIONATE AND
BIBLICAL RESPONSE**

By Tim Geiger

On May 13, 2016, many were surprised to learn that the federal government issued a directive to schools receiving federal Title IX grants. The directive said that schools must allow transgender students to use the bathroom and locker room that match their gender identity. A confusing issue on a personal level became even more confusing as it developed into a public policy issue.

The emergence of public scrutiny over gender raises questions in the minds of many Christians: *Why would someone identify as transgender? What do we mean by gender? Is it possible that there are more than two genders, male and female? How does Scripture call Christians to interact with transgender individuals?*

These questions and the various answers given have sparked tremendous confusion and even, from some, hostility over what many see as another example of society going off the rails. It has become crucial for Christians to know how to reason through these issues on gender. With opinions on gender coming at us from all directions, we must find clarity to both understand and respond—intelligently, and with Christ-like compassion.

How do we understand what gender is?

What is a traditional understanding of gender?

To understand what is revolutionary about current gender politics, a quick look at how gender has been viewed historically, across all cultures, is necessary. For the whole of human existence, society, with few exceptions, has affirmed a male-female binary regarding gender. In other words, an individual's [given] physical sex at birth revealed and determined which gender the person was, however those gender roles of being a man or woman were expressed in one's given cultural time period.

This view of gender understood that for a very few number of individuals (about one in every 1,500 births, or .007% of the population), this binary classification was not clear at birth. A condition known as *intersex*, formerly known as hermaphroditism, occurs when an individual is born either with genitalia of both sexes or with ambiguous genitalia. This poses tremendous challenges for these children and their parents regarding what gender they will live out. We ought to give much understanding and compassion for these difficult situations. However, intersex conditions have not been viewed historically as evidence of multiple genders, but rather as disorders of sexual development. Like someone born without the ability to use their legs to stand or walk, such a condition does not argue that there are multiple views about what legs are for.

What is the new cultural understanding of gender?

In simple terms, it's this: Instead of possessing one of two fixed genders for life, the new understanding is that gender is *fluid*. Gender exists not as two permanent, fixed points, but rather on a continuum ranging from male to female. One's experience of gender is no longer one gender or the other; instead, it can be entirely opposite from one's biological sex, or one can switch back and forth between two genders. The goal of this cultural redefinition of gender is to ultimately do

away with even the categories of male and female. Gender doesn't matter in understanding what it means to be human.

A second element of this new cultural understanding is that gender is not innate, but acquired. While a child is born with male or female genitalia, that child does not develop his or her sense of gender identity until well after birth, according to psychologists. In most individuals, psychological gender is congruent with physical sex. However, in some cases, this

is not so. Hence, it is possible to have an individual born with genitalia associated with one gender, but to have a psychological conception of one's gender that is incongruent with one's physical sex.

Transgender is a blanket term applied to a person whose subjective experience of gender is incongruent with his or her physical sex. Because of this perceived discrepancy, a transgender individual may elect to live out his or her gender in any number of ways. One might choose to identify as a particular gender different from his or her physical sex but never take measures to surgically or pharmacologically alter his or her physical sex. Someone might go through a process of using certain drugs to alter brain chemistry and hormone levels to develop physical characteristics of his or her preferred gender. Or one might elect to undergo gender reassignment surgery. These last two processes are known colloquially as *transitioning*.

This particular cultural concept of gender is new and itself in a state of evolution. In 2012, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV)* of the American Psychiatric Association categorized the aforementioned types of gender incongruence as a psychiatric condition: Gender Identity Disorder (GID). Just four years ago, the psychiatric community would have counseled the GID-presenting patient to accept his or her physical sex.

When the *DSM-IV* was updated in 2013 (*DSM-V*), the diagnostic criteria for GID changed, so that most people who were previously diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder are now diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria—a perceptual problem, as

In the twin areas of sexuality—sexual behavior and gender identity—the church is experiencing tremendous pressure to change its understanding of what Scripture says about personhood and identity—and to subsume its authority to that of the individual.

opposed to a disorder. Now the goal of the therapist is to help patients accept their perceived or preferred psychological gender.

What is the problem with transgender?

Essentially, this view of sex and gender makes the individual's *experience and feelings* primary about what it means to be a person. Who I am and what I am are grounded in what I feel or believe about myself. Everything else—whether Scripture, or physical reality, or millennia-old social understanding—becomes secondary to my understanding of personhood. So if I *feel* as though I am another gender—whether male, female, or something in-between—that is who I actually *am*.

This radical view of personhood and identity comes out of the movement toward deconstructing gender and sex (as they have been traditionally and historically understood), which is the fruit of the sexual revolution that began more than half a century ago. Sexual boundaries and gender understanding are seen as social constructs, imposed by tradition (religious and civil) and by those in power. Viewing the issue from that worldview, the individual is elevated above society and is now seen as self-determinative and authoritative, able to choose what best fits their own perception of reality. The result of this worldview disallows any kind of objective truth from God—that the world he created has a particular design and a particular purpose within which people find God's plan, his purposes, and themselves.

In the twin areas of sexuality—sexual behavior and gender identity—the church is experiencing tremendous pressure

to change its understanding of what Scripture says about personhood and identity—and to subsume its authority to that of the individual. While the world sees this process as freedom and finding authenticity of self, Scripture views it as the outworking of sin and rebellion that is the result of the brokenness of life. The last line in the book of Judges, “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes,” aptly describes our world of increasing chaos and brokenness.

What is God's view of gender?

Understanding the narrative of Scripture when it discusses human beings, made in the image of God, as either male or female, will give us a critical starting point for entering into this discussion.

Scripture is the starting point for how Christians ought to think and live. God's Word has much to say regarding gender, and makes the following especially clear:

1. It identifies two (and only two) genders in creation, with no distinction between biological sex (male and female) and gender (being a man or a woman)
2. It describes the brokenness of creation in the Fall, from which gender confusion results

Scripture identifies two (and only two) genders in creation.

We see this plainly when God establishes two genders—male and female—by decree in Genesis 1:27:

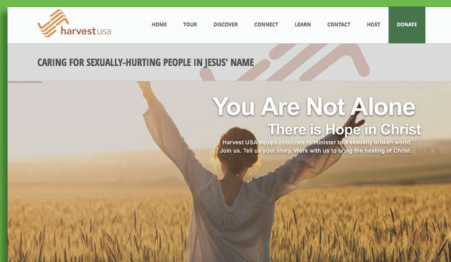
*So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

God created men and women specifically for a particular kind of relationship with one another: the covenant of marriage, where the creation of children, leading to the development of both family and society, is a major reason for our sexuality. Sexual activity is connected to humanity's purpose in life—a purpose that God mentions in Genesis 1:28 to manage the earth and make it a place of bounty and beauty. Creating life is an essential part of this.

But the Genesis story, as the anchor for our understanding of sexuality and gender, doesn't limit gender differences only to reproduction. Male and female reflect God's image to the world, and particularly so when a husband and wife join together in marriage. The narrative in Genesis hints at how gender differences profoundly shape humanity and our relationships. When Adam first sees Eve, he speaks of both similarity and difference, and between them a relationship grows where intimacy, transparency, mutual love, and unity grow in a way unlike any other human relationship (Genesis 2:21–25). Eve's designation as Adam's “helper” speaks of a relationship of unity and shared purpose (and not, as some erroneously think, that woman is inferior to man).

The importance of gender is not relegated only to marriage, either. A single man or woman also lives out their unique

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identities and personalities in the context of their maleness or femaleness. All relationships are structured and enhanced through how we relate to one another as gendered beings.

So, God has established two genders—male and female—*generally*, in creation. But, we must note that he has also established these genders *particularly* in the lives of each individual. That is to say, God has *assigned* one of the two genders to each person at his or her birth. Scripture declares that God has planned out our unique gendered identity, connected to the biological sex with which we were born.

The Psalmist in Psalm 139 says clearly that God designed each person before he or she existed:

- *“For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.”* (Psalm 139:13)
- *“My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.”* (Psalm 139:15)
- *“Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.”* (Psalm 139:16)

God both declares and foreknows the gender he has given to us. Examples of this are found throughout Scripture: Hagar is told she will bear a son who is to be named Ishmael (Genesis 16:11); Abraham and Sarah are told that Sarah will bear a son, and they are to name him Isaac (Genesis 17:19); the angel of the Lord tells Manoah that his barren wife will soon bear a son (Judges 13:3); and Mary receives the startling news, as an unmarried woman, that she would bear a son, Jesus, who would be the Messiah (Luke 1:31).

These key redemptive-historical acts, while they only mention the birth of sons, nevertheless establish the fact that it is God who ordains who we are as either male or female, as either sons or daughters.

Scripture describes the brokenness of creation in the Fall, from which gender confusion results.

Christians do not live in a perfect, transcendent world; they share in the extensive brokenness of all creation. In the area of sexual behavior, the numerous prohibitions in the Old Testament regarding particular sexual acts is telling. The reason why God had to spell out one sexual prohibition after another was not because he views sex as intrinsically evil

(as some think Christian doctrine teaches), but because our fallen, sinful hearts are capable of doing evil even with the good things God has created.

Though God’s order for creation exists in fractured form, it still remains. It still matters that we live according to it. Regarding gender confusion or fluidity, in Deuteronomy

22:5, the Lord tells his people that to live as if you are someone of the opposite gender is sin. For many years, Deuteronomy 22:5 was

used as a proof text against transvestitism, but its meaning goes far beyond simply wearing the clothes of the other gender. The verb-object clause used in the verse means to “put on the mantle” of the opposite gender—in other words, to live as though you were of the other gender.

The entire narrative of Scripture, including this passage, proclaims that God created all individuals to be either male or female, and to live as a man or woman in harmony with their physical sex. (As mentioned earlier, special consideration should be given to those who are born with intersex conditions, for they will require difficult decisions that are made for the benefit of the child; but these rare non-binary situations, which some proclaim as evidence of a “third” gender or sex, are evidence that God’s original design is broken and not that he intended multiple forms of gender.)

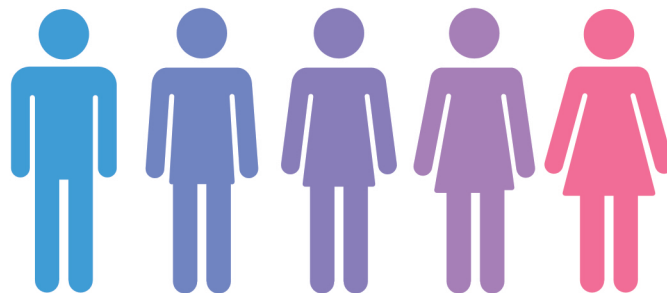
Gender matters to God, and as his image bearers, it should matter to us as well. To alter one’s birth gender or to live as a member of the other gender is therefore sin—as it is a repudiation of God’s will and intent for the particular creature.

One is reminded of the Lord’s words to his rebellious people in Isaiah 29:16:

You who turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, “He did not make me”; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, “He has no understanding”?

To live outside of his design and purpose is to engage in rebellion against him, even if that rebellion is the result of confusion and personal pain. The confusion about gender is the result of our world moving away from an acceptance of God as both creator and ruler. The implications for the individual in distress, and for society as a whole, are enormous. It is right and good and necessary that we proclaim a true view of human personhood and the benefits that come from embracing it.

Gender matters to God, and as his image bearers, it should matter to us as well.



ON THE ROAD: TALKING TO MILLENNIALS ABOUT TRANSGENDERISM

R. Nicholas Black



"What's wrong with changing your gender if your body is sick—if your body is wrong for you?"

How's that for a question to answer? The question's larger context was this: If you're sick, you go to the doctor and get help. If you lose your leg, you get a prosthesis. If you're depressed, you take medication. So what's wrong with changing your gender if your body is sick, if something is wrong with it?



Ellen Dykas and I went to a coffeehouse talk for young adults at Calvary Church in Souderton. Calvary has a terrific discussion event called *Living Room Tuesdays*, where, according to their website, "these meetings are meant to be a safe place for young adults to discuss issues, ask questions, and learn how the Bible directs us to respond to these issues." As John McCants, the Pastor of Young Adult Ministries (who, BTW, is totally in sync with this age group!) said to us, "We've got to get Christians thinking well on these subjects. We don't want to be stupid!"

So, yes, it was a safe place to open up and talk about transgenderism. But what came through was the fact that this is, indeed, a very hot topic. And one rife with confusion, courtesy of our culture's pervasive post-Christian views of gender and sexuality.

After an hour of interactive discussion with John McCants, we took questions. Lots of questions. Questions that really couldn't be answered with a simple yes or no, do this or don't do that. Wisdom questions and conscience questions, particularly about how to intersect faith with living our Christian lives "out there" in the marketplace.

Then, near the end of our time, came the question at the top. Upon hearing it, I recognized the cultural mindset behind it. If someone feels this way, then why do Christians find fault with it, especially if, for them, it might be a life-or-death issue? There are lots of things we fix or change in life, so why shouldn't this just be another one?

Lurking behind this individualistic framework is our culture's insistence that truth and reality are arrived at from my own personal experience. And if there is no God, then who I am (identity) and what I do (purpose) are entirely up to me.

Tragically, it's a mindset that has infiltrated the church. While Christians should respect people's life experiences, we must also be a people who believe that who we are and what we are here for is determined by God, who has put into place both design and boundary lines so that we might live well.

I couldn't go too deep into a cultural worldview discussion at that point (we were wrapping things up after two long hours!), but this is what came to my mind. I acknowledged the deep struggle someone might have with aligning their biological sex with their sense of gender, but more foundational than someone's distress is this issue: does God have a primary claim on who we are, or are we in charge of choosing whatever seems right for us?

Then I said: *Since when is being male a disease to be cured? Since when is being female a medical condition that needs intervention? If there are no biological complexities involved like intersex complications, why would you do this to an otherwise healthy, normal body? Why do we intervene in other "body dysmorphic" issues like anorexia but not this one?*

With someone who is literally starving but believes she is overweight, we properly locate where the struggle is: the person's mind and heart, which has become influenced by self-destructive impulses, erroneous beliefs, and cultural distortions of what a body should look like.

Our churches need to get these cultural issues on the table for discussion, to air them out, and to help people see the wisdom of God's design in making men and women his image bearers.



Why would we not do the same with a gender-confused person? We need to help that individual live well within his or her "assigned gender," to learn that being male or female reflects the image of God and his purposes for our lives.

There's more to be said about this issue, but Calvary Church in Souderton is on the right track. Our churches need to get these cultural issues on the table

for discussion, to air them out, and to help people see the wisdom of God's design in making men and women his image bearers.

Go to www.vimeo.com/album/4194063 to see the videos on this discussion, as well as follow-up videos from the second time we had this discussion at Calvary.

HARVEST USA DIRECT MINISTRY FOCUS

Harvest USA equips Christians and the church in six primary ways: three ways involving direct ministry to sexual strugglers and those who love them, and three focusing on equipping others to minister to sexual strugglers. The three ways we serve others through our Direct Ministry Focus are:

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S MINISTRIES:

We provide targeted discipleship both one-on-one and in biblical support groups to help those struggling with sexual sin understand how to rest in the Lord in the midst of their pain and struggle.

Spouses of those who struggle sexually also need encouragement and practical help. We also minister to them, helping them to stay near to Jesus as they walk a hard road with their families.

PARENTS MINISTRY:

Sexual brokenness affects individuals and their families. Our goal is to establish biblical support groups in churches throughout the country to encourage parents and other family members of teen or adult children in the gay life.

PASTORS MINISTRY:

Pastors are not immune to sexual temptation. We currently have two support groups for sexually-struggling pastors, who frequently do not want to become a part of our larger ministry due to the risk of exposure and the risk to their reputation.

GENDER CONFUSION:

WHAT DO WE SAY TO SOMEONE?

R. Nicholas Black



A pastor calls, wondering what he should do. A married woman in his church is beginning to look like a man. Over several months her changed appearance has made it increasingly clear that a slow but significant transformation is happening. But neither the woman nor her husband has asked for help. No one in the congregation has said anything publicly, though people are beginning to take notice. What should this pastor do?

For a church to help someone with gender confusion, they must first see a real person in distress. When we get down to the level of the individual, this becomes not a cultural battleground but a person who is struggling. Yes, our culture has made transgenderism the issue du jour, but the person in front of you is like a lamb without a shepherd. In everything you do, help her come to the true Shepherd who will gently guide her.

So, if someone in your church is struggling with gender confusion, we need to do more than proclaim adherence to Genesis 1 and 2 to resolve his or her dilemma. Yes, good biblical teaching on sexuality is necessary. We must not abandon the anchor position that Scripture gives us: God created humanity as male and female, and those two genders are who we are as unique, individual persons. Living out our given maleness and femaleness is an essential part of what it means to be human.

But we also live in a Genesis 3 world. Ours is a world that is broken, resembling God's original design but increasingly showing deep cracks in how God's image bearers reflect his image. Men and women have struggled with sexuality and gender for countless ages, so this isn't anything new.

What is different now, however, is how the culture has turned reality upside-down, insisting that the individual decides what is real and true, rather than the individual conforming to reality. But those who wrestle with their gender identity don't think they are trying to be rebellious. Rather, they are confused, desperate, and fearful, trying to make sense of their pain. The distress they feel is real. The world's solution seems more hopeful, a better "fit" to their struggle, so they embrace the post-Christian script that gender is essentially pliable.

What is our advice on what this pastor could say to this woman? How might he speak a message that could give her hope—maybe enough hope to grasp why God has called her to live as a woman; maybe enough hope that she can begin to see herself living congruently with her femaleness; and maybe enough hope for a future that would help her choose to slow down and reverse the transition process she seems to be pursuing?

What do we say? Here are five broad principles this pastor and a church can pursue:

Affirm and recognize how hard this is

Affirm the likelihood that this struggle has been going on for some time. Recognize that this is not a superficial battle and that she and others are trying to make sense of what they experience. Ask good questions so that you can begin to grasp what her life is like and why she feels so strongly that she needs to transition to the opposite gender. When did you start feeling this way? When do you feel it most strongly? What makes you feel most desperate? Get to know her; listen to her stories that are shaping her. Listen carefully.

Carefully teach and seek mutual involvement

Communicate to her that deep, persistent struggles grow stronger when we contend with them in isolation. As someone who attends your church, ask if she would allow you to keep speaking into her life about this. You want to hear her thoughts but you also want her to listen as you share a biblical perspective on gender and sexuality. Keep in mind that she has come to hate parts of herself, so communicate in a way that helps her question what she believes about gender rather than trying to convince her with an argument. Questions like, If God has designed every detail of your life from the beginning (Psalm 139), how do you view God if you insist on transitioning? What makes you hate parts of your body when God loves the very body he gave you? What would need to change if you began to accept the body you were born with? Do you know what Scripture says about what it means to be a man or a woman? How is that different from what you believe?

Understanding biblical truth, and then applying it to our hearts, is a journey, so expect this to take time.

Good teaching is rarely, if ever, the sole factor that encourages someone to move in the right direction. Our words, combined with our loving presence, are what people in pain need. Being involved also means connecting her to the body of Christ. You could assist her with Christian counseling, help her find an older and wiser woman as a mentor, involve her in appropriate ministry, pray with her, etc. It is in the body of Christ, we grow. Here, among those who will walk with her, is where we want her to grow into and accept the gendered body God gave her. Walk with her for as long as it takes, through all the successes and failures that will be a part of her journey.

Help her to grasp that our life, which includes our body, first belongs to God

Patently teach that believers in Christ have a deeper foundation for their identity than those in the world. We do not have the right to be autonomous, self-determined individuals, creating identities and lives that fit our felt needs. We are unique individuals, but we first belong to the One who gave us

life and redemption. Being made in the image of God includes our gendered body; who we are and how we relate to God and others flows through and is shaped by the body we are given at birth. The body is not like a piece of clothing we can change; we are “ensouled bodies,” bodies into which God breathes life. The body he has given us is essential to our identity.

An identity grounded in Christ seeks his purposes above all else. Orienting ourselves around Christ allows us to reflect on the secure identity that he offers, rather than frantically trying to discover or fashion an identity for ourselves. Grounding who we are in Christ gives us the means to fight and grow increasingly free of internal desires that first confuse and then enslave us.

Teach a biblical view of perseverance in the midst of suffering

Acknowledge that some situations we find ourselves in will not be completely resolved in this life, like those who live with chronic disabilities. We are called to persevere faithfully in certain situations, to discover in and through the struggle that God’s grace gives meaning, purpose, and daily strength to live, grow, and even to prosper

(2 Corinthians 12:8-10).

Call her to bring God into the heart of the situation

Bringing God into the heart of the situation is absolutely necessary because this is a spiritual issue too. Her gender distress has another element of struggle, beyond what she or others think about this issue. And it is this: that to go against God’s design and purpose (and reality itself) brings about increasing confusion and pain. Searching for healing is not necessarily wrong, but pursuing solutions that violate God’s intentional design and purpose is rebellion against him. Bringing God into the center is to move toward obeying him, even when it is difficult.

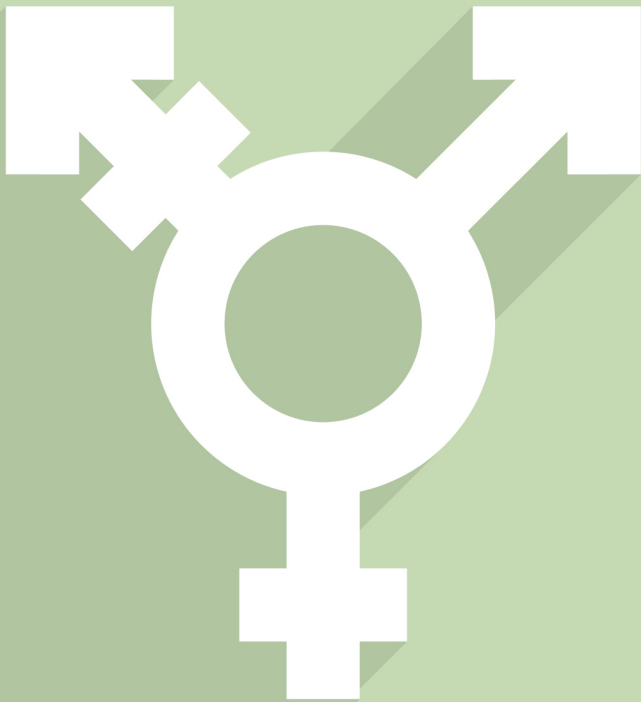
Obedience involves repentance, a daily practice that slowly brings about change and joy. This is accomplished not by focusing on behavior, but by helping her see her heart, the place where she still seeks to find her own solutions. Help her see that obedience is not just keeping a set of rules, but rather the means to experience following Christ as a life-affirming direction. But be careful about what obedience looks like. We are not calling her to live out gender stereotypes, but for her to embrace being a woman who lives that out in ways that honor God, which can look uniquely different than our preconceptions.

We could say a lot more here. But speaking into these broad categories might open doors to effectively help someone wrestling with gender confusion to seek God’s help to be who God has called him or her be.

Understanding biblical truth, and then applying it to our hearts, is a journey, so expect this to take time.

THE GREAT TRANSGENDER CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Dr. Sam A. Andreades



Identity. What makes it up? It is no easy thing to decide, and we need help. I am writing this article having just learned today that a young man close to our family has decided that he is really a woman. He is taking a new name to assume what he thinks is his true identity.

People today have done a great switcheroo on the matter. Nowadays, a man's *desires* are considered a deep part of who he is, at the core of his being. But his *body* is simply happenstance, a house of the soul that may be changed, or exchanged, without damage to his identity. We must grieve this change in the culture because it is exactly opposite of what the Bible says about us.

According to the Book, we are chock-full of desires, some lofty, some destructive, many mostly contradictory. While some tell us about ourselves, others lie to us about who we are. To root our identity in a particular one is superficial and likely to mislead us. For a person to identify herself by the direction of her sexual desires (as in, "I am a lesbian") is incredibly dehumanizing and limiting to the psyche. To demand, as our society now does, that people who experience same-sex attraction must identify with those desires, must consider them an inalienable and unchangeable part of who they are, must, in other words, call themselves "gay," is one of the great harms of our day. It means that many who would like to determine themselves differently cannot get help with unwanted same-sex attractions. Even if they are aware that help exists, they will be persuaded against seeking it out.

At the same time, under the influence of Plato, Gnosticism, and, more recently Rene Descartes, our culture has decided that our bodies are not an important component of our identities. The body is considered a cage of our real selves, and sometimes a hindrance to our spirituality. But, in the beginning, God declares that He gives us bodies to reflect His image. In the first chapter of Genesis, he makes us masculine and feminine, giving us physical characteristics to guide us into our identities. That integration is maintained throughout the Biblical witness (spend some time, for example, meditating on James 2:26). Our bodies teach us how to be in relationship, and being in relationship is deeply who we are.

Transgenderism is a predictable result of rejecting the Bible's counsel. We all commonly dislike parts of ourselves. If we switch what does not really compose our identities (our sometimes wrongful sexual desire) for what should compose our identities (our body), then when we experience severe distress with who we are, it makes sad sense to try changing our bodies. But, as the suicide statistics of those who transition show, that modification is not the answer. We are wrecking part of our true identities.

Our gender is a great gift from God, an immense privilege in reflecting His image and, as expressed through our bodies, an indispensable key to understanding our inner selves. As I've said, it is no easy thing to understand our identities and our bodies are given to guide us in that understanding, to help us know how we should love. Why would people reject this great gift?

There are many reasons we could give, but two very important ones stand out. The reasons are false ideas that deceive many people today.

A first reason for believing that one is trapped in the wrong body is misunderstanding what gender is. According to the Bible, gender matters in relationship, and this part of who we are comes out in how we love one another (1 Corinthians 11:11). Again, rejecting this counsel, people come to think of their gender in isolation and rely on societal norms to define manhood and womanliness. They think that being a real man means using power tools, or being a real woman means wearing perfume. If you are a man who does not fit in with the norms around you, or who identifies more with the opposite norms, then—of course, that’s it!—you must really be a woman.

But your gender was never meant to be understood that way. Young people today need more than ever to see the Bible’s beautiful vision of manhood and womanliness so that they can be encouraged that they can do it as they grow. Yes, if I am a girl, I can be a woman in the Lord’s eyes. Yes, if I am a boy, I really can do the things that God calls men to do, I really can reach manhood. Maybe I cannot achieve the culture’s definition, but I can answer God’s call.

A second reason people are apt to opt for transitioning is mistaking a capacity for sympathy for identity. Our secondary sexual traits often overlap. Boys are usually better at math but not always. Girls often do better at languages but not every time. Many more men sleepwalk than women, but that doesn’t mean that no woman ever sleepwalks. God makes this overlap on purpose so that we can relate to one another.

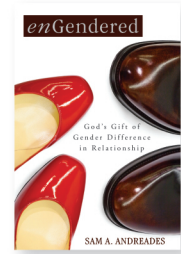
Men and women need points of connection. So if a guy feels certain affinities with women, he should understand that he is God’s gift to the church to help the men around him relate to the mysterious others in their midst. Pastorally, we can help this man by helping him to understand how he is uniquely created and how God loves many of these things about him, even things that he himself may hate. This man is given to us to understand women better, but he *is not* a woman.

These are two of the gross misconceptions—really deceptions—that cloud judgment and pave the road to the adoption of the opposite gender and alteration of the body. They block off finding one’s true identity in Christ.

We can expect the transgender phenomena to increase because, when you lose gender in relationship, you lose gender. Our society has, and will. If you do not already, you will soon know someone like our family friend, who is taking a new name as a woman. His parents have

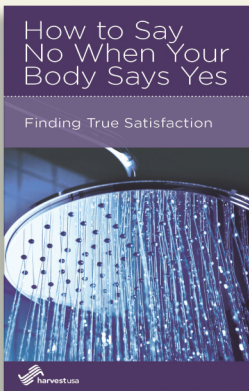
written me, in a letter I just opened, urging me to support this decision. While I want relationship with this friend to continue in my life, I do so with great sadness for him. I must grieve at what is, to me, a great case of mistaken identity.

Our gender is a great gift from God, an immense privilege in reflecting His image and, as expressed through our bodies, an indispensable key to understanding our inner selves.

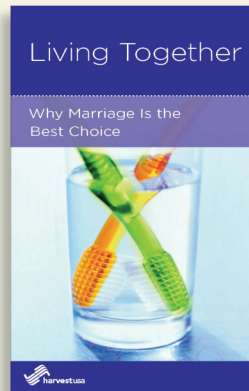


Dr. Sam A. Andreaades is a PCA pastor in Pennsylvania and author of the book, *enGendered: God’s Gift of Gender Difference in Relationship*, published by Weaver Book Company. *enGendered* won World Magazine’s Theology Book of the Year for 2015. Sam is a friend of, and partner with, HARVEST USA in ministry to sexual strugglers.

TWO NEW MINI BOOK RESOURCES FROM HARVEST USA



Dan Wilson, coordinator for the Student Outreach, has written an easy-to-understand primer for young men and women on why they should say “no” to premarital sex, and then Dan walks them through the key steps to take to make sure their “no” sticks. No moralism, no difficult rules to follow, just a gospel-infused discussion on turning away from what’s hurtful toward God’s best plan for couples.



Ellen Dykas, Women’s Ministry Coordinator, explains that marriage is about more than just a husband and a wife. It’s a picture of the enduring relationship God has entered into with his people. By grasping the wonder and beauty of this, Ellen discusses why casual sexual relationships and living together is so far less than what God wants for a couple, and how a relationship based on promise and commitment reflects the deep and enduring love we all want in our relationships.

Get these new resources for your church, youth group, and singles ministry at www.harvest-usa-store.com

RAISING A CHILD WITH GENDER BROKENNESS

LIGHT IN DARKNESS AND TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY

Chuck and Nancy Snyder
with permission from their adult son



Seeing the Struggle

One of our sons announced, almost as soon as he could string together sentences, that he did not want to be a man when he grew up. By the time he was four, he covered his head with yellow T-shirts and flicked his imaginary blond hair over his shoulder.

His dreams, both sleeping and waking, featured him in sequined dresses dancing on stage, with no one in the audience knowing he was male. For years, he wanted to wear fingernail polish, dresses, high heels, and feather boas.

His voice was high and his mannerisms were extremely feminine. He screamed his hatred for his body, "Why can't someone just cut 'it' off and put in a hole instead?" He fantasized about what he had never heard of: gender reassignment surgery.

Our homeschool, all-male-except-mom family wasn't expecting this. We weren't expecting a son who kept sneaking into my dresser to try on my lingerie. We weren't expecting a son who wrote stories about himself dancing with a prince at a ball. We weren't expecting self-portraits with cleavage. We weren't expecting a son who took down his curtains to fashion an evening gown.

In 1992, when our son was seven years old, I (Nancy) made calls and sent letters to Christian counseling organizations across the country, willing to pay anything if someone could help our son. One person said, "There's nothing you can do about problems this serious in a child this young." One of these organizations gave me a phone number. The receptionist there brightly chirped, "We absolutely can help your son."

"How?" I clung to the phone.

"We do gender reassignment surgery."

I quit making phone calls.

Seeing the Sin

If our son had been born with a hole in his physical heart, we would have repaired it. What would be wrong with fixing this hole in his soul? Our son's anguish was clouding our understanding of Scripture. So, we read the Bible with him, hoping to gain a God-honoring perspective on gender. Instead, our son wanted to be Delilah.

As we dug through the rubble of our son's gender brokenness, we saw his sin. His unbelief that God could help him live as a man. His rebellious demand to be what he wanted to be, not what God made him to be. We also saw our sin. Our fear that God might not work the transformation for which we prayed daily. Our proud and rebellious accusation, "Millions of children bond with their biological sex. How could God keep such a good gift from our son?"

Seeing Gospel Opportunity

In 1993, after reading an afterword in one of Larry Crabb's books, I wrote to seek his help. Dr. Crabb urged us not to think of our son "as having a qualitatively different struggle than any boy learning the joys of manhood. Think of it as a continuum and [your son] is at the far end of the struggle, but still on the same continuum of all boys." United with Christ,

we believed God would give us the same courage we were calling our son to embrace as, together, we lived for Christ, rather than for ourselves:

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh.

2 Corinthians 5:14-16 (ESV)



In place of fear, the love of Christ began to control us. God gave us eyes to see our son by faith and celebrate glimpses of God's grace at work.

Dr. Crabb also gave this advice: "Pray together as husband and wife about how the picture of MAN and WOMAN can be lived out clearly, not by trying hard to do so, but rather by expressing joyfully the deepest part of who you both are..." Living out our genders became a joyful current, and we prayed that our son would be swept along in the beauty and symmetry of God's good design for male and female.

Seeing God Together

We helped our son illustrate a book we wrote outlining simple teaching about biblical manhood and womanhood. Later, we wrote a chapter book¹ that gently wove the theme of biblical manhood into its child-sized plot. We used cloth dolls to tell stories of children living out their genders for the glory of God. We built a castle for our son to sleep in, as a reminder that God was his protection amid what was for him a terrifying prospect: becoming a man. We fasted and prayed that our son would see his gender as hallowed, rather than happenstance. We laid hands on our son while he slept and spoke blessings over him. We recruited two dozen people who prayed daily for our son and our parenting. We cried—often.

And we saw God. We saw God's truth as our confusion became conviction that, not only was our son's gender a gift from the King to be lived for His glory, so was ours. We saw God's power as our son took broken but beautiful steps of faith. We saw God's mercy as the treasure of the gospel worked in and through jars of clay (2 Corinthians 4:7). We saw the goodness of the God who "shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). We saw God's glory, and that became enough.

Beyond Seeing

As our son moved through his teenage years, he became more masculine. Recently, he said, "I'm so glad you didn't turn me into a girl." Instead, his struggle with same-sex attraction became the frontline of his fight. He remained involved in church and shared his struggles with his pastor. As he matured, his heart orientation toward God and His Kingdom strengthened. After moving to another city, he found a Gospel-centered church where he is involved in a strong small group. He is fighting his fight, but it is still a fight.

If our son, however, now claimed to be our daughter, our story of seeing God's glory and becoming satisfied with Christ alone would still be a good story. It glorifies God when Christian parents teach their children that gender is a gift from the King to be lived for God's glory—regardless of the outcome.

We don't simply show mercy to children who hate their gender because we hope the mercy will change them. God calls us to delight in showing mercy because it glorifies the God who shows extravagant mercy to sinners. Working for the Lord and not for men (Colossians 3:23) may involve spending oneself and seeing no fruit. Mercy that flows from the love of God shed abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5) glorifies God even if we never see results from that mercy. "We walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Seeing Beyond

"Now we see through a glass darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12). We fight for glimpses of God's glory in His Word and His world. One day, however, our faith will be sight. We will see Him as He is and be changed to be like Him (1 John 3:2). Our present sufferings—anguish for a child who struggles with gender, marital conflict over how to disciple a child who longs to change genders, hurtful comments made by others, dread over a child's future—will work for us a weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17). We will enter the glory we fought to glimpse. And it will be more than enough.

¹ *Lions for Ajax*, to be published by Shepherd Press.

Chuck and Nancy Snyder translate seminary for Deaf pastors. Chuck also preaches at a Deaf church that is searching for a Deaf pastor. Nancy is the Student Support Coordinator at Logos Academy, which was founded to bring the hope of Christ to York, PA. Nancy is the author of *The Gospel for Moving Targets*, which Shepherd Press is publishing in 2017. Chuck and Nancy have been blessed with four sons, three daughters-in-law, and two grandsons.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE: THERE IS HOPE IN CHRIST



September 24, 2016, was an important day for us. That day, we celebrated the Lord's work through HARVEST USA as manifested in radically changed lives.

Our Celebration Banquet, held in Lancaster, PA, drew nearly 600 people. They came to hear stories of the Lord's grace at work. Three people who have been impacted by the work of the Lord through HARVEST USA shared their stories of moving from the isolation and hopelessness of sin to the beauty and hope of walking in repentance.

Rosaria Butterfield, author of the books *Secret Thoughts of An Unlikely Convert* and *Openness Unhindered*, was our keynote speaker. Butterfield powerfully told the story of her own experience of God's grace, which gradually moved her out of the dark isolation of separation from God into relationship with him and his people. That hope in Christ which she first felt upon becoming a Christian is what empowered her to continue walking in repentance from sexual sin.

"This is why HARVEST USA is so needed," she said, "so people like me have a place to go."

And there *are* a lot of people like Rosaria Butterfield. The Lord continues to bless us with the opportunity to see many like Rosaria walk in increasing faith in repentance. We are blessed to see many move from the darkness of separation from the hope of God into a joyful embrace with their Savior

and his people. Time and again, we see lived out the marvel of grace Peter describes in 1 Peter 2:10: "Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

So, how many people do we help?

Over the last 12 months, our staff has had over 2,000 conversations with people affected by all sorts of sexual struggles. We conducted more than 400 in-office discipleship sessions. About 130 people participate every month in our Biblical Support Groups in our office. 11,000 people heard our presentations on biblical sexuality and gender in churches around the world. By God's grace, we're reaching more people than ever before.

I invite you to watch a new, short video entitled *The Heart of HARVEST USA*. Through the words of HARVEST USA staff and ministry recipients, you'll hear how the Lord is making a difference through our ministry. You can watch the video at harvestusa.org/heart.

One of the aspects of helping people find hope in Christ in the midst of their sexual struggles is convincing them that they're not alone. They have union with their Savior, Jesus Christ. And, they have us—and others in their churches—to walk with them, as partners on a journey.

Would you partner with us as we do this essential work? Your gift of support would help us to help so many others. A gift of **\$39** covers one hour of our staff working with a sexual struggler. A gift of **\$156** covers the typical cost of working with one sexual struggler over the course of one month. A gift of **\$228** covers the cost of a typical weeknight Biblical Support Group at our office, where we help dozens of men, women, and parents on an ongoing basis.

You can make a gift of support using the return envelope included with this magazine. You can also make a gift quickly online by going to our website, **harvestusa.org**, and clicking on the Donate tab at the top of the page.

We depend on the gifts of God's people—like you—to continue the life-changing work the Lord has given to us. Please help us continue to help others find hope in Christ.

Thank you!
In the Lord,



Tim Geiger
President



CHRISTMAS IS COMING AND THE END OF THE YEAR

Like other Christian non-profit ministries, Harvest USA greatly depends on the generosity of our supporters for end of year financial support. **You may not know that our direct ministry to men, women, and families is given for free, at no cost to those who are affected by sexual struggles.**

Here are some ways you can give—to make a difference in many lives through Harvest USA.

SUPPORT US MONTHLY ON A REGULAR BASIS—through Electronic Fund Transfer. This is the best way to help us! Call us (215-482-0111) or email us (info@harvestusa.org) to find out how to set it up.

INCLUDE US IN YOUR ESTATE PLANNING—designating us as a beneficiary to your life insurance or estate can be major way to give powerfully for the future.

GIVE ONLINE—give an online gift now by going to our secure website, harvestusa.org, and click the Donate Button.

FAST FACTS ABOUT HARVEST USA

Number of people on Harvest USA Staff

22

Number of people helped through our Direct Ministry Focus, Fiscal Year 2016

788

Number of people reached through our Equipping Ministry Focus, Fiscal Year 2016

11,300 (est.)

Number of Biblical Support Groups that meet at our offices

7

Number of individuals who attend these Biblical Support Groups each month

128

Number of operating Partner Ministries we've helped start in churches

11

Harvest USA's Fiscal Year 2017 Budget

\$1,979,745



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PITTSBURGH

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harvestusa.org
thestudentoutreach.org

REAL LIFE CONVERSATIONS

CHURCH LEADERS: DON'T RUN AWAY FROM THE MINEFIELD!

In general, people rarely come forward to talk about their sexual struggles or sexual identity issues. Therefore, it can be difficult to address people pastorally, even when pastors are willing and want to help people deal with their sexual brokenness. On the other hand, pastors are sometimes increasingly reluctant to address these issues themselves. One member of a church filled with millennials told me that his church never addresses issues like sexuality at all. He said it's dangerous to do so, like walking through a minefield. That's pretty ironic, given that this generation is the most porn-exposed, gay affirming, and pro gay marriage group of any generation—even in very conservative churches. In the absence of guidance from church leaders, the culture has done its own job of discipleship in this area quite well!

Indeed, pastors have told me they fear that the culture, sexually speaking, is starting to impact their leadership and elders as well. Case in point? Sam, an elder at a larger congregation with a mostly younger crowd, confessed to me recently, "Every day, it's almost like I'm only one step away from starting to believe that, just maybe, we are the ones who have been wrong [about homosexuality]."

Phil, a pastor in a large metropolitan-area church, told me that some people stopped attending his church when they found out that the church held a biblically faithful stance on homosexuality. "Visitors are often offended when they learn what we believe about this issue, even though we talk about it with grace and mercy." It's true. Today it's quite normal for someone to inquire of an individual, once they find out they are a Christian, "Well, what do you think about homosexuality? Is it a sin?" It's seen as the new barometer of trustworthiness in

the eyes of the inquirer. In an analogous way, church visitors, even those who may attend an introductory or membership class, also want to know up front now, "What does your church think about homosexuality?" One pastor described trying to navigate these waters today as a minefield—no matter what he says or how kindly he will say it, someone is going to be upset. In fact, the upset party may very well leave the church, perhaps taking some others with them.



Maybe that's why one pastor of another large city church told me not long ago, "We'll never have anyone from HARVEST USA come and speak to our congregation. I don't want to offend anyone, especially those who may be gay in the church." Well, okay, but my question to that pastor would be, "How do you plan to educate your people biblically about sex and sexuality? Or are you just going to let them figure it out for

themselves, continuing to allow the hundreds of other voices out there be their instructors?" I also wonder how struggling members of such a congregation might ever be encouraged towards honesty, faith, and repentance when it comes to their sexual temptations, struggles, and sin—to even want to get help.

My guess is that fear of man and a desire to not upset the applecart are often ruling forces here. We err when we dismiss or fail to teach on something as big and important to God as sex. If we talk about these things biblically (as in really teaching what God says), we may fear that our message won't go over well with those who are exploring the faith.

But church leadership doesn't have to walk on eggshells, fear, be confused, or choose silence. Yes, teaching and speaking the whole counsel of God, offering mercy and grace all the

“Every day, it’s almost like I’m only one step away from starting to believe that, just maybe, we are the ones who have been wrong [about homosexuality].”

while, can be a challenge. Yes, we’ll need to be more strategic in learning how to engage the culture that is already deeply influencing our own people. But if there’s any time that we must proclaim the truth and grace of God about these issues, it’s today!

HARVEST USA wants to help pastoral staff, other church leadership, elder boards, etc. better consider how to communicate all this to their congregation. No longer can we just wait on the sidelines. As leadership, we must intentionally think about how we can guide and help our people better understand God’s intention in these areas.

Please let us know if you’d like HARVEST USA staff to help your church leadership and key volunteers think through these

things. Your church staff and other leadership will be much better prepared to help the congregation if you do. Send me an email for more information on how your church leadership can begin to tackle these issues—and, therefore, be enabled to lead your people well in concerns close that are close to the heart of God.

John Freeman



Founder and Ministry Liaison
john@harvestusa.org

HARVEST USA EQUIPPING MINISTRY FOCUS

The three ways in which we equip Christians to disciple sexual strugglers in biblical sexuality are:

PARTNER MINISTRIES: Harvest USA equips church leaders to start their own ministry to men and/or women, students, and families affected by sexual struggle and sin. We have eleven Partner Ministries around the country, with more churches in the process of starting their own. Once a Partner Ministry is up and running, we provide ongoing support and training for its leaders.

THE STUDENT OUTREACH: The Student Outreach equips parents, youth, and campus workers to help students live sexually faithful lives by finding their life and true identity in Jesus Christ. Our goal is to see 6-8 major equipping seminars take place nationally each year, and to develop print and video-driven curricula for discipleship.

RESOURCES: Harvest USA produces a wealth of live, print, electronic (web-based), and video resources for free and for sale to individuals and churches, equipping them to understand and to disciple others in biblical sexuality.

COMING IN EARLY 2017

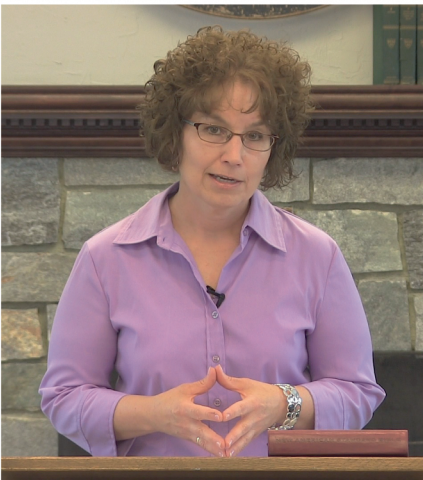
Harvest USA Video Series: God's Design for Sexuality in a Changing Culture



Harvest USA is putting some of their most popular teaching topics in a video format for churches and organizations. Perfect for a Sunday school or small group setting, these video presentations are specifically geared to get people *talking* about the issues of sexuality, while giving them relevant cultural and biblical information to help them think and live biblically.

The church is making two errors today in dealing with sexual issues: don't talk about them or talk without engaging in a discussion. Both these approaches weaken God's people because they don't know how to think through the ways they are being influenced by the culture. Getting the issues of sexuality out on the table and discussing them in open, safe settings is critical to help people begin to grasp why God's design for sexuality is good and remains relevant for today.

Each downloadable video is approximately 30 minutes long and comes with an accompanying class handout (so listeners can follow along with the presenter) and a question/discussion guide for the facilitator to guide discussion following the video presentation. Topics are:



- **Why do we need to talk about sex?**
- **Why do we struggle with our sexuality so much?**
- **Does God's design for sexuality still make sense today?**
- **How should we understand the Scriptures today regarding homosexuality?**
- **Can you change if you're gay?**
- **Pornography: It's not just about what you look at**
- **Singles—how do we live faithfully with our sexuality?**
- **Understanding gender and transgender**
- **Effective ways to help the sexual struggler**
- **Key steps for raising sexually faithful kids**
- **iSnooping on your kids: parenting in an Internet world**



*Questions? Interested? More details to come, but in the meantime,
email Nicholas Black at nicholas@harvestusa.org*