

HOW DOES A CHRISTIAN LOVE A TRANSGENDER PERSON?

BY

DANIEL R. GENSMER

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

PROF. JOEL RUSSOW, ADVISOR  
WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

MEQUON, WI

FEBRUARY 20, 2025

## CONTENTS

|                                                       |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----|
| CONTENTS.....                                         | II |
| ABSTRACT.....                                         | IV |
| INTRODUCTION .....                                    | 1  |
| TRUTH AND LOVE.....                                   | 3  |
| Defining Truth .....                                  | 3  |
| Defining Love .....                                   | 9  |
| Who Does Christian Love Love? .....                   | 10 |
| What Does Christian Love Do? .....                    | 12 |
| The Tension between Truth and Love .....              | 14 |
| JAMES 1:19 FRAMEWORK.....                             | 17 |
| QUICK TO LISTEN.....                                  | 19 |
| Terminology .....                                     | 19 |
| Desire for Belonging & Experiences of Rejection ..... | 21 |
| The Belief that Sex Is Different than Gender .....    | 23 |
| Gender Dysphoria .....                                | 28 |
| Affirming Solutions .....                             | 30 |
| Social transitioning .....                            | 30 |
| Puberty blockers .....                                | 31 |
| Hormone replacement therapy.....                      | 33 |
| Gender affirming surgery.....                         | 35 |
| Confirming Solutions.....                             | 38 |
| Counseling .....                                      | 38 |

|                                       |    |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Faith .....                           | 39 |
| Living in tension .....               | 40 |
| God Hates Sin .....                   | 41 |
| Are Transgender People Sinning? ..... | 42 |
| God Loves People.....                 | 45 |
| SLOW TO SPEAK .....                   | 47 |
| Truth Loving .....                    | 48 |
| Just Loving.....                      | 50 |
| Truth and Love United.....            | 52 |
| CONCLUSION.....                       | 55 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY .....                    | 56 |

## ABSTRACT

How does a Christian love a transgender person? This is a challenge many Christians may face, but this thesis seeks to equip Christians with the basic framework and understanding necessary to reach transgender people with both the truth of God's word and Christian love. Before offering a response to this question, the terms "truth" and "love" will be clarified. Next, this thesis will look to James 1:19, which calls believers to be quick to listen and slow to speak.

Following the listening posture of James 1:19, this thesis first surveys the lived experience of transgender individuals: their terminology, their desire for belonging, their experiences of rejection, and the medical and psychological landscape of gender dysphoria. Both affirming and confirming approaches to treatment are examined. The paper then turns to Scripture, considering what God's word says about sin, creation, and the redemption available in Christ for all people—including transgender people.

With careful listening complete, the paper addresses how a Christian can speak to the transgender moment. Two equal and opposite errors are identified: the Truth-Loving Christian, who clobbers with the Law but neglects the Gospel, and the Just-Loving Christian, who affirms sin in the name of love. The paper argues that faithful Christian engagement requires both truth and love held together. To achieve this goal, Christians will need to carefully consider how best to reach this community through building relationships. (Abstract prepared with the assistance of Claude AI (Sonnet 4.6))

## INTRODUCTION

How does a person know if they are transphobic? According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, a person is transphobic if they engage in behaviors including, but not limited to: restricting trans people's access to resources and public spaces, misgendering, misnaming, and mispronouncing trans people, using transphobic language, referring to cisgender people as real, normal or natural, and even debating trans people's existence or rights.<sup>1</sup>

The term transphobia implies that these attitudes and behaviors stem from fear. This fear can take root because the struggles and proposed solutions are foreign concepts to those who have never experienced the pain of feeling as if they are living in the wrong body. But fear is not a reason for Christians to downplay their calling to view all people, especially transgender<sup>2</sup> people, as individuals loved by God and redeemed by Christ. Rather than picking and choosing a preferred target audience for God's good news, the Christian is called to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15 NIV). During a time when 2.8 million adults and youth (13 and older) identify as transgender in the United States,<sup>3</sup> Christians cannot remain paralyzed during this transgender moment, whether by fear or for other reasons. If it has not already happened, Christians will inevitably be asked to respond whether they interact with transgender individuals in society, their churches, or among their own family members.

---

1. T.J. Jourian, "What Are the Connections between Transphobia, Racism and Sexual Violence?" *National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)*, March 8, 2023.

2. The term "transgender" is an adjective used to describe a person who actively identifies and presents themselves contrary to their birth sex. This paper will focus specifically on Male to Female and Female to Male transgender people. While there will be no explicit discussion about other emerging gender identities, this paper can still serve as a valuable initial resource for these cases. See pages 19–21 for more detailed definitions.

3. Jody L Herman and Andrew R Flores, *How Many Adults and Youth Identify as Transgender in the United States?* (Los Angeles: UCLA School of Law Williams Institute, 2025).

Because fear does not justify ignorance, this paper will strive to combat this fear in three steps. First, this paper will clarify the challenges of the Christian's calling to speak truth in love. Second, this paper will attempt to listen for understanding to the struggles and expressions of those who are familiar with the transgender experience. Finally, this paper will discuss how a Christian can properly love transgender people.

## TRUTH AND LOVE

Considering that the Christian is called to speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15), the terms “truth” and “love” ought to be defined. To be clear on this point, this paper will define the terms and clarify the tensions felt when expressing both truth and love.

### Defining Truth

The word “truth” is understood in a unique way within transgender circles. The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), an LGBTQ+ media advocacy group, states, “‘Coming out’ to other people as lesbian, gay, or bisexual is typically seen as revealing a truth that allows other people to know your authentic self... When a transgender person has transitioned and is living their life as their authentic self – that **is** their truth.”<sup>4</sup> The word “truth” here deserves unpacking. This “truth” is viewed personally as “their truth” rather than “the truth” because the authority establishing this truth is the individual.

This expression of truth finds its roots in the *coherence theory* of truth. The coherence theory views something as truth “if it sufficiently coheres with, or makes rational sense within, enough other beliefs; alternatively, a belief system is true if it is sufficiently internally coherent.”<sup>5</sup> Because trans-identifying individuals personally believe that their gender differs from their birth sex, it is coherently true within their own belief system. This is the most limited scope of coherent truth and could be referred to narrowly as a subjective truth. The coherent truth

---

4. GLAAD “Tips for Allies of Transgender People,” March 2021.

5. S. W. Blackburn, “Truth,” *Britannica*, last updated May 2, 2023.

is challenged by its limited source. Consequently, alternate coherent truths that deny a self-declared transgender identity could also be considered coherent truths within opposing belief frameworks. Because of this, affirmation is sought to expand the network of coherence to validate this subjective truth.

This does not mean that the subjective truth expressed by trans-identifying individuals is illegitimate. Transgender expression is viewed as true within its own belief framework and can provide a window into understanding the real struggles transgender individuals face daily. Much of the “Quick to Listen” portion of this paper will be dedicated to understanding the subjective truth of transgenderism<sup>6</sup>. For now, it is necessary to distinguish what is subjectively true within one’s own belief framework from what is objectively true. To do this, we will focus on the source of subjective truth, “the self”.

The question at hand is, who or what has the authority to establish truth? In general, “the self” takes on this role within the transgender belief framework.<sup>7</sup> But “the self” refers to a fallible human being, and by placing the authority of establishing the “truth” in the hands of people, that authority has been brought into question. Take, for example, churches advocating for race-based slavery in the 1800s, presidential sex scandals, and police abusing their authority in a prejudiced manner.<sup>8</sup> While certainly not exhaustive, each example demonstrates mankind’s inadequate reliability to establish “truth”.

---

6. The term “transgenderism” refers to the ideology behind the transgender belief framework.

7. This is a natural line of thought common to Postmodernism. While this logical line of thought may not accurately describe the way all transgender people view truth, there is a pertinent philosophical train of thought that is worth unpacking. A deeper discussion on Postmodernism and its offshoot, Queer Theory, will be discussed later on pages 27–28.

8. Andrew T. Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate* (Charlotte, NC: The Good Book Company, 2017), 40–41.

Andrew T. Walker, in his book *God and the Transgender Debate*, posits that to establish truth, especially in big decisions, one needs to seek out a source of authority, knowledge, and trustworthiness to establish reliable truth.<sup>9</sup> But does “the self” have the authority, knowledge, and trustworthiness to be that source?

Some may argue that “the self” has the authority to establish personal truth. But each individual lives within a community, and without authority being delegated, one cannot declare absolute truth to be foisted upon a community external to “the self’s” internal belief network. Authority is lacking.

“The self” is certainly knowledgeable in some respects about one’s own preferences and desires, but is that knowledge absolute? Uncertainty is natural, a person might say, “I don’t know how I will feel, who I will be, or what I will need tomorrow or next year, let alone a decade.”<sup>10</sup> Preferences like a childhood dislike for Brussels sprouts may change as they mature. Additionally, people change their careers, their houses, their relationships, their cars, because this subjective knowledge is subject to change. Since uncertainty pervades “the self”, one must admit that knowledge is lacking.

When determining if “the self” is trustworthy, one must note the prevalence of regret in people’s lives. One might regret not going to bed earlier, working out more frequently, eating healthier, harming a relationship with harsh words, or showing up unprepared for class. These instances of regret demonstrate choices that have been delegated to “the self”, which resulted in

---

9. Walker, *Transgender Debate*, 38–39.

10. Walker, *Transgender Debate*, 42.

negative consequences. Every regret pinpoints “the self’s” lack of absolute trustworthiness when making life decisions.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, can “the self” establish “truth”? Since “the self” lacks the authority, knowledge, and trustworthiness to be a source capable of establishing “the truth”, one must conclude that “the self” does not have the necessary prerequisites to establish objective truth. On the other hand, the Bible is the source that has perfect authority, perfect knowledge, and perfect trustworthiness.<sup>12</sup> Since all creation came into existence by God’s word in Genesis 1, God’s word must have authority. Since a creation is best known by its creator, God must be thoroughly knowledgeable. And God’s trustworthiness far exceeds that of mankind. “God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?” (Num 23:19)

But the simple fact that God has the authority, knowledge, and trustworthiness to establish truth does not mean that he will be universally accepted as this source. Andrew T. Walker identifies this problem and offers a solution,

Fundamentally, the biggest issue that drives a wedge between an increasingly secularized culture and the Christian worldview is the question of where we locate authority, knowledge, and trustworthiness... The Christian answer is to locate authority, knowledge and trust where it can find a firm, stable, fulfilling foundation – in the crucified Creator. He may not always agree with our feelings or our reason – but he can be trusted, and he knows what he’s talking about, and he has the right to tell us how to live.<sup>13</sup>

The *correspondence theory* of truth aligns well with the truth found in Scripture. This theory stems from the Aristotelian statement, “To say of what is that it is, or what is not that it is

---

11. Walker, *Transgender Debate*, 42–43.

12. Walker, *Transgender Debate*, 43.

13. Walker, *Transgender Debate*, 45–46.

not, is true.”<sup>14</sup> Essentially, the correspondence theory holds something to be true if it corresponds with the facts.<sup>15</sup> The connection here between the truth expressed by God and the correspondence theory is the immutability of the truth. Since God’s Word established the world in a certain way, the world is ordered according to the intentions of its creator. “Our words do not make the world: God’s Word does (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26; Ps 33:6-9; Heb 11:3).”<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the subjective truth, expressed by advocates of transgenderism, emphasizes subjective feelings over the unchangeable facts. God’s word established truth at creation and still carries the same weight today. In the words of Jesus, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17).

Scripture presents objective truth; Christians have disagreed on its interpretation and contemporary application. Mark Yarhouse, in his book *Emerging Gender Identities*, labels these viewpoints as three biblical lenses: Integrity, Disability, and Diversity. Each lens views transgenderism through a different biblical angle and consequently alters how Christian love would be properly applied.

The *integrity lens* focuses on God’s established order in Genesis 1 and 2. The emphasis of the integrity lens is to return to the created order for sex and gender.<sup>17</sup> Those living outside the God-created gender binary are living in sin and rebelling against God. This lens is black and

---

14. Blackburn, “Truth.” The quotation from Aristotle is widely known, but this article was the consulted source.

15. Blackburn, “Truth.”

16. Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Statement on Human Sexuality, Personhood, Identity, and the Historic Christian Faith*, (Conference of Presidents, October 21, 2019).

17. Mark Yarhouse and Julia Sadusky, *Emerging Gender Identities: Understanding the Diverse Experiences of Today’s Youth* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2020), 79.

white; if you live within God's created order, you are in, if you do not, you are out. Therefore, this lens would seek to express Christian love by meeting this rebellion with harsh correction.<sup>18</sup>

The *disability lens* focuses on the repercussions of the Fall in Genesis 3. The emphasis of the disability lens is to view deviations from God's created order as a painful result of the Fall that ought to be met with compassion.<sup>19</sup> Under this lens, the role of Christian love is to seek interventions that could alleviate chronic pain felt by transgender individuals; this could include medical intervention and embracing various social transitioning practices, such as the use of pronouns.<sup>20</sup>

The *diversity lens* focuses on God's creative capabilities expressed through diversity. Its emphasis is to view divergent gender identities as a testimony to the creative handiwork of God. Under this lens, the Genesis 1 and 2 creation accounts are viewed as descriptive rather than prescriptive.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, gender-diverse expressions are met with universal unconditional love and support for every thought, desire, action, or decision of an individual. Mark Yarhouse notes that this lens is derived from philosophy rather than Scripture since "Christian references are not central to the claims of this lens."<sup>22</sup> Because this lens celebrates gender diversity and urges Christian love to buy into the coherent truth of transgender ideology, the diversity lens is favored by trans-advocates. Austen Harkte, a transgender pastor and advocate, argues against Yarhouse's view that the diversity lens is unscriptural. Hartke offers Psalm 104 as one example, which

---

18. Yarhouse and Sadusky, *Emerging Gender Identities*, 87–88.

19. Yarhouse and Sadusky, *Emerging Gender Identities*, 79.

20. Yarhouse and Sadusky, *Emerging Gender Identities*, 88–91.

21. Yarhouse and Sadusky, *Emerging Gender Identities*, 81.

22. Yarhouse and Sadusky, *Emerging Gender Identities*, 93.

points to the biodiversity of God's creation. Within that biodiverse creation, Hartke points out that many animals, fish, and plants can change sex.<sup>23</sup> While scripture was referenced, it ignores the portions of Scripture that speak directly to sex and gender.

Yarhouse's three lenses help clarify the starting point of the conversation. Truth needs to be agreed upon before progress can be made. Each lens has its shortcomings. Adopting the integrity lens alone could result in legalism. Adopting the disability lens alone could ignore a Christian's life of sanctification. And adopting the diversity lens alone would reject God's authority to establish created order. A blend between the integrity and disability lenses is preferred.<sup>24</sup> By doing this, a Christian recognizes two things: 1) God's authority to establish the rules of the world. 2) How far mankind has fallen from God's created order. This approach leaves room for Christian love to step in and share God's solution, a savior who died to restore God's fallen creation.

### **Defining Love**

Since the Bible is the best source of objective truth, we will strive to define the term "love" with the scriptures. Professor John D. Schuetze observed that "love" in the Bible was not

---

23. Austen Hartke, *Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), 40–42. This book offers a counterargument to Yarhouse's interpretation of the three lenses. Yarhouse approaches these lenses from an Orthodox position, while Hartke is an open transgender pastor advocating for the diversity lens.

24. Yarhouse and Sadusky, *Emerging Gender Identities*, 94–96. Yarhouse argues here that a flexible approach would be preferred to encourage accompaniment. Settling on blending both the integrity and disability lenses alone is my own conclusion.

merely an emotion devoid of action and not strictly an action apart from emotion.<sup>25</sup> In his exegetical studies of “love” he notes the variety of manners in which this love is expressed,

There are words describe a kindness or goodness that one person shows to another (חֶסֶד—φιλανθρωπία—χρηστότης). Some words denote a compassion or mercy, a love that is moved by the misery of another person (חַנּוּן—ἔλεος—οἰκτιρμός—σπλάγχνα). Scripture also describes a love that is undeserved and gracious (חֶסֶד—χάρις). In the Old Testament אֱמֻנָה pictures a love that is steadfast, unfailing, and loyal. Another group of words or phrases (אֲנוּחַ—ἀνοχή—μακροθυμία) refers to a loving forbearance, longsuffering; or patience. Even though אָהָבָה and ἀγάπη are given a rich meaning in Scripture, they are simply general words for love within their respective languages.<sup>26</sup>

Considering that the scriptures express “love” in a variety of ways, we will focus on one specific form of love, Christian love. To do this, we will strive to answer two questions: Who does Christian love love? And what does Christian love do?

### Who Does Christian Love Love?

In Luke 10, Jesus is caught in a discussion with an expert in the Law as they come to a focused summary of the Law. The summary is love: Love God and love your neighbor (Luke 10:27). But the question stands, who is our neighbor? By asking this question, the expert in the law implies that there are people who should not be considered neighbors.<sup>27</sup> But in response to this line of theological questioning, Jesus responds with one of his most well-known parables: *The Good Samaritan*. Rather than answer this question by pointing to a bystander or naming a

---

25. John D. Schuetze, “Doctrinal Brief: Is Love an Action or an Emotion?” Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, 2007.

26. Schuetze, “Is Love an Action or an Emotion?” 1.

27. Arthur A. Just, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997). 452.

specific group of people by race, Jesus merely leaves the question in the hands of the expert: Of the Priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan, who loved the injured man as a neighbor? The question seeks a clear answer that takes little to no thought to conclude. The Samaritan acted like the loving neighbor. While the Priest and the Levite saw the injured man, they avoided him (likely for ceremonial reasons). The Samaritan, however, went out of his way to help this stranger get back to health at his own expense.

By asking the question “who does Christian love love,” it may imply that there is a limited scope of people Christians are supposed to love. This parable contradicts this notion and reminds Christians to love their neighbor, even when that person is unlikely. Replace the injured man with a hurting transgender person, and this parable brings us right back to the topic of this paper.

Transgender people are certainly one of the many neighbors Christian love loves. To argue differently would be to reinterpret such fundamental verses expressing God’s universal love for creation (John 3:16; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9) in an exclusionary manner. Replace the sin of transgenderism with any other commonly overlooked sinful activity, and one can quickly see how hypocritical this exclusionary focus on God’s love becomes. In this respect, both Christians and trans-identifying individuals can find common ground when viewing all people, including transgender people, as people deserving of love. The question bearing the most tension between Christian love and the love expected by the Transgender community is, “What does Christian love do?”

### What Does Christian Love Do?

Within the transgender community, people are encouraged to express their love and care for transgender people with affirmation. But is affirmation a form of love that Christian love can express? Gender affirmation “refers to the process through which individuals are affirmed in their gender identities and live as their authentic selves. It may include social, legal, or medical dimensions.”<sup>28</sup>

Affirming a transgender individual would be to buy into their *subjective truth* and participate in their personal belief framework. By affirming a person in their transgender identity, one is assenting and granting credence to the subjective truth believed by the transgender individual. That subjective truth might be coherently true in an increasingly growing network of people holding those same beliefs.

Affirmation, as discussed above, is a derivative of Queer Theory, which,

challenges and disrupts the traditional notions that sexuality and gender identity are simply questions of scientific fact or that such concepts can be reduced to fixed binary categories such as “homosexual” vs. “heterosexual” or “female” vs. “male.” As such, this third definition of “queer” refers to the erasing or deconstructing of boundaries with respect to these categories of sexuality and gender.<sup>29</sup>

In the book *Radical Love*, Patrick Cheng fuses Queer Theory with Christian theology to argue that both can be expressed as radical love. “Radical love, I contend, is a love so extreme that it dissolves our existing boundaries, whether they are boundaries that separate us from other

---

28. University of California, Irvine, Office of Inclusive Excellence, “Practice Gender Affirming Language,” accessed November 24, 2025.

29. Patrick S. Cheng, *Radical Love: Introduction to Queer Theology* (New York: Seabury Books, 2011).  
15.

people, that separate us from preconceived notions of sexuality and gender identity, or that separate us from God.”<sup>30</sup>

But does the love expressed in the Bible actually “dissolve our existing boundaries”? Even more importantly, does Christian love make it so that affirmation becomes the necessary response to transgenderism? Jesus commanded his disciples to “love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34). But Jesus’s ministry was not a ministry of affirmation. Yes, Jesus loved people throughout his ministry, but that did not keep him from expressing the truth of the law when he encountered people. Jesus loved the Samaritan woman at the well as he offered her the “water of life”, but Jesus refused to affirm her as he called out her sinful extramarital relationship (John 4:1–26). Jesus loved the woman caught in adultery as he dismissed the angry mob of religious leaders, but he refused to affirm her as he urged her to leave her life of sin (John 8:1–11). The apostle John explicitly points out that “Jesus loved” the rich young ruler, as Jesus, in the next sentence, refused to affirm his love of money (Mark 10:17–22).

Whether it is Jesus’s continual calls for the Pharisees to be brought back to repentance (i.e., Matt 23, Luke 11) or Jesus calling his beloved companion Peter, “Satan,” (Matt 16:23) the love Jesus expressed and commanded believers to imitate did not affirm sin. However, Jesus approached each case differently. He preached the unbridled law to the self-righteous religious leaders and gently corrected those who were crushed by their sin. It is as if Jesus approached each broken sinner, saying, “I get that. I see that. I love you, and I want to help. I may not always agree with you, but I will only disagree with you because I want the best for you. I’ve come to stiffen you not to snap you. I don’t snuff out flickering candles. I want to fan them into flame.”<sup>31</sup>

---

30. Cheng, *Radical Love*, 8.

31. Walker, *Transgender Debate*, 14.

If this is the love that Christian love is modeled after, then what does Christian love do? One must conclude that Christian love “is a deep concern for another that leads us to act in that person’s best interests.”<sup>32</sup>

### **The Tension between Truth and Love**

The tension between truth and love is complex. A Bible-believing Christian could look at the Creation account in Genesis 1 and 2 and desire to express the truth that God made people within a gendered binary, and that those who willingly live outside that God-ordained binary should be responded to with the harsh truth of their sin. Another Bible-believing Christian could look at Jesus’ command “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34), and conclude that the person struggling with transgenderism should be responded to in love and only love.<sup>33</sup> The truth of the matter lies in the middle. These two terms are inseparably interconnected.

If Christian love seeks to act in a person’s best interests, a Christian would express alarm if the other person were in danger of harm. This raises the question: Is identifying as transgender harmful, or at least risky for the individual? If identifying as transgender is demonstrably harmful, Christian love cannot affirm this identity. This paper will delve deeper into this question in the “Quick to Listen” portion.

To illustrate this principle, consider a child who struggles with anorexia. In their heart and mind, they are overweight. This is their own subjective truth they profess, and to resolve the

---

32. Schuetze, “Is Love an Action or an Emotion?” 2.

33. Benjamin T. Roekle, “‘Speaking the Truth in Love’: Philosophies for Addressing Same-Sex Attraction in WELS High Schools” (Senior Thesis, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2025), 20.

pain, the child engages in restrictive eating and excessive exercise to remedy this perception.<sup>34</sup> This subjective truth carries clear psychological risks and potential for the child to harm their body irreversibly.<sup>35</sup> A parent who truly loves their child would immediately be alarmed and make every effort to express the objective truth that anorexia is harmful and dangerous out of concern for their well-being.

On the other hand, expressing objective truth in a manner void of love results in a broken relationship. Blatantly stating that someone's mere existence is sinful has led to an overwhelming perception that Christians are hateful.<sup>36</sup> Empathy, a variant form of love, tempers the harsh expression of contrary truth. Empathy does this by striving to authentically understand the condition before speaking. A Christian may be called to confront harmful truths, and "confrontation that presumes to proceed without empathy often misses the mark as well as provoking unnecessary opposition and defensiveness."<sup>37</sup>

So, what is the right balance? How does a Christian express true Christian love and love the objective truth of the Bible? The apostle Paul declares, "Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth" (1 Cor 13:6). Love loves truth. Christian love loves the objective truth in the Bible, and Christian love loves the subjective truth expressed by transgender individuals. What transgender people express is real because what they express is a window into authentically understanding the real burdens and struggles transgender people regularly

---

34. "Eating Disorders: What You Need to Know," *National Institute of Mental Health*, 2024.

35. "Eating Disorders", *NIMH*.

36. Sam Westra, "The Church in the Community: Showing Love to Our Neighbors" (Senior Thesis, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2023), 3–5.

37. Ralph L. Underwood, *Empathy and Confrontation in Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1985). 89.

experience. Christian love desires to help burdened sinners such as this, but “you cannot help with a burden unless you come very close to the burdened person... so in the same way, a Christian must listen and understand and physically, emotionally, spiritually, take up some of the burden with the other person.”<sup>38</sup> This is exactly what this paper will do. This paper will look at James 1:19 to establish a framework that will guide this discussion.

---

38. Timothy Keller, *Galatians For You* (Epsom, UK: The Good Book Company, 2012), 168.

## JAMES 1:19 FRAMEWORK

Now that we have clarified the importance of truth and love, we will utilize James 1 to establish a framework that will guide us as we approach the challenge of addressing transgenderism. The primary focus for this structure will be verse 19; however, further thought will be taken from the surrounding verses.

James 1:19 says, "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." The simple ordered structure laid out here by James is as follows: First, understand, then respond. Looking further into the depth of these imperatives, James is careful, first and foremost, to emphasize the "listening" role of his audience. "This is a call to stop and be attentive, a call for restraint, when human nature might otherwise encourage one to react with a hasty response. Such propensity to receive spoken words is a trait that indicates that one is not self-sufficient, an admission of the need for learning via an external source."<sup>39</sup> This listening role stands in contrast to the problem that James was addressing among his readers. In 1:13, the recipients of this letter point their wicked fingers toward their God and declare, "God is tempting me." They are being quick to speak. In the same stroke, they are shifting the blame for their insufficiency to God in a manner reminiscent of the "born this way" argument.<sup>40</sup> What James points these people to, however, is the truth, an unchangeable

---

39. Curtis P. Giese, *James*, Concordia Commentary (Concordia Publishing House, 2021). 162.

40. This is in reference to Lady Gaga's hit song "Born this Way", which became a transgender anthem over the years. The message argues that this transgender identity wasn't something that was chosen, but rather an inherent identity that is revealed and worthy of celebration. In this view, God is either absent or the cause of the individual's

truth, a truth that is derived from our God who does not change and only does what is good. This is the central focus of the listening encouraged by James.

James' imperative does not merely encourage us to listen; it also obligates us to respond in line with the truth, which is acquired through the laborious act of listening. Listening is not one-sided; it listens to the subjective transgender truth and the objective truth expressed in God's word. These two imperatives, listening and speaking, are not without their qualifiers. The listening is to be done in a "quick" (ταχὺς) manner, emphasizing the primacy of this action, while the speaking is to be done in a "slow" (βραδὺς) manner, noting the caution and care we should take when expressing ourselves. Not only are we to be slow when speaking, but James draws attention to the emotional reaction one might experience when confronting a sinful situation, as he includes slowness in becoming angry.

With this ordered approach in mind, we can establish a framework to address sensitive situations such as transgenderism. From this point on, this thesis will make every effort to "listen": First, to the experienced realities of the transgender population in an unbiased manner. Second, this thesis will "listen" to the unchanging truths that are found in Scripture alone. Then, and only then, we will attempt to slowly and carefully weigh how a Christian can love a transgender person.

---

transgender identity. This view is not universally accepted among transgender advocates. The "Born this Way" argument is accused of being too restrictive at times and not allowing for fluidly evolving gender identities.

## QUICK TO LISTEN

Keeping with the framework established in James 1:19, we will make every effort to listen carefully and fairly to the subjective transgender truth and the objective biblical truth. For this reason, the contents of this portion of the paper should not be considered exhaustive on this topic, but merely a snapshot of the ever-changing terrain of transgenderism. Through this process of slow and careful listening, we will strive to understand the unique situation that God has placed before us and dampen the fear some Christians feel when faced with the topic of transgenderism.

### Terminology

Looking at the terminology surrounding transgenderism is a daunting task. It appears to be an ever-expanding variety of expressions that are challenging to grasp, but at the core of these words is a person within a community attempting to express their own unique experience. To dismiss the terminology altogether would be to stunt our capacity to truly listen to the transgender argument. For this reason, we will take the time to define and understand five key terms used by the transgender community. We will first define the terms *sex*, *gender*, *gender identity*, *gender dysphoria*, and *transgender*, and then move on to the deeper applications of these terms expressed in transgenderism.

**Sex** refers to the physical biological characteristics that determine a person's sexual identity. If a person possesses XY chromosomes, male sexual organs, and other physical male features, then the person is a male. The inverse is true if the person possesses XX chromosomes,

female sexual organs, and other physical female features; then the person is a female.<sup>41</sup> Simply put, “sex is parts.”<sup>42</sup>

**Gender** “refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex. Behavior that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender-normative; behaviors that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender non-conformity.”<sup>43</sup> Simply put, “gender is identity.”<sup>44</sup>

**Gender identity** refers to “a person’s deeply-felt, inherent sense of being a boy, a man, or male; a girl, a woman, or female; or an alternative gender... which may or may not correspond to a person’s sex assigned at birth or to a person’s primary or secondary sex characteristics.”<sup>45</sup> Gender identity is not visible until it becomes an outward gender expression.

**Gender dysphoria** refers to an experience characterized by strong negative feelings that stem from conflict between one’s gender identity and biological sex.<sup>46</sup> A person experiencing gender dysphoria may have the desire to identify or express themselves outside their biological sex, but the existence of gender dysphoria does not necessitate this identity or expression.

---

41. Walker, *Transgender Debate*, 29–32.

42. Nathan A. Wordell, “Are Transgender People Sinning?” (Senior Thesis, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2016), 7.

43. American Psychological Association, *Key Terms and Concepts in Understanding Gender Diversity and Sexual Orientation Among Students* (Washington, DC: APA, 2015), 20.

44. Wordell, “Are Transgender People Sinning?” 7.

45. Wordell, “Are Transgender People Sinning?” 20.

46. Walker, *Transgender Debate*, 33–34.

**Transgender** is an adjective which refers to the state of a person who expresses their gender identity in a manner that does not match their biological sex. The term transgender is an umbrella term that can encompass people who have medically transitioned, socially transitioned, or merely identify opposite their biological sex.<sup>47</sup>

### **Desire for Belonging & Experiences of Rejection**

Transgender people naturally break from biological norms by rejecting their biological sex in favor of their preferred gender identity. This rejection does not imply a diminished desire to be accepted. In a study done by Brian A. Rood in 2016, 30 transgender individuals were interviewed about their experiences of rejection due to their transgender identity. The responses demonstrate an overwhelming desire for acceptance, which was met with rejection. One participant shared,

I want to be treated like anybody else, so anticipating being an outsider isn't a great feeling. It's pretty upsetting, hoping that somebody would go up to bat for you, right? ... It's like the one kid who gets punked on or bullied, and they kind of know that they're different, but hopes that other people will stand up for them, be nice to them, and fight for them, you know? (28, multiracial, male/man)<sup>48</sup>

Another individual stated, “I would get people that would look at me and talk to me like, ‘Is this freak really speaking to me?’ instead of just talking to me like I'm a normal human being... (34, Black, male/man)”<sup>49</sup> Even within the LGBTQ community, rejection was common. A third participant commented on this lack of acceptance in the LGBTQ community,

---

47. Walker, *Transgender Debate*, 34.

48. Brian A. Rood et al., “Expecting Rejection: Understanding the Minority Stress Experiences of Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Individuals,” *Transgender Health* 1, no. 1 (2016): 151–64.

49. Rood et al, “Expecting Rejection,” 151–164.

The gay community refuses to accept trans men and gender fluidity, and the lesbian community will sometimes become violent against trans women, and then they turn around and complain about the same things being done to them by the rest of society. It's like, "How can you cry about this when you're doing it to the rest of us?" (40, White, gender fluid)<sup>50</sup>

The study observes that throughout the stories, these transgender individuals experienced "rejection in ways that suggested that the experiences were intense and often life-threatening...; upsetting and disparaging...; and an expected part of their existence."<sup>51</sup>

Since rejection is such a common experience for the transgender community, it follows that acceptance is demanded to remedy this experience. Foundations, such as *The Human Rights Campaign (HRC)*, encourage people to become allies so that transgender people can "feel seen, supported, and safe."<sup>52</sup> Being an ally consists of listening for understanding, respecting boundaries, being an active supporter socially and politically, and using a person's preferred name or pronouns.<sup>53</sup>

What can be felt through this desperate cry for acceptance is that transgender people yearn for belonging. People want to belong and dislike rejection.<sup>54</sup> The APA reports that rejection registers in the brain similarly to physical pain, and that continual social rejection often leads to deteriorating mental and physical health.<sup>55</sup> The *Human Rights Campaign* reports the sad reality that transgender people, regardless of their desire to belong, face harsh rejection in the

---

50. Rood et al, "Expecting Rejection," 151–164.

51. Rood et al, "Expecting Rejection," 151–164.

52. Human Rights Campaign, *Being an LGBTQ+ Ally* (2022).

53. Human Rights Campaign, *Being an LGBTQ+ Ally*.

54. There could be some special circumstances of extremely antisocial individuals who truly do not care to belong anywhere, but as a generality belonging is preferred over rejection.

55. Kirsten Weir, "The Pain of Social Rejection," *Monitor on Psychology*, April 2012.

form of verbal and physical violence regularly. In many cases, the violent hate crimes are fatal.<sup>56</sup> When it comes to religion, 46.1% of transgender individuals have experienced religious rejection in their lives, which has resulted in an overall negative view of religious institutions among LGBTQ+ individuals.<sup>57</sup> This reputation poses a serious challenge for the church. The church is tasked with speaking both God's objective truth and demonstrating Christian love to a community that anticipates rejection.

### **The Belief that Sex Is Different than Gender**

One of the primary tenets of transgenderism is that *sex* and *gender* are separate and distinct. The essence of being transgender is that gender expression<sup>58</sup> must be opposed to the biological sex. This relationship between these two terms has shifted over the years. It used to be understood that a transgender boy is a biological girl who identifies as a boy, or a transgender girl is a biological boy who identifies as a girl. But now, rather than *identifying* as the opposite sex, the transgender boy and girl *are* the sex they claim to be.<sup>59</sup> This seemingly small change makes the claim that gender is no longer a deviant expression of the biological sex, but now

---

56. Human Rights Campaign, *The Epidemic of Violence Against the Transgender & Gender-Expansive Community in the U.S.* (2024).

57. Steph L. Cull et al., "Associations Among Religiosity, Religious Rejection, Mental Health, and Suicidal Ideation in Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Adults," *Behavioral Sciences* 15, no. 3 (2025): 270.

58. While *Gender Identity* refers to the internal sense of maleness, femaleness, or otherness, *Gender Expression* refers to how a person outwardly communicates and presents their gender.

59. Ryan T. Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment* (Encounter Books, 2018). 28.

influences and dictates the sex of an individual so that a transgender woman *is* a woman, and a transgender man *is* a man.

The way gender expresses itself aligns with socially accepted gendered stereotypes.<sup>60</sup>

Jamie Raines<sup>61</sup>, in his book *The T in LGBT*, shares his personal experience from his transgender journey. Jamie observed from early on that he unknowingly expressed an inclination toward stereotypically masculine things,

Ever since I can remember, I thought I was just one of the boys. For the most part I rejected anything that would associate me with being a girl – not that gender conformity is the be-all and end-all, but because my child brain made a connection between doing and wearing stereotypically feminine things and being seen as a girl, which was something I very much wanted to avoid.

I also simply enjoyed things that were stereotypically more masculine. I liked playing football with the other boys; I wanted my hair short; I only chose clothes from the boys' section for much of my pre-teen childhood. I remember one particular haircut when I was about eight years old. When it was finished I turned to my mum and asked, "Do I look like a boy now?" Her answer was something along the lines of, "If that's what you want, dear." Looking back at photos of me from that time, the answer was absolutely yes!<sup>62</sup>

Jamie describes the tension felt between his expression and socially accepted gender stereotypes<sup>63</sup> enforced by peers.<sup>64</sup> And later on, an aha-moment when he finally discovered the

---

60. i.e. young boys love roughhousing and playing with critters outside, while little girls enjoy the color pink, drawing, and princesses.

61. Jamie Raines is a biological female that expresses his gender as a male. The preferred pronoun is utilized here for the purpose of intentionally respecting Jamies expression. This is partly because this portion of this thesis is attempting to be "quick to listen" and "slow to speak" by making a point about pronouns and their usage here would interject prematurely.

62. Jamie Raines, *The T in LGBT: Everything You Need to Know About Being Trans* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2024). 2.

63. Hartke, Transforming, 28–29. Gender stereotypes are considered fluid across culture and time. Austen Hartke observes that, babies in the 1900's wore white regardless of the gender, by 1918 boys wore pink, and girls wore blue, and again in the 1940's boys wore blue, and girls wore pink. This demonstrates change. The challenge for gender expression is the rigidity with which culture enforces gendered stereotypes.

64. Raines, *The T in LGBT*, 5–7.

account of a transitioning biological girl in the news that closely aligned with his lived experience.<sup>65</sup> Because this news account validated his experience, Jamie found solace in the normalization of his preferred gender expression through adopting masculine stereotypes. By taking on these masculine stereotypes, Jamie expressed a gender identity that was contrary to his biological sex.

To the transgender individual, gender is the true self. Physical sex characteristics are merely accidental and can misrepresent the identity of a person. Current medical and psychological practices utilize the phrase “sex assigned at birth” to infer that birth sex is externally imposed and opens the door for gender identity to serve as the absolute basis of a person’s biological sex.<sup>66</sup> Within this framework, biological sex is considered “socially constructed, because there’s nothing in nature that decides whether XX and XY chromosomes or testicles and ovaries should be categorized as male or female or something else altogether. It’s humans who make that distinction and who decide what is within the range of normal for a particular category.”<sup>67</sup> In this instance, personal gender expression becomes the arbiter of biological sex.

To demonstrate the malleability of sex in light of gender identity, transgender advocates point to the various brain structures of transgender people as evidence showing the physical biology of a person coming into alignment with one’s preferred gender identity. Two studies, one

---

65. Raines, *The T in LGBT*, 7–8.

66. Anderson, *When Harry*, 29.

67. Hartke, *Transforming*, 29.

done by Frank Kruijver in 2000<sup>68</sup> and another by Florian Kurth in 2022,<sup>69</sup> observed that brain structures in transgender men have drawn similarities to those in cisgender<sup>70</sup> men, and that the brain structures in transgender women have drawn similarities to those in cisgender women. While the brains of the transgender patients did not demonstrate a 100% neurological shift toward the individual's gender identity, the study did observe changes in the brain structure that drew closer to alignment with the gender identity of the tested individuals.

While there is certainly evidence that the brain changes structures in some capacity, it has been argued that these studies are problematic. Professor Paul Wendland makes such a statement,

The problem with all brain studies is that they cannot offer anything like conclusive proof of a biological “reason” for transgenderism. That is due to the well-known phenomenon called “neuroplasticity.” This is a word that simply means “brain changes” and it refers to the fact that the brain’s structure can be altered due to many factors, including a person’s behavior and experience.<sup>71</sup>

When a person adopts a non-conforming gender expression, this continued expression could develop a brain with structures reminiscent of those commonly found in the opposite biological sex. Professor Wendland’s point raises a valid objection to this line of argumentation. Until

---

68. F. P. Kruijver et al., “Male-to-Female Transsexuals Have Female Neuron Numbers in a Limbic Nucleus,” *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism* 85, no. 5 (2000): 2034–41.

69. Florian Kurth et al., “Brain Sex in Transgender Women Is Shifted towards Gender Identity,” *Journal of Clinical Medicine* 11, no. 6 (2022): 1582.

70. The term “cisgender” refers to a person who’s gender identity and biological sex are in alignment with one another.

71. Paul O. Wendland, *A Pastoral Statement on the Transgender Movement* (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2020), 13.

further study has been done, it would be unwise to state factually whether the observed biological brain structures are the *cause* of gender non-conformity or the *result*.<sup>72</sup>

In either case, the division between sex and gender remains central to transgenderism. This division, however, is not only a medical or psychological distinction but also a philosophical one. Postmodernism raises the question as to who or what has the authority to establish truth.<sup>73</sup> Postmodernism rejects authority capable of establishing universal truth.<sup>74</sup> “The only solution is to refuse to grant anyone moral authority: *no one* is to have the power to say how everyone should live.”<sup>75</sup> Postmodernism concludes that each person is to have their own isolated silo of subjective truth.

This is where Queer Theory connects to postmodernism. Traditional authorities declare something to be a moral truth or a societal norm. Traditionally speaking, gender and sex have been placed into binary categories such as male/female or masculine/feminine; however, within Queer Theory, these are not objective truths to be held, but rather cultural authorities using binary language as an expression of oppressive power. Judith Butler, one of the founding authorities of Queer Theory, argues in her book, *Gender Trouble*, that gender and sex should not be viewed within a binary framework and that an individual’s gender expression dictates one’s sex.

It would make no sense, then, to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex, if sex itself is a gendered category. Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural

---

72. Anderson, *When Harry*, 33.

73. The skepticism over authority capable of establishing truth is discussed briefly on page 5–6.

74. Heath White, *Postmodernism 101: A First Course for the Curious Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 54–57.

75. White, *Postmodernism 101*, 57.

inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which “sexed nature” or “a natural sex” is produced and established as “prediscursive,” prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts.<sup>76</sup>

In this expression, sex and gender are held distinct from one another, and the traditionally held belief that gender stems from biological sex is disputed. For this reason, Scripture may be received as an oppressive authority over and against transgenderism.

### **Gender Dysphoria**

Postmodernism and Queer Theory reinforce transgenderism. Not all transgender people are philosophers engaging in theory; many are merely trying to express their felt reality and seek relief. Gender dysphoria is a personal and emotional experience commonly experienced by transgender individuals; however, not all transgender people experience gender dysphoria.<sup>77</sup> Grasping the personal experiences of these people is critical if we are to properly listen and understand the condition of those considering identifying as transgender.

Dysphoria is a strong, painful, negative feeling that is excessively hard to bear.<sup>78</sup> Dysphoria could be used to describe a wide variety of strong negative feelings, but gender dysphoria is caused by one’s gender identity and their biological sex being out of sync. It is

---

11. 76. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006),

77. Gender GP, “Not All Transgender People Experience Gender Dysphoria,” *GenderGP*, February 5, 2026.

78. “Dysphoria,” *Merriam-Webster*, accessed December 4, 2025.

commonly described as a person having a “boy brain but in a girl’s body” or vice versa. The pain isn’t temporary like a stubbed toe, every glance in a mirror, every time a person is identified according to their biological sex, and every small nuance that does not cohere with the preferred gender identity is a constant jolt of dysphoric pain. It is inescapable. Jamie Raines describes his personal experience with gender dysphoria.

You can’t escape your own body and being stuck in a body that was so... deeply and incredibly uncomfortable felt unbearable at times. I remember desperately willing my body to start changing in the way I wanted it to, hoping that I would wake up one day and look different. To not have my chest, to not be an hourglass shape, to not have a high-pitched voice. I longed for a beard and a deep voice, and so much more. I wanted to escape my own skin and step into looking a different way – a way that I knew wouldn’t cause me this pain and discomfort. It didn’t feel like a want, it was a desperate need.<sup>79</sup>

Other transgender people in Jamie’s book described dysphoria as: wearing a clown costume while everyone is staring, being trapped in a big blob of playdough you can’t reshape, feeling like an alien in one’s own body, feeling like you’re trapped by skin, flesh, and bone and as if you’re constantly waiting for permission to breathe.<sup>80</sup> There is one commonality among all of these: their bodies cause pain.

The alarming part is the heightened suicide rates among this demographic. In 2019, it was recorded that among people with gender dysphoria, nearly 55% of people demonstrated suicidality, which includes thoughts of death, suicide plans, or suicide attempts, compared to 4%

---

79. Raines, *The T in LGBT*, 92.

80. Raines, *The T in LGBT*, 93.

of those without gender dysphoria exhibiting suicidality.<sup>81</sup> The specific statistic varies between studies but is consistently elevated among those diagnosed with gender dysphoria.

It is only natural that a person in pain would seek to alleviate that pain. For those struggling with gender dysphoria, sex and gender feel as if they are in tension, and this tension is the cause of the pain. Under this reasoning, relief is found by bringing sex and gender into alignment with one another. The solutions could be broken down into two separate categories: *affirming* and *confirming*. The affirming category of solutions desires to deny the biological sex and align it with the non-conforming gender. The confirming category desires to deny the non-conforming gender and align it with the biological sex. There are several methods that are used to achieve this alignment.

### Affirming Solutions

There is a plethora of proposed *affirming* solutions to align the biological sex with the non-conforming gender. They will be discussed in order from least invasive/reversible to most invasive/irreversible.

### ***Social transitioning***

Social transitioning is the broadest term. Social transitioning includes using different pronouns or a new name in place of their dead name, changing legal documents, public profiles,

---

81. “Gender Dysphoria Statistics in the United States,” Bright-Path Behavioral Health, December 3, 2024.

hair, clothing, using binding, packing, padding, and tucking.<sup>82</sup> Each of these options is temporary and easily reversible. The person struggling with gender dysphoria could choose when to use or drop any of these at any given time.

### ***Puberty blockers***

As the name would indicate, puberty blockers are a category of medicine used to delay puberty in adolescents by preventing the release of sex hormones. Jamie Raines describes puberty blockers as “hormone agonists that essentially block testicles from making testosterone and ovaries from making oestrogen (estrogen) and progesterone. When taken pre-adolescence, they essentially put a pause on puberty from happening, which for trans kids means they don’t need to go through the wrong puberty for their true gender.”<sup>83</sup> Putting the process of puberty in a holding pattern is “seen as a way of extending the decision-making time for everyone *prior to*

---

82. Raines, *The T in LGBT*, 106–121. All definitions of *binding*, *packing*, *padding*, and *tucking* are adapted from this source.

*Dead name* refers to one’s birth name which has been dropped in favor of a new name to reflect their preferred gender identity.

*Binding* is an act in which a biological female uses specialized vests or wraps to flatten her breasts under clothes for the purpose of presenting a flatter more masculine chest.

*Packing* is an act in which a biological female wears a prosthesis in her groin area to create a bulge in one’s pants reminiscent of a penis. The prosthesis, colloquially referred to as a packer, comes in a variety of shapes, sizes, materials and functions.

*Padding* is a term used to describe material filler, which is used to simulate a body structure reminiscent of the opposite sex. Padding is most used to imitate feminine hips, butts and breasts. While less common, padding can be used to accentuate masculine structures such as broader shoulders.

*Tucking* is an act in which a biological male pushes his penis back between his legs and secures it in place with specialized underwear or tape. On occasions padding can be used to give the groin a smooth flattened feminine appearance.

83. Raines, *The T in LGBT*, 123.

medical intervention.”<sup>84</sup> The ultimate goal of using puberty blockers is to prevent the possible development of attributes that would cause further gender dysphoria.

But do puberty blockers merely pause sexual development in a manner that can be resumed without irreversible damage? While there are no conclusive studies, there are concerns that puberty blockers may have adverse side effects. In the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism*, Michele A. O’Connell and colleagues note that the long-term effects of puberty blockers are largely unknown, but the same journal expresses concern over the potential for this treatment to negatively impact the patient’s bone health, fertility, growth, cognition, and sexual function.<sup>85</sup>

Since puberty blockers are used primarily on children on the cusp of puberty, far before the brain has fully developed, is it truly wise to allow a child to make possibly life-changing decisions such as taking puberty blockers? At the age of puberty, a child naturally struggles to come to grips with their body, which begins to produce hair, body odor, and acne in addition to a new realm of sexual attraction. These changes are awkward, uncomfortable, and even dysphoric. But on the other end of puberty, it is seen that a vast number of children, who previously struggled with gender dysphoria, grow out of that experience.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, a young child’s gender identity could be described as “elastic” and “plastic”, meaning that it changes over time and responds to the approval and disapproval of their parents and other cultural influences. If this

---

84. Yarhouse and Sadusky, *Emerging Gender Identities*, 53.

85. Michele A. O’Connell et al., “Approach to the Patient: Pharmacological Management of Trans and Gender-Diverse Adolescents,” *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* 107, no. 1 (2022): 241–57.

86. Lawrence S. Mayer and Paul R. McHugh, “Part Three: Gender Identity,” *Sexuality and Gender*, no. 50 (The New Atlantis, 2016).

is the case, taking a step such as puberty blockers could lead a child to persist in trying to soothe a sense of gender dysphoria that would otherwise have resolved itself over time.<sup>87</sup>

### ***Hormone replacement therapy***

*Hormone Replacement Therapy* (HRT) takes this process forward another step. Rather than merely preventing hormones to be produced in the individual's body, HRT actively attempts to introduce testosterone or estrogen. In effect, HRT not only prevents undesired biological sex characteristics from developing but is understood to begin causing changes in the person's body and emotions that tend to correlate with the desired biological sex.

Testosterone treatment is used in Female to Male (FtM) patients. The International Journal of Transgender Health states, "The effects of testosterone treatment are multiple and may include the appearance of increased body and facial hair, male pattern baldness, increased muscle mass and strength, decreased fat mass, deepening of the voice, interruption of menses (if still present), increased prevalence and severity of acne, clitoral enlargement, and increased sexual desire"<sup>88</sup>

Estrogen treatment is used in Male to Female (MtF) patients. The International Journal of Transgender Health states, "Estrogen treatment induces breast development... [causes] decreases

---

87. Anderson, *When Harry*, 123.

88. E. Coleman et al., "Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People, Version 8," *International Journal of Transgender Health* 23, no. sup1 (2022): 110–120.

in testicular volume, lean body mass, skin oiliness, sexual desire, spontaneous erections, facial hair, and body hair along with increased subcutaneous body fat.”<sup>89</sup>

The changes that happen in a person undergoing HRT are not immediate and develop over time. The effects of HRT, however, are not comparable to puberty blockers. Changes in FtM patients, such as the voice deepening, facial and body hair growth, scalp hair loss, and clitoral enlargement, do not go away if a person chooses to discontinue taking the hormones.<sup>90</sup> MtF patients similarly encounter permanent changes such as breast growth and shrinking testicles.<sup>91</sup> In both cases, permanent infertility has been identified as a likely risk.<sup>92</sup> Those who take hormone therapy have been identified as being at a higher risk of bone loss, weight gain, and a plethora of cardiovascular diseases.<sup>93</sup> On the other hand, HRT does cause the body to begin to change in a manner that resembles the desired biological sex. While the success of HRT depends on the duration of the treatment, the changes effected by the procedure are largely irreversible and carry added risk.

---

89. Coleman et al., “Standards of Care,” 120.

90. Helene Frances Hedian, “Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy (GAHT),” Johns Hopkins Medicine, January 20, 2021.

91. “Estrogen, Progesterone, & Testosterone Blockers,” Plume Clinic, last updated September 23, 2025.

92. E. Coleman et al. “Standards of Care” 254.

93. Cécile A. Unger, “Hormone Therapy for Transgender Patients,” *Translational Andrology and Urology* 5, no. 6 (2016): 877–884.

### ***Gender affirming surgery***

Gender Affirming Surgery (GAS) is the most drastic form of the affirming solutions. GAS forcefully removes and/or constructs sexual characteristics of the individual. The most common surgeries focus on altering the chest and/or genitals of the patient. These surgeries are colloquially referred to as *top surgery* and *bottom surgery*.<sup>94</sup> The following descriptions are rather graphic.

Top surgery refers to the surgical alteration of the chest. In MtF patients, top surgery “consists of an augmentation of their naturally growing chests. The surgeon usually inserts breast implants and occasionally injects fat around the implants in a technique called lipofilling.”<sup>95</sup> This surgery could also be called a mastoplasty. In FtM patients, top surgery “consists of the removal of naturally growing breasts. This surgery is called a mastectomy or ‘male contouring’ procedure.”<sup>96</sup>

Bottom surgery alters the genitals. Although the term “bottom surgery” might sound like a one-time procedure, it is often performed in multiple stages. Each patient can elect to undergo an extirpative surgery (-ectomy), which removes part or all of their sexual organs, a reconstructive surgery (-plasty), which reshapes genital structures, or a combination of both.

---

94. In the following descriptions various terms will be used ending in either *-ectomy* or *-plasty*. The suffix “-ectomy” refers to the removal of an organ. The suffix “-plasty” refers to the construction of an organ.

95. Wordell, “Are Transgender People Sinning?” 20.

96. Wordell, “Are Transgender People Sinning?” 19.

MtF patients who undergo extirpative bottom surgery remove the testicles and scrotum in an orchiectomy and remove the penis in a penectomy.<sup>97</sup> By performing an orchiectomy, the male is effectively castrated. MtF patients who elect to undergo reconstructive bottom surgery can choose to construct a neovagina<sup>98</sup> (vaginoplasty), neoclitoris (clitoroplasty), neolabia (labiaplasty), or any combination of these three. The neovagina is constructed through a technique called penile inversion in which the internal flesh of the penis is removed, and the hollowed organ is sewn together with the scrotum and pushed inside the pelvic cavity.<sup>99</sup> The neoclitoris is constructed using the sensitive tip of the penis (glans penis). And the neolabia is constructed with the remaining scrotal skin.<sup>100</sup>

FtM patients who undergo extirpative bottom surgery remove the uterus through a hysterectomy, the ovaries and fallopian tubes through a salpingo-oophorectomy, and the vagina either partially or completely through a vaginectomy.<sup>101</sup> FtM patients who elect to undergo reconstructive bottom surgery can choose to construct a neophallus (metoidioplasty or phalloplasty) and/or a neoscrotum (scrotoplasty). The neophallus can be constructed through one of two different procedures. The metoidioplasty is the more affordable of the two options. A metoidioplasty utilizes the clitoris, which is enlarged before the surgery through hormone treatments. The resulting neophallus allows for partial erectile function but cannot be used for

---

97. Wordell, "Are Transgender People Sinning?" 22.

98. The prefix "-neo" means "new" this prefix will be used several times here. The fact that the prefix "-neo" qualifies the term indicates that what is constructed here through surgery is not the equivalent of the desired organ but an imitation.

99. Wordell, "Are Transgender People Sinning?" 23.

100. Wordell, "Are Transgender People Sinning?" 23.

101. Wordell, "Are Transgender People Sinning?" 21.

standing urination or sexual penetration due to its size being comparable to a micro-penis.<sup>102</sup> A phalloplasty is performed by removing a portion of the patients flesh from their arm, shaping and attaching it to the groin region. The resulting neophallus resembles the size of a natural penis and can be used for urination if the urethra undergoes an elongating procedure, but it cannot become naturally erect, and physical sensation is often lost. A prosthetic implant can be inserted, or pumps can be used to imitate an erection.<sup>103</sup> The neoscrotum is formed through a scrotoplasty which utilizes parts of the labia to form a scrotum. After the neoscrotum fully heals, one can choose to insert prosthetic testicles to give the impression of a natural scrotum.<sup>104</sup>

While many of these procedures can be performed to remove and repair infected or cancerous sex organs, the organs being removed in GAS are healthy. To alleviate gender dysphoria, healthy functioning organs are removed and replaced with new manufactured organs, which “cannot fulfill the purpose that is central to the organ’s definition.”<sup>105</sup> While various prosthetics and medications can be provided to force these organs to imitate the function of natural sex organs, they have no connection to naturally developed sex organs. Mastoplasty does not create natural female breasts. Metoidioplasty and phalloplasty do not create a natural male penis. And a vaginoplasty does not create a natural female vagina. “Plastic surgery on the reproductive organs, no matter how ‘realistic’ the result may appear, does not create the organs

---

102. Raines, *The T in LGBT*, 145–147; Wordell, “Are Transgender People Sinning?” 21.

103. Raines, *The T in LGBT*, 145–147; Wordell, “Are Transgender People Sinning?” 21.

104. Raines, *The T in LGBT*, 146–147; Wordell, “Are Transgender People Sinning?” 22.

105. Anderson, *When Harry*, 100.

of the opposite sex.”<sup>106</sup> Once the surgery has been performed, the patient must remain on HRT for the duration of their lives.

In any case, the individuals who choose to go under the knife are taking drastic measures to attempt to alleviate their gender dysphoria. No surgery is simple and comes with a plethora of risks. Albeit rare, individuals have been documented who have even resorted to performing DIY gender affirming surgeries on themselves.<sup>107</sup> These drastic measures demonstrate the absolute sense of desperation felt by people experiencing gender dysphoria. Their pain is real.

### Confirming Solutions

Contrary to *affirming* solutions, *confirming* solutions strive to bring the person’s gender into alignment with the individual’s biological sex.

### *Counseling*

Depending on the focus, counseling could be affirming or confirming. Affirming counseling is typically a prerequisite to HRT and GAS. Confirming counseling is often viewed negatively by the transgender community and characterized as “conversion therapy.” In a 2019 report, the Williams Institute at the School of Law pointed to the harmful history of practitioners utilizing “aversion treatments, such as inducing nausea, vomiting, or paralysis; providing electric

---

106. Anderson, *When Harry*, 101.

107. Nooshin Khobzi Rotondi et al., “Nonprescribed Hormone Use and Self-Performed Surgeries: ‘Do-It-Yourself’ Transitions in Transgender Communities in Ontario, Canada,” *American Journal of Public Health* 103, no. 10 (2013): 1830–36.

shocks; or having the individual snap an elastic band around the wrist.”<sup>108</sup> This classification of treatment portrays confirming counseling in a barbaric light.

On the other hand, Psychodynamic Psychotherapy for Gender Dysphoria (PPGD) does not attempt to convert a person’s gender identity by force but rather strives to help prevent the individual from mislabeling themselves and consequently taking more drastic steps.<sup>109</sup> This practice is largely passive. In the same vein, a counselor could take a “wait and see” approach to see if the dysphoria subsides. This approach seems to be a prudent consideration due to the high rates of biological males and females resolving their dysphoria over time.<sup>110</sup>

### ***Faith***

The *American Psychological Association* agrees that all people naturally yearn to connect spiritually with something greater than themselves.<sup>111</sup> By searching for a greater meaning in life that resides outside the self, pressure would naturally be taken off the individual to be the sole arbiter of truth. Additionally, faith comes with an inherent purpose in life, which involves participation in a greater community. By adopting faith and the community involved, a person

---

108. Christy Mallory, Taylor N.T. Brown, and Kerith J. Conron, *Conversion Therapy and LGBT Youth*, (Los Angeles: UCLA School of Law Williams Institute, June 2019).

109. Joanne Sinai and Peter Sim, “Psychodynamic Psychotherapy for Gender Dysphoria Is Not Conversion Therapy,” *Journal of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 33, no. 2 (2024): 145–53.

110. Wendland, *A Pastoral Statement*, 16–17.

111. Zara Abrams, “Can Religion and Spirituality Have a Place in Therapy? Experts Say Yes,” *American Psychological Association*, November 1, 2023. The APA also argues in this article that various religious affiliations have a history of abusing the LGBTQ+ community. We should not be quick to condemn this statement. Religion has been historically wielded against “undesirables” in the past.

could discover that they are no longer so focused on the tension felt between their sex and non-conforming gender.

### ***Living in tension***

While there are a number of people who experience relief through the affirming solutions<sup>112</sup>, many transgender people who have undergone HRT and GAS continue to be at an elevated risk of suicidality.<sup>113</sup> Rather than take steps that mutilate a person's healthy body, a person whose dysphoria persists could choose to live in tension with their non-conforming gender. On the surface, living in tension would be the most challenging of the confirming solutions since it would mean accepting the pain that comes with a conflicting sex and gender. These individuals deserve an extra measure of patience and compassion. Within Christianity, living in tension is not merely a rarity but an expectation. "And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27). But no one's cross is born alone. "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2).

Here are the challenges. Transgenderism is not just a social trend, but a closely held belief that rejects the authority to argue otherwise. The experiences of transgender people are full of pain. They desire acceptance but experience rejection. They desire relief but experience dysphoria. To find relief, people experiencing gender dysphoria frequently seek out solutions that can at times be harmful and permanent. These people are real. The pain is real. And so is

---

112. Wordell, "Are Transgender People Sinning?" 25–26.

113. Ashley Austin et al., "Suicidality Among Transgender Youth: Elucidating the Role of Interpersonal Risk Factors," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37, nos. 5–6 (2022): NP2696–718.

their God, and God has a lot to say to transgender people. Next, this paper will take time to listen to Scripture to see what it will add to the conversation.

### **God Hates Sin**

God does not arbitrarily hate sin. Sin is the very antithesis of God's nature. Throughout the Bible, God is referred to as "holy" (Exod 15:11; Lev 11:44–45; 1 Sam 2:2; Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8), which denotes God's state of moral perfection. Immediately after the Fall, sin caused Adam and Eve to "[hide] from the LORD God among the trees of the garden" (Gen 3:8) and effectively caused them to separate themselves from God. Sin, however, does not merely separate mankind from God but causes mankind to be entirely hostile to God and incapable of submitting to God's Law (Rom 8:7). There is no hierarchy of sin, in which certain sins merit hate from God more than others; all sin deserves death (Rom 6:23). Sin should not be minimized. C. F. W. Walther, in his book *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel* describes people who minimize God's hatred for sin,

People who speak in this way picture God, the Holy and Righteous One, as a feeble, old man like Eli, who saw his sons sin and merely said, "No, my sons," thinking that he had already done his duty. True enough: God is love. But He is also holiness and righteousness. For the people who rise up against him, God becomes a terrible fire, and His fiery wrath follows those sinners into the depth of hell.<sup>114</sup>

It is true, God hates sin. But are transgender people sinning?

---

114. C. F. W. Walther et al., *Law & Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010). 366.

## Are Transgender People Sinning?

To answer this question, this paper will use Nathan Wordell's thesis, *Are Transgender People Sinning?*<sup>115</sup>, and Professor Paul Wendland's paper, *A Pastoral Statement on the Transgender Movement*.<sup>116</sup> We will briefly lay out the basic scriptural principles presented in both papers.

At creation, God formed Adam and Eve in a way that only God has the power and authority to do. The verb בָּרָא in Genesis 1 and 2 describes an extraordinary creative act through which God establishes order.<sup>117</sup> As part of this created order (Gen 1:27), God assigned Adam to be male and Eve to be female. Sex and gender were assigned by God, not the other way around.<sup>118</sup> The Bible contains gendered words for both men and women, as well as corresponding activities and functions that relate to the underlying biological sex. Men can be circumcised and have sex with women, but they cannot bear children. Women can menstruate, have sex with men, conceive, give birth to children, and nurse, but they cannot fertilize an egg.<sup>119</sup> God created one human race, but within this singular identity, God created a binary nature. "He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them 'Mankind' when they were created" (Gen 5:2). This means that men and women were created with similarities yet were distinct, with "different purposes, different biology, and different social roles to play."<sup>120</sup> The ultimate

---

115. Wordell, "Are Transgender People Sinning?"

116. Wendland, *A Pastoral Statement*.

117. Wordell, "Are Transgender People Sinning?" 49.

118. Wordell, "Are Transgender People Sinning?" 49.

119. Wordell, "Are Transgender People Sinning?" 41–46.

120. Wordell, "Are Transgender People Sinning?" 46.

culmination of gender and sex is found in marriage as established in Genesis 2:22–24, in which men and women are to take on gendered roles corresponding to their biological sex.<sup>121</sup> While verses specific to transgenderism are scant, God can be seen protecting this created order in Deuteronomy 22:5, “A woman must not wear men’s clothing, nor a man wear women’s clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this.”<sup>122</sup> Additionally, God expects males to act like males and females to act like females in their marriages, sexual activities, and social relationships.<sup>123</sup> Finally, God’s creation, its order, and all its aspects were and are “very good” (Gen 1:31).<sup>124</sup> While mankind has fallen and corrupted that “very good” creation, this created order remains the standard. Jesus pointed back to this created order, “‘Haven’t you read,’ he replied, ‘that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female.’” (Matt 19:4)

Christians disagree on how Scripture should be applied to transgenderism. These differing viewpoints can be understood by studying Mark Yarhouse’s three lenses. Due to their scriptural basis, this paper holds to a synthesis of the Integrity and Disability lenses to describe God’s created order and the fallen state of that creation.<sup>125</sup> For this reason, people engaging in transgender activities are clearly sinning. “It is God’s will that people live out their gender roles according to the sex he assigned them at birth. To do otherwise is a sin against God.”<sup>126</sup> The

---

121. Wendland, *A Pastoral Statement*, 20.

122. During biblical times HRT and GAS were not available to gender dysphoric people, prohibiting crossdressing can be viewed as tantamount to prohibiting social transitioning as previously discussed.

123. Wordell, “Are Transgender People Sinning?” 54.

124. Wendland, *A Pastoral Statement*, 20.

125. The Integrity lens looks to Genesis 1 and 2 as the moral redline for sex and gender, and the disability lens looks to Genesis 3 as the explanation to why this redline cannot be maintained. Mark Yarhouse’s three lenses were discussed in greater depth on page 7–9.

126. Wordell, “Are Transgender People Sinning?” 58.

primary issue with transgenderism is that it rejects God's ordained will for them to live in their carefully created bodies. Transgenderism rejects God as the ultimate authority of sex and gender and establishes their personal feelings as an idol in place of God.<sup>127</sup> Additionally by choosing to undergo social transitioning, HRT and GAS, a transperson is actively choosing to defile and mutilate their biological sex which is a precious gift of God that was carefully crafted by God himself (Ps 139:13). By undergoing mutilating surgeries and procedures, the body is viewed as a malleable feature of the person which is subject to the whims of the individuals' feelings.

Essentially, transgender individuals express a form of "ancient Gnosticism in new garb."<sup>128</sup>

Those who actively engage in transgender activity are undeniably sinning against God's created order. Additionally, the sinful thoughts and inclinations associated with gender dysphoria are also sinful (Matt 5:28). Still, Christians should be cautious of accusing individuals who struggle with the horrors of gender dysphoria of the same sin. The key is the struggle. Is the individual actively engaging with these thoughts or affirming solutions that blur the lines between sex and gender? Or is there a genuine struggle to understand the identity they were created with? Every Christian bears a cross, and in the case of a Christian who struggles with gender dysphoria, this is their unique cross. Rather than give in to the sinful desires of "the self", Jesus calls Christians, who struggle with gender dysphoria, to "deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Matt 16:24)<sup>129</sup>.

Ultimately, transgender people, who actively choose to defy this created order, are sinning because they reject the objective truth established by God (Rom 2:8). God hates sin. God

---

127. Wordell, "Are Transgender People Sinning?" 60

128. Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Baker Books, 2018), 3.

134. Emphasis mine.

hates transgenderism. All sinners by nature are “objects of God’s wrath” (Eph 2:3), but the Bible does not end by expressing what God hates; it tells those sinners what God loves. God loves the whole world, and that includes those struggling with transgenderism.

### **God Loves People**

Although God’s creation was deemed “very good” (Gen 1:31), Adam and Eve fell into sin (Genesis 3), that very good creation became corrupted, and their relationship with their God, each other, and their bodies changed drastically. Pastor Mike Novotny, in his book *Taboo*, wrote,

In Genesis 1 and 2, Adam and Eve loved each other. In Genesis 3, they blamed each other. In Genesis 1 and 2, Adam and Eve were naked and absolutely unashamed. In Genesis 3, they covered their own bodies with fig leaves. Where the Father had created unity, the father of lies ripped it apart.<sup>130</sup>

God’s perfectly ordered creation had been defiled, and perfection was lost. But before condemning his special creation, God’s love moved him to promise restoration. “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen 3:15). Yes, God hates sin, but God loves people. And God didn’t merely love people from a distance; God provided a solution because “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son” (John 3:16). God didn’t provide his Son so that only the true pious believers could be saved, rather God “wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4). The truth being that God’s “love extends to the grossest of sinners, to thieves and murderers, to harlots and adulterers. As He hates the sinners

---

<sup>130</sup>. Mike Novotny, *Taboo: Topics Christians Should Be Talking about But Don’t* (Austin: Fedd Books, 2024), 112.

without exception, so He loves all sinners without exception.”<sup>131</sup> God loves all people, and “God demonstrates his own love for us [including transgender people and those struggling with gender dysphoria] in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!” (Rom 5:8–9)

Christians bear a new command to love. “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34). If Christian love extends from the love Christ has already shown people, how does Jesus demonstrate this love? Jesus wasn’t selective with the people he approached and dined with; he is seen dining with tax collectors and sinners (Matt 9:11; Mark 2:16; Luke 5:30, 15:1–2), he protects adulterers from the onslaught of pious religious leaders (John 8:1–11), and Jesus approaches the very people society rejects (Matt 8:1–4; Mark 1:40–45; Luke 17:11–19). Transgender people<sup>132</sup> are sinners. Transgender people are targets of pious religious leaders. Transgender people have experienced rejection. But Jesus loves transgender people, and this is the love Christians are to mirror.

This is not to dismiss the real challenges of confronting sin, as if love merely overlooks and affirms a person’s sinful condition as is. Rather, sin is a sickness of the soul, and as Jesus says, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick” (Matt 9:13). Transgender people are sick with sin and need a doctor. Not a doctor who is going to put them through HRT and GAS, but a doctor who is going to connect them to Christ, the great soul physician, who died for the purpose of healing their souls and for the redemption of their bodies (Rom 8:23).

---

131. Siegbert W. Becker, *The Use of Law and Gospel in Motivation for Christian Living* (WLS essay file, 1974), 5.

132. When this paper references transgender people, it is not trying to exclude those who have not identified as transgender but still struggle with gender dysphoria. These same truths apply just the same.

This is how God loves people who struggle with transgenderism. Transgender people struggle with their identity, but in baptism, they receive a new identity tied to Christ rather than their sex or gender. “So, in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither... male [nor] female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26–28). Transgender people experience rejection, but God welcomes them. “Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me” (Ps 27:10). For those experiencing the pain of gender dysphoria or the aftermath of affirming surgery, their body is the cause of their pain. But Jesus took on a fleshy body (John 1:14), which was able to be hurt and broken (Isa 53:4–6), all so that by his crushed body, these dearly loved people could be healed (1 Pet 2:24).

### SLOW TO SPEAK

Having taken the time to listen carefully, we can now express true Christian compassion that seeks to “feel with” the hurting person<sup>133</sup> rather than merely expressing condescending pity. In this context, we can take the words of Jesus to heart as he commands us to “do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matt 7:12).

To what extent can Christians, who are unfamiliar with the specific struggles of transgender people, relate? Everyone sins (Rom 3:23). Christians internally struggle between their new identity in Christ and their sinful flesh. “For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want” (Gal 5:17). The sinful struggle is common, but each case is

---

133. Wordell, “Are Transgender People Sinning?” 63.

unique. For this reason, the Apostle Paul encourages Christians to “carry each other’s burdens..., without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load” (Gal 6:2, 4–5). In this portion, Paul observes that each person has their own unique burden to carry. No burden is the same, but this doesn’t call for comparison; it is merely an opportunity to “restore the person gently” (Gal 6:1).

The following sections will discuss how a Christian can speak truth and love to transgender people. There are two ditches that a Christian can fall into: overemphasizing truth and overemphasizing love. The trick is figuring out how to express both faithfully.

### **Truth Loving**

Sin is disgusting and vile to God. This is true. However, a Christian who loves God’s word and all its truth can stray into legalism. A Christian who expresses the truth of God’s law over and above Christ’s command to love would fall into this category; this is a Truth-Loving Christian. Truth-Loving Christians have used several Bible verses (i.e., Gen 1:27; Lev 18:22, 20:13; Rom 1:26–27; and 1 Cor 6:9–10) to speak harshly against transgenderism. In a sermon on John 10:7–16, Austen Hartke referred to these harsh passages and described them as “‘the clobber passages,’ because they’re often used to beat LGBTQ+ folks into silence, or submission.”<sup>134</sup> This is a common description among transgender people. As the name would imply, clobber passages are meant to beat the sinner with biblical Law for the purpose of correcting sinful activity.

---

134. Austen Hartke, “‘The Bible Is a Story About Inclusion’—A Sermon on John 10:7-16,” April 16, 2019.

The issue is not the use of the Law, but the absence of the Gospel. By clobbering sinners with the Law apart from the Gospel, the Christian is essentially preaching the letter of God's word while ignoring the spirit of it, and "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor 3:6), "But if the Law kills, how can it make a person God-fearing?"<sup>135</sup> No one is converted by preaching the Law. By preaching the Law, outward moral behavior could develop, but no care is expressed about the condition of the person's heart. In this instance, the Christian operates like a worldly jailer. "An enforcer of the Law – just like a jailer – does not care about the condition of the heart of the person with whom he has to deal. He is only interested in enforcing that person's obedience."<sup>136</sup>

While clobber passages claim the authority of Scripture to make a point, Truth-Loving Christians can also express their disapproval through the deliberate avoidance of preferred pronouns, exclusion from church functions, gossipy slander, and occasional violence. The truth-loving Christian correctly abhors transgender sin, but this attitude reeks of hypocrisy. All people have sinned (Rom 3:23), any infraction against God's law is the equivalent of breaking the whole law (Jas 2:10–11), and each sin whether perceived as great or small merits the same consequence, death (Rom 6:23). Where are the visceral reactions against the drunkards, the gossips, the petty thieves, and the work righteous pious church goers? Certainly, there are clobber passages that could be foisted against this demographic with the same fervor.

This antibody reaction against transgender people could be understood as a fear reflex against something unknown, or in this case, someone with foreign struggles. The easy selfish path is to avoid and move on. If there are no transgender people welcome in the church, then one

---

135. Walther, *Law & Gospel*, 432.

136. Walther, *Law & Gospel*, 437.

never has to take the time to learn how to love a transgender person as Christ loved them by bringing them the Gospel. By being a Truth-Loving Christian, one merely focuses on the sin-hating aspect of God's truth while ignoring the truth of the Gospel love found in Christ. This approach will only further alienate the suffering and ostracized people who struggle with transgenderism.

### **Just Loving**

On the other side of the spectrum are Just-Loving Christians, who sacrifice the truth of the Law on the altar of affirmation. An example of such an approach could be found in Patrick Cheng, who advocates for "Radical Love" to be expressed within the church.

This love is not just any love, but a radical kind of love. It is a love so extreme that it dissolves existing boundaries that might normally seem fixed. We know that God's love is extreme in terms of magnitude because God's grace is described in superlative terms. However, God's love is also extreme because it breaks down all kinds of human boundaries.<sup>137</sup>

In practice, radical love encourages Just-Loving Christians to affirm, support, and advocate for gender non-conforming people. This would include utilizing pronouns and names, encouraging affirming solutions, and providing a non-judgmental community for these people to live within. Under this framework, God's love is so radical that there is nothing that could separate a person from God's love and forgiveness. But this expression of love ignores the truth of sin to avoid confrontation.

---

137. Cheng, *Radical Love*, 30.

Yes, God's word acknowledges that God is love (1 John 4:8), but it also declares that sin is a barrier between God and Man (Isa 59:2). God, in his tremendous love, does provide a solution in Christ that removes the barriers between God (Matt 27:51), but the removal of this barrier has not negated the barrier-erecting nature of sin. Jesus, who is the God that is described as love, does not exercise his love by affirming sin (John 8:11)

By ignoring the truth of God's Law in favor of coddling the inclinations of people defined by their sinful flesh, Just-Loving Christians do a disservice and lead individuals to false security when they should truly be in a state of spiritual dysphoria.

A wicked person who wants to remain in his sins – whether they be those coarse or refined sins – such a wicked person, Isaiah says does “not see the majesty of the LORD.” They do not discern what great treasure is being offered them. They do not understand the doctrine of salvation by grace. Either they reject it, or they shamefully misapply it. They think: “If mere faith is all that I need for salvation, then my sins, too, are forgiven. I can remain as I am, and I will still go to heaven. I, too, believe in my Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>138</sup>

By affirming activities that are deemed sinful in the truth of the Law, the Just-Loving Christian achieves two things. 1) They avoid difficult confrontation for the sake of empty platitudes. 2) And they encourage sinners to continue in behaviors that will lead to spiritual harm. While Just-Loving Christians elevate the role of love in the life of a Christian, the role of the law is neglected. Consequently, the Just-Loving Christian expresses a flawed biblical truth, and the love they express is nothing more than warm feelings as they cause greater harm in the process.

---

138. Walther, *Law & Gospel*, 128.

## Truth and Love United

Finally, we arrive at the intersection of Truth and Love. Neither the Truth-Loving nor Just-Loving Christian faithfully expresses both biblical truth and Christian love. Both fall short because, in the life of a Christian, these two concepts are inseparable. “Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth” (1 Cor 13:6). The core goal is the eternal well-being of the transgender person’s soul. How can Christians overcome the physical and psychological barriers that transgender people have erected between themselves and the truth of God’s word?

The natural starting point is to form a relationship. As seen in his ministry, Jesus approached sinners, tax collectors, lepers, and adulterers.<sup>139</sup> Many of these encounters weren’t merely passing conversations, but substantial time commitments as Jesus dined with and cared for these sinners. Jesus’ typical response to alienated sinners was not to clobber them from the start with the Law, but to minister to them in their broken states.

To form these relationships, a Christian could consider approaching the transgender person with acceptance rather than affirmation. Acceptance views the transgender person with the value that God has placed on them, while affirmation approves of transgender sin as morally good. A Christian can accept a transgender person for two reasons. 1) God created them in his own image (Gen 1:26), which designated all people, including the transgender person, as a special object of God’s love. 2) Because of Christ’s death on the cross, he reconciled the whole world to himself (Rom 5:8–11, 18–19, 2 Cor 5:18–21). Therefore, a Christian can rightly say, “This is a soul for whom Christ died” (Rom 14:15, 1 Cor 8:11).

This approach addresses the transgender desire to belong by showing them that the transgender person truly belongs in a Christian community. To express acceptance, a Christian

---

<sup>139</sup>. Refer to page 46 for original discussion on Jesus’ relational ministry.

should consider what barriers stand in the way of welcoming the transgender person into the Christian community. The apostle Paul advocated for such practices as he encouraged the Romans. “Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.”

What are these obstacles? If a transgender person were to walk through the doors of our church, would they be greeted and welcomed like any other visitor? Would our church nurture a culture that welcomes visitors who look, think, and sin differently than the rest of the congregation? No one walks through the doors of a church for the first time without being weighed down by a lifetime of sin, and no one quits sinning until the day they die. A person is changed only when God radically transforms unbelievers through the power of the Gospel, by bringing them to faith and binding them to their identity in Christ.

Relationships may play a pivotal role in building this bridge between the sinner and their savior. These relationships don’t have to be a formality within the confines of the church either. Relationships can and should be pursued with genuine interest. Listen attentively. Care deeply. And take time to listen. We were sinners when God found us, but Christ chose to love us with his life (Rom 5:8). Jesus died for transgender people, too. And by authentically loving this person with the love Christ showed us, we may win them over (1 Pet 3:1) and earn the trust and opportunity to speak God’s truth to them.

While acceptance sees the intrinsic value God places on the life of the suffering transgender person, acceptance does not affirm sin. By forming a relationship, trust is built, and one could earn the opportunity to correct sinful activity carefully. Additionally, sharing the truth of God’s word is not a one-time act in which you can expect an immediate and complete change in the life of the transgender person. Rather as Paul encouraged Timothy, “Preach the word; be

prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Tim 4:2). Loving a transgender person and expressing the controversial objective truth of the Bible is no easy task, but throughout all this, “be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Eph 4:2).

Every situation is different, but at the core, there is a sinner in need of a Savior. Once again, Christians may be called to wrestle with some challenging questions. What does repentance look like for a transgender person? How can a Christian move on from sin that has caused irreversible external damage? How can the church uphold God’s created order for sex and gender without making God’s forgiveness dependent on their works?

Earthly struggles will not end for the transgender Christian the moment God’s word has been proclaimed to them in its purity. The journey has only just begun. God does not promise us easy, pain-free lives on this earth. Jesus promises us in John 16:33, “in this world you will have trouble.” A transgender Christian may struggle with their gender identity for the rest of their life. They may bear permanent scars that remind them of their sin. But Jesus leaves them with a promise of hope, “but take heart! I have overcome the world!” There is hope for the transgender person. Jesus did not merely die for our souls, but for the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:23).

## CONCLUSION

How does a Christian love a transgender person? They love them by building bridges to share the truth of God's word. This is a daunting task, and transgenderism is a challenging topic to understand, but at the core, transgender people are sinners that Jesus died for. Christians have an opportunity to reach transgender people with the truth of God's word. No singular approach can overcome the task of loving transgender people with Christian love on its own. But by careful listening, a Christian can equip themselves with the tools and understanding to take on the humble task of reaching transgender people with the love of God.

The Christian is not alone in this endeavor; "it is God who works [in Christians] to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Phil 2:13) of bringing transgender people to the truth of God's love. Conversations will not always result in conversion. Whether the Christian gets to witness God's word transform an unbeliever into a believer, God promises that as Christians share his word, it will achieve exactly what God intended it to do. "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isa 55:11).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, Zara. "Can Religion and Spirituality Have a Place in Therapy? Experts Say Yes." *Monitor on Psychology* 54, no. 8 (November 1, 2023): 67.  
<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/11/incorporating-religion-spirituality-therapy>.
- American Psychological Association. *Key Terms and Concepts in Understanding Gender Diversity and Sexual Orientation Among Students*. Washington, DC: APA, 2015.  
<https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/programs/safe-supportive/lgbt/key-terms.pdf>.
- Anderson, Ryan T. *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*. New York: Encounter Books, 2018.
- Austin, Ashley, Shelley L. Craig, Sandra D'Souza, and Lauren B. McInroy. "Suicidality Among Transgender Youth: Elucidating the Role of Interpersonal Risk Factors." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37, nos. 5–6 (2022): NP2696–2718.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520915554>.
- Becker, Siegbert W. *The Use of Law and Gospel in Motivation for Christian Living*. Mequon, WI: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, 1974.  
<http://essays.wls.edu:8080/handle/123456789/358>.
- Blackburn, Simon W. "Truth." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Last updated May 2, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/truth-philosophy-and-logic>.
- Bright-Path Behavioral Health. "Gender Dysphoria Statistics in the United States." December 3, 2024. <https://www.brightpathbh.com/gender-dysphoria-statistics/>.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Cheng, Patrick S. *Radical Love: Introduction to Queer Theology*. New York: Seabury Books, 2011.
- Coleman, Eli, et al. "Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People, Version 8." *International Journal of Transgender Health* 23, supplement 1 (2022): S1–259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2100644>.
- Cull, Steph L., Paul B. Perrin, and Richard S. Henry. "Associations Among Religiosity, Religious Rejection, Mental Health, and Suicidal Ideation in Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Adults." *Behavioral Sciences* 15, no. 3 (2025): art. 270.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15030270>.
- GenderGP. "Not All Transgender People Experience Gender Dysphoria." GenderGP, February 5, 2026. <https://www.gendergp.com/en-us/blog/not-all-transgender-people-experience-gender-dysphoria/>.

- Giese, Curtis P. *James*. Concordia Commentary. Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2021.
- GLAAD. “Tips for Allies of Transgender People.” GLAAD, March 2021.  
<https://glaad.org/transgender/allies/>.
- Hartke, Austen. “‘The Bible Is a Story About Inclusion’ - A Sermon on John 10:7-16.” AustenHartke.com, April 16, 2019. <http://austenhartke.com/blog/2019/4/16/the-bible-is-a-story-about-inclusion-a-sermon-on-john-107-16>.
- Hartke, Austen. *Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2023.
- Hedian, Helene Frances. “Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy (GAHT).” Johns Hopkins Medicine, January 20, 2021. <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/treatment-tests-and-therapies/gender-affirming-hormone-therapy-gaht>.
- Herman, Jody L, and Andrew R Flores. *How Many Adults and Youth Identify as Transgender in the United States?* Los Angeles, CA: Williams Institute, 2025.  
<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-adults-united-states/>.
- Human Rights Campaign. *Being an LGBTQ+ Ally*. Washington, DC: Humans Rights Campaign, 2022. <https://reports.hrc.org/being-an-lgbtq-ally>.
- Human Rights Campaign, *The Epidemic of Violence Against the Transgender & Gender-Expansive Community in the U.S*. Washington, DC: Human Rights Campaign, 2024.  
<https://reports.hrc.org/an-epidemic-of-violence-2024>.
- Jourian, T. J. “What are the Connections between Transphobia, Racism and Sexual Violence?” National Sexual Violence Resource Center, March 8, 2023.  
[https://www.nsvrc.org/blog\\_post/what-are-connections-between-transphobia-racism-and-sexual-violence/](https://www.nsvrc.org/blog_post/what-are-connections-between-transphobia-racism-and-sexual-violence/).
- Just, Arthur A. *Luke 9:51-24:53*. Concordia Commentary. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997.
- Keller, Timothy. *Galatians For You: For Reading, for Feeding, for Leading*. Epsom, UK: The Good Book Company, 2012.
- Kruijver, F. P., J. N. Zhou, C. W. Pool, M. A. Hofman, L. J. Gooren, and D. F. Swaab. “Male-to-Female Transsexuals Have Female Neuron Numbers in a Limbic Nucleus.” *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism* 85, no. 5 (2000): 2034–2041.  
<https://doi.org/10.1210/jcem.85.5.6564>.
- Kurth, Florian, Christian Gaser, Francisco J. Sánchez, and Eileen Luders. “Brain Sex in Transgender Women Is Shifted towards Gender Identity.” *Journal of Clinical Medicine* 11, no. 6 (2022): 1582. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm11061582>.

- Mallory, Christy, Taylor N. T. Brown, and Kerith J. Conron. *Conversion Therapy and LGBT Youth*. Los Angeles, CA: Williams Institute, June 2019.  
<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/conversion-therapy-and-lgbt-youth/>.
- Mayer, Lawrence S., and Paul R. McHugh. "Part Three: Gender Identity." In *Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences* (No. 50). Washington, DC: The New Atlantis, 2016.  
<https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/part-three-gender-identity-sexuality-and-gender>.
- Merriam-Webster. "Dysphoria." Accessed December 4, 2025. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dysphoria>.
- National Institute of Mental Health. "Eating Disorders: What You Need to Know." 2024.  
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/eating-disorders>.
- Novotny, Mike. *Taboo: Topics Christians Should Be Talking about But Don't*. Austin, TX: Fedd Books, 2024.
- O'Connell, Michele A., Thomas P. Nguyen, Astrid Ahler, S. Rachel Skinner, and Ken C. Pang. "Approach to the Patient: Pharmacological Management of Trans and Gender-Diverse Adolescents." *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* 107, no. 1 (2022): 241–257. <https://doi.org/10.1210/clinem/dgab634>.
- Pearcey, Nancy R. *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality*. Ada, MI: Baker Books, 2018.
- Plume Clinic. "Estrogen, Progesterone, & Testosterone Blockers." September 23, 2025.  
<https://support.getplume.co/support/solutions/articles/72000544305-estrogen-progesterone-testosterone-blockers>.
- Raines, Jamie. *The T in LGBT: Everything You Need to Know About Being Trans*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., May 7, 2024.
- Roekle, Benjamin T. "'Speaking the Truth in Love': Philosophies for Addressing Same-Sex Attraction in WELS High Schools." Senior Thesis, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2025.  
<http://essays.wls.edu:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/7681/%22Speaking%20the%20Truth%20in%20Love%22%3a%20Philosophies%20for%20Addressing%20Same-Sex%20Attraction%20in%20WELS%20High%20Schools.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- Rood, Brian A., Sari L. Reisner, Francisco I. Surace, Jae A. Puckett, Meredith R. Maroney, and David W. Pantalone. "Expecting Rejection: Understanding the Minority Stress Experiences of Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Individuals." *Transgender Health* 1, no. 1 (2016): 151–164. <https://doi.org/10.1089/trgh.2016.0012>.
- Rotondi, Nooshin Khobzi, Greta R. Bauer, Kyle Scanlon, Matthias Kaay, Robb Travers, and Anna Travers. "Nonprescribed Hormone Use and Self-Performed Surgeries: 'Do-It-

- Yourself” Transitions in Transgender Communities in Ontario, Canada.” *American Journal of Public Health* 103, no. 10 (2013): 1830–1836.  
<https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301348>.
- Schuetze, John D. “Doctrinal Brief: Is Love an Action or an Emotion?” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 104, no. 4 (2007).  
<http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/3086/SchuetzeLove.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- Sinai, Joanne, and Peter Sim. “Psychodynamic Psychotherapy for Gender Dysphoria Is Not Conversion Therapy.” *Journal of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 33, no. 2 (2024): 145–153.  
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11201722/>.
- UC Irvine Office of Inclusive Excellence. “Practice Gender Affirming Language.” Accessed November 24th, 2025. <https://inclusion.uci.edu/core-programs/gender-inclusive-campus/gender-affirmation-glossary/>.
- Underwood, Ralph L. *Empathy and Confrontation in Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1985.
- Unger, Cécile A. “Hormone Therapy for Transgender Patients.” *Translational Andrology and Urology* 5, no. 6 (2016): 877–884. <https://doi.org/10.21037/tau.2016.09.04>.
- Walther, C. F. W., Christian C. Tiews, Charles P. Schaum, John P. Hellwege, and Thomas Manteufel. *Law & Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*. Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2010.
- Walker, Andrew T., and R. Albert Mohler. *God and the Transgender Debate*. Charlotte, NC: The Good Book Company, 2017.
- Weir, Kirsten. “The Pain of Social Rejection.” *Monitor on Psychology* 43, no. 4 (April 2012): 50. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/04/rejection>.
- Wendland, Paul O. *A Pastoral Statement on the Transgender Movement*. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2020.  
<http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/4507/WendlandTransgender.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- Westra, Sam. “The Church in the Community: Showing Love to Our Neighbors.” Senior Thesis, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2023.  
<http://essays.wls.edu:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/7312>.
- White, Heath. *Postmodernism 101: A First Course for the Curious Christian*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006.
- Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Statement on Human Sexuality, Personhood, Identity, and the Historic Christian Faith*, Conference of Presidents, October 21, 2019.

<https://synodadmin.welsrc.net/download-synodadmin/en-cristo/?wpdmdl=3422&ind=15743664663> 95.

Wordell, Nathan A. “Are Transgender People Sinning?” Senior Thesis, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2016.

<http://essays.wls.edu:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/4250/Wordell.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

Yarhouse, Mark, and Julia Sadusky. *Emerging Gender Identities: Understanding the Diverse Experiences of Today’s Youth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2020.

How Does a Christian Love a Transgender Person? © 2026 by Daniel Gensmer is licensed under CC BY 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>