

SEXUAL IDENTITY



Our generation is experiencing an increased level of confusion with regard to sexual identity. When addressing same-sex attraction, gender identity concerns, or a transgender disposition we must approach such struggles with several foundational understandings.

SEXUAL WHOLENESS

Wholeness begins with the realization that sex is first and foremost a noun (what we are) rather than a verb (what we do). Each of us has been created by God to reflect His image as male or female. "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness'...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number'" (Genesis 1:26-28). Our physical design (male and female) points us to the nature of a triune God, an eternal communion of persons whose image we bear. Nothing reflects that image more than when two become one as husband and wife and enter into the intended design of conjugal love. Sexual health begins by understanding that our sex (male or female) is fixed in us at our creation and not a social construct or individual choice subject to alteration by the person created.

COMMON STRUGGLES

Confusion over sexual identity can be common during puberty as an influx of hormones can throw the body and emotions out of balance. This is no time to panic. Under normal circumstances the confusion clears. However, those who are encouraged to act upon such short-term feelings can perpetuate and intensify the struggle into adulthood. Far too many adolescents listen to peers, the media and even authority figures pushing them to "come out" or declare themselves to be something other than what God made them to be. This can trap them in the mistaken idea that one's desires (even if short-term) dictate one's identity.

Christianity recognizes that human affections can become disoriented due to the effects of the fall. As the Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the church at Rome, "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin...For what I want to do I do not

do, but what I hate I do" (Romans 7:14-15). Every person feels desires that run counter to our intended design including a variety of sexual struggles like pornography addiction, same-sex attraction and others.

A REDEMPTIVE APPROACH

The emotions associated with same sex attraction and gender identity confusion are both real and complex. Many individuals desperately wish they could free themselves from feelings and desires that can make them feel abnormal or even shame. Unfortunately, extending hope in such situations has become difficult because those who affirm God's design for human sexuality are labeled "bigots" or "homophobic haters" by those with a political agenda. Loved ones and friends are told that if you don't accept the person's lifestyle choices you are rejecting them as a person. Christians should love others too much to perpetuate lies that undermine sexual wholeness. To become agents of redemption in the midst of an increasingly emotional debate, both the person wrestling with sexual identity confusion and the person who cares about them can follow a few important steps.

Step One: Extend Grace

Refuse to perpetuate stereotypes. Not everyone struggling with same-sex attraction is living in rebellion against God's design. On the other side, those who believe God intended sexual union exclusively for a husband and a wife are motivated by truth and love, not ignorance or hate. So extend grace. Give one another permission to disagree without calling names or assuming the worst.

Step Two: Explore God's Design

Regardless of our current posture or perspective, the best starting place is to explore what it means to be created male and female in God's image and how we can find sexual wholeness as intended by our Creator. Start with resources suggested in the Going Further section.

Step Three: Glean From Those Who Understand

Same-sex attraction and sexual identity confusion are complicated matters with no easy answers. The journey to wholeness may be a difficult, long process. Seek wisdom from those who have been where you are. Let them help you discover the joy and health that comes from pursuing God's loving, beautiful design for human sexuality. Start by exploring the Going Further Resources.

GOING FURTHER RESOURCES

LOVOLOGY: GOD. LOVE. MARRIAGE. SEX. AND THE NEVER-ENDING STORY OF MALE AND FEMALE by John Mark Comer

Explores the meaning and implications of God's design for human sexuality including tackling sensitive and challenging questions.

IS GOD ANTI-GAY? by Sam Allberry

Addresses why the gospel is good news for those, like the author, who struggle with same-sex attraction.

RESTORING SEXUAL IDENTITY: HOPE FOR WOMEN WHO STRUGGLE WITH SAME-SEX ATTRACTION by Anne Paulk

Offers practical advice for healing and change to women, their families and friends wrestling with same-sex attraction.

WHEN HOMOSEXUALITY HITS HOME by Joe Dallas

Provides grace-filled, biblical perspective on same-sex attraction from those who have left the homosexual lifestyle.

LIVING IN A GRAY WORLD by Preston Sprinkle

Provides Christian teens with a guide to understanding homosexuality.

WHEN HARRY BECAME SALLY: RESPONDING TO THE TRANSGENDER MOMENT by Ryant T. Anderson

Addresses gender identity confusion and reassignment in light of the physiological realities to put recent cultural debates in perspective.

GOING FURTHER SUPPORT

COUNSELING AT HILL COUNTRY

Hill Country Bible Church has the vision to offer professional counseling along with excellent pastoral care to help those in need find an anchor to weather the storms of life. Life's burdens can be so heavy to carry at times, and we find ourselves needing support and guidance. As a ministry of Hill Country Bible Church, we want to come alongside you in your time of need and embrace the power of community on the road of healing. For more information, please visit hcbc.com/counseling

CELEBRATE RECOVERY

A biblical and balanced program that helps us overcome our hurts, hang-ups and habits. It is based on the actual words of Jesus rather than psychological theory. For more info, email us at celebraterecovery@hcbc.com

LGBTQ+ SUPPORT GROUP

This support group is designed to give group participants a place to talk honestly and openly about living in the tension of loving, supporting, and ministering to their LGBTQ+ loved ones while remaining congruent with their biblical beliefs. It will be a place to be connected with others who share common challenges and be heard and encouraged. For more info, email us at stacireichmanis@hcbc.com