

# Sex + Gender

The world is not the same place it once was.

Certainty has given way to subjective reality. Truth can no longer be pinned down. Common sense doesn't seem quite so common after all.

At times, it feels like the whole world has gone mad.

And perhaps we have...

One of the biggest conversations of our time is the gender/sexuality\* debate. It used to be that gender, now a contested term, and sex were largely synonymous. If your sex or gender was 'male' then you were a man. If your sex or gender was 'female', then you were a woman.

Certainly, more is perhaps encompassed in the use of the descriptor 'man' rather than just 'male' (or 'woman' rather than just 'female'), binary terms which refer to a human's sexuality (gender, not 'orientation'), but these terms are nonetheless indelibly connected to one another, two aspects of the same reality.

Historically, most societies have recognised only two distinct genders, a binary of masculine and feminine largely corresponding to the biological sexes of male and female. Simply put, if you had an X and a Y chromosome, you were a male human. Two XXs and you were a female human. Immature undeveloped humans were called boys and girls, respectively. Mature, fully developed humans, were called men and women.

The discovery of sex differentiation chromosomes is a relatively new science but its discovery in 1905 only confirmed what humans [had believed and understood for millennia.1](#)

*"During the first decade of the 20th century, it was*

*established that the sex of almost all many-celled biological organisms is determined at the moment of fertilisation by the combination of two kinds of microscopic entities, the X and Y chromosomes. This discovery was the culmination of more than two thousand years of speculation and experiment of how an animal, plant, or human becomes male or female.” | [Nettie N Stevens And The Discovery Of Sex Determination By Chromosomes](#).*

## The Human Genome

This XY sex-determination system is shared by humans, many mammals, insects, and other animals. The perpetuation and reproduction of many species, humans included, is a result of the combining of the chromosomes from one X individual and one Y individual. Humans have forty-six chromosomes (including the two sex chromosomes, XX in females and XY in males), 23 of which are inherited from an individual's father (a male), with the other 23 inherited from an individual's mother (a female).

Our sex chromosomes form only part of the approximately three billion base pairs of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) that make up the entire set of chromosomes of the human organism. One of the most significant and ambitious scientific endeavours of our time has been the sequencing of this entire set of chromosomes – the human genome, a project which was begun in 1990 and which, by 2022, had produced the first truly complete human genome sequence.

*The [objective2 of this project](#) was ‘to decode the human hereditary information (human blueprint) that determines all individual traits inherited from parents.’ Dr Francis Collins, head of the Human Genome Project, and one of the world's leading scientists, has long worked at the cutting edge of the science of DNA, which he describes as ‘the language of God’. He argues that science and God are in harmony – that, indeed, science is of God, and that the*

*sequencing of the human genome 'was both a stunning scientific achievement and an occasion of worship'.*

The sequencing of the human genome only confirmed what many have long believed; that we are *'fearfully and wonderfully made'* (Psalm 139:14). Humanity has been created and brought into being by an intelligent designer, who has carefully constructed the complex genetic material that makes up a complete human, with the ability for that human to replicate and reproduce *in his or her own likeness*. We are not an accident, a vague collection of random cells which have collided together, but a highly complex sequence of chromosomes that have formed a complete human, with a soul, intellect, morals, capability, and purpose.

In fact, the Bible comments in its earliest chapters that we are *made in God's image*. We are unique in all of creation because *we are made like God*. *Who we are* is directly connected to *the One who created us*.

## **The Emperor Has No Clothes On**

Post-modern ideology would try to tell us that there are (currently) 57 genders. Gender, it's claimed, is not something we *are* but something that we *feel*. Not only that, gender is something that is fluid, an experience that can remain static or be in constant flux. Today we may *feel* female. Tomorrow we may *feel* male. Next week, we may *feel somewhere in the middle* or possibly *both at the same time*.

But, we're also told, gender is somehow some kind of social construct, that our gender *is expressed through the roles we take on, the expectations placed on us, our relationship with others, and the complex ways that gender is institutionalised in society*. Gender – *how we feel and who we know ourselves to be* – is unrelated to our biological and physical realities, that is, our sex and our gender *are not the same thing*.

The historical recognition of two genders – male and female (called the gender binary) is usually based on someone's anatomy (the genitals they were born with), but, we're being told, these markers are unreliable as to the *true person's self* (or gender) which emerges with time (or is forced upon them by society), and which may or may not *match [the gender they were assigned at birth](#)*.<sup>3</sup>

(At this point, I'm looking around, wondering, *when is someone going to tell the Emperor he has no clothes on?*)

We are more than just our genitals, this is true. But these outward markers are only part of a complex series of chemical reactions that were set in motion the moment that fertilisation took place, the moment that *we began*, and the unique individual that would eventually become *us* sparked into reality. This sex determination, which will include all the physical, emotional, and psychological traits we will uniquely possess happens during fertilisation, and *it doesn't change during the pregnancy*.

*"All human individuals—whether they have an XX, an XY, or an atypical sex chromosome combination—begin development from the same starting point. During early development the gonads of the fetus remain undifferentiated; that is, all fetal genitalia are the same and are phenotypically female. After approximately 6 to 7 weeks of gestation, however, the expression of a gene on the Y chromosome induces changes that result in the development of the testes. Thus, this gene is singularly important in inducing testis development. The production of testosterone at about 9 weeks of gestation results in the development of the reproductive tract and the masculinisation (the normal development of male sex characteristics) of the brain and genitalia. In contrast to the role of the fetal testis in differentiation of a male genital tract and external genitalia in utero, fetal ovarian secretions are not required for female sex differentiation. As these details point out, the basic differences between the*

*sexes begin in the womb.” | [National Library Of Medicine](#)*

We are not merely male or female because our bodies say so, we are male or female because our brains also say so; neurochemically distinct from one another as either ‘male’ or ‘female’ brains. While similar in many basic ways, male and female brains show consistent differences that have important implications for each sex. Our sex (most commonly observed and confirmed by our exterior genitalia at birth) and our gender – whether we are male or female – are one and the same, and this differentiation shows up time and time again in the way we think and behave.

Diane Halpern, PhD, and past president of the American Psychological Association, comments that *“there is simply too much data pointing to the biological basis of sex-based cognitive differences to ignore.”* She references a catalogue of human behavioural differences that have been [studied and observed](#)<sup>4</sup>:

*“Women excel in several measures of verbal ability – pretty much all of them, except for verbal analogies. Women’s reading comprehension and writing ability consistently exceed that of men, on average. They outperform men in tests of fine-motor coordination and perceptual speed. They’re more adept at retrieving information from long-term memory. Men, on average, can more easily juggle items in working memory. They have superior visuospatial skills: They’re better at visualising what happens when a complicated two- or three-dimensional shape is rotated in space, at correctly determining angles from the horizontal, at tracking moving objects and at aiming projectiles.” | [Stanford Medicine Magazine](#)*

Halpern concludes; *“new technologies have generated a growing pile of evidence that there are inherent differences in how men’s and women’s brains are wired and how they work and many*

*of these cognitive differences appear quite early in life."*

This process of sex differentiation, begun at fertilisation, continues throughout our life, influencing our physical and mental growth and development (bone structure, weight, height, genitalia, brain, and characteristics). The complex process encoded in our DNA resolutely follows the invisible instructions given at fertilisation, and, barring abnormality or mutation, results, without fail, in a *gender* or sex that matches our physicality.

The **gender/sex of a person** is the final result of unique genetic, hormonal, and morphologic sex-differentiation at fertilisation. It is fixed and it is binary, either male or female.

Your shy sensitive son isn't a *girl trapped in a boy's body*, he's simply a shy, sensitive *boy*. Your boisterous, energetic, sandpit-loving daughter isn't a *boy trapped in a girl's body*, she's simply an energetic, outdoor-loving *girl*.

While our sex/gender may be fixed and binary, our unique personalities and characteristics are not. Our identity is not the same as any other person on the earth. Even identical twins are not truly 100% identical, with a complex interaction between our genes, our environment, and our epigenetic markers uniquely shaping who we are.

We are truly, each one of us, one-of-a-kind.

Historical gender roles may have played a large part in the troubling place where we now find ourselves as a culture, insisting that all men must behave in certain ways and perform certain roles (outdoorsy, tough, adventurous..) and, conversely, that all women must behave in certain ways (deferring and submissive, domestic, delicate) (another day, another blog, although I tackle some of this in relation to healthy church function in my article '[Stop Promoting Gendered Hierarchy!](#)').

However, I think a large part of what has contributed to the madness surrounding sex and gender conversations today is the abandonment of the idea of *God*, an intelligent, thoughtful designer who *insists we were created for a purpose*.

## What Is A Woman?

One of the most startling, and troubling documentaries in recent times is a project undertaken by Matt Walsh, an American Christian conservative and political commentator. In his documentary, "[What Is A Woman](#)"<sup>5</sup>, Walsh asks questions that many people no longer seem willing to answer.

Can a woman be defined? (historically, a woman was defined as *an adult human female*). Is being a woman simply a *feeling* or *behaving a certain way*? Can a woman be *trapped in a man's body*? Does *being a woman* mean anything at all?

In the documentary, Walsh visits a women's march, where placards are lifted high, campaigning *for the rights of women*. Unfortunately, nobody seems able to define what a woman actually is, reducing the impetus of the march to nothing more than a ridiculous farce. Implausibly, many of those he interviews in his documentary seem 'uncomfortable with his line of questioning', deeming his tone 'malignant and harmful'.

The prevailing (or, at least, the most vocal) narrative at play is built on a serious and disturbing detachment from subjective reality. If being a woman is *simply how one feels on any given day*, then being a woman can include everyone and no one. It's no kind of definition at all.

Gender and sex are no longer something that people are willing to define. Forget science, forget biology; how any one person *feels* is the prevailing truth of the day. And if you have a difference of opinion in relation to the gender + sex conversation, if you even dare to ask questions, you are

deemed hateful, phobic, violent, or discriminatory.

As one person interviewed in the documentary comments, *"If you speak up about it ... your life will be over in some way"*. Defy the trans groupthink and face profound consequences.

*Walsh's long-ranging interview with a gender studies professor finds the star drilling down on a basic principle. Truth. [emphasis mine] One therapist asks, with a straight face, "whose truth are we talking about?" | [Hollywood Into To](#)*

## What Is Truth?

*Truth.*

A hot-button topic, to say the least.

And *truth*, it seems, is at the core of the issues we are facing in relation to gender, sexuality, and identity.

Most human activities depend upon the concept of 'truth' as an objective reality, including most of the sciences, law, journalism, and, indeed, elements of everyday life. As Sir Isaac Newton discovered, if you throw an apple up in the air, it (or anything else) will invariably come down. The old adage, *'what goes up must come down'* is attributed to his discovery of this undeniable truth. The science behind this, is, of course, the law of gravity, one of three 'laws of motion' that Sir Isaac Newton formulated.

I have deliberately avoided overly referencing the Bible up until this point, endeavoring instead to defer firstly to science and reason (who are, in reality, both friends of faith) in my initial comments. But humanity has been long discussing the question, *"what is truth?"* and Jesus himself gave an answer to this question when it was put to him, circa AD33. He replied, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life"* (John 14:6)



Jesus claimed (and the Bible is in agreement) that truth is not subjective, just some abstract exchanging of philosophical ideas, but rather objective, rooted in the person of God, who has been revealed to us in Christ. Paul the Apostle comments in his letter to the church at Colosse in the early first century that every truthful thing in the universe is found in Christ as the Word, Wisdom and Knowledge belonging to God Himself. Everything that was created was through and for him, he existed before anything else and he holds all things together. (Colossians 1:16-17, Colossians 2:3)

For many, the Bible may seem outdated, irrelevant, out of touch, or even downright dangerous. And I can understand this. The Bible has been misused, misinterpreted, and misunderstood throughout history, often used to control and harm rather than heal and liberate.

The reality, however, is that the Bible is the divinely inspired word of God Himself, whereby He has revealed Himself to His creation and through which we are able to understand His intentions. It offers life-giving wisdom, leads humanity to salvation, and provides meaning and purpose for our human existence. In fact, the Bible is the expression of God Himself, who is *all about justice, redemption, and liberation* (and who is utterly opposed to injustice and evil).

As such, the implication is that it is entirely sufficient to answer all our tricky and troubling questions, and, because its author is God, those answers can be relied upon to be true. (I've written more about the accuracy, authority, and authenticity of the Bible [here](#)).

Let's suppose for a minute that the Bible really does have the answers to all our human problems, issues, doubts, and questions. Does the Bible have anything to say about gender and sex? What truths does God communicate to us about these issues?

# Made In God's Image | Imago Dei

*God is The Subject Of Life. The Centre Of Everything. The story of humanity starts with Him and ends with Him.*

As I commented earlier in this article, we (humanity) are unique in all of creation because *we are made like God. Who we are is directly connected to the One who created us.* This belief formed one of the key cornerstones of the early Christian faith and, in many respects, set Christianity apart from other religions of its time; that is, the belief in the intrinsic value and worth of every human *because they're made in God's image.*

Science tells us *how* we're (uniquely and intricately) made (and I've talked about that earlier in this article) but faith tells us *why* (what we're here for and what life is all about). Scripture intends us to understand that we were created intentionally and with a specific purpose in mind; to be God's image-bearers – *imago dei* – on the earth, and to rule it wisely and well on His behalf. Nothing about our creation was accidental, and nothing was left to chance.

One of the first things that the book of Genesis confirms, alongside the commission for which we were created, is the binary nature of our humanity:

*So God created human beings in His own image. In the image of God He created them; **male** and **female** He created them. Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground." Then God said, "Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life." And that is what happened." | Genesis 1:27-30, NLT*

The narrative of humanity's creation is further fleshed out in Genesis chapter 2 with our gender binary of male and female being connected to our naming as 'man' and 'woman'. (Genesis 2:18-25) (Interestingly, we are also given the blueprint for marriage in this chapter; that is, a committed and exclusive relationship between a man and a woman).

Jesus himself confirms his belief in and understanding of the creation narrative (when discussing the legality of divorce) in Matthew 19: 4-8, where he says, *"Haven't you read the Scriptures? They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female. This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.'"*

The differences between the two genders are unique and distinctive, both designed by God with a purpose in mind. Both genders are intrinsically valuable and precious to God, and we see His characteristics displayed by the perfect merging of both masculine and feminine traits. These distinct genders are the fundamental building blocks of God's creation and are part of God's plan for His creation.

God's original design for humanity was built on equality, cooperation, respect, commitment, and support, with both genders bringing unique and valued differences to the partnership. This mutuality, this joint responsibility, forms part of the great narrative of restoration and redemption that Jesus himself came to inaugurate when he ushered in *the kingdom of God*. Part of this reality includes the binary of our respective genders, that of male and female (man and woman); deeply embedded into our DNA, the very building blocks that make us *us*.

The Bible insists that we were created for a purpose. It insists that there are two genders; male and female. And it names these genders; man and woman.

*“The physical, human body has great significance within Christian understanding, from creation through incarnation to the resurrection and ascension. The Bible recognises and celebrates two sexes. The text does not seem to allow for, and actually on occasion prohibits, identifying as different from your biological birth sex. That said, we need to understand what the Bible means when it says we are made “male and female” and not unwittingly accept society’s stereotypes about sex and gender.” | [Premier Christianity](#)*

## Responding Pastorally

Unfortunately, for some individuals, gender identity disorder is very real. People with gender dysphoria genuinely have a deep sense of unease and distress at the perception their biological sex/gender does not match who they *feel* they are.

Sensitivity and compassion are crucial in engaging with and in these conversations.

(Additionally, there *are* individuals born with genetic anomalies (sex chromosomes, gonads, and genitalia) which don’t conform to the usual binary of male/female. Known as [intersex\\*\\*](#), the prevalence of such occurrences is thought to be about 0.018% of the population. People with abnormalities of development should be helped to find their place as they see it best, and it’s not the intention of this article to discuss those particular cases in any detail.)<sup>6</sup>

Yet the statistics would suggest that the reportable numbers of those suffering from gender dysphoria are between 0.002% and 0.005% of the population, actually a very small number. It goes no way towards explaining the absolute explosion that seems to have happened in recent years, as young children and teens are diagnosed as transgender, rushed into hormone treatments, and, more drastically, undergoing life-altering surgeries.

This is such a difficult issue for families to navigate today. Many of us can feel out of our depth engaging in conversations that use terms and language that have shifted so dramatically from historically accepted definitions.

More seriously, parents are being told that failure to affirm a child who may be suffering from gender dysphoria could result in, worst case scenario, suicide and, in a recent amendment to the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 in Victoria, Australia, non-endorsement by parents of a child who wishes to transition [is considered emotional and psychological abuse \(ie family violence\)](#).<sup>7</sup>

Yet the reality is that affirming a person's belief (they are the opposite gender to that which they were "assigned" at birth), or advocating the use of hormonal or surgical intervention actually does nothing to truly resolve the issue. As Ryan T Anderson, PhD [comments](#), "Sex "reassignment" doesn't work. It's impossible to "reassign" someone's sex physically [because sex isn't something that is "assigned at birth"], and attempting to do so doesn't produce good outcomes psychosocially."

*"Cosmetic surgery and cross-sex hormones can't change us into the opposite sex. They can affect appearances. They can stunt or damage some outward expressions of our reproductive organisation. But they can't transform it. They can't turn us from one sex into the other. Transgendered men do not become women, nor do transgendered women become men. All become feminised men or masculinized women, counterfeits or impersonators of the sex with which they 'identify.' In that lies their problematic future." | [The Heritage Foundation](#)*

Carving up bodies and dishing out synthetic hormones is not the answer. Speaking hope and truth into people's lives is.

"Our minds and senses function properly when they reveal reality to us and lead us to knowledge of truth. And we

flourish as human beings when we embrace the truth and live in accordance with it. A person might find some emotional relief in embracing a falsehood, but doing so would not make him or her objectively better off. Living by a falsehood keeps us from flourishing fully, whether or not it also causes distress.” (The Heritage Foundation)

John Whitehall, Professor of Paediatrics at Western Sydney University, comments, “People are not interested in discussing the science. We’ve all got to believe that there’s no such thing as a boy or a girl, that we’re all somewhere in between. I don’t believe that. The good news is that in all the major articles, these children (who may be confused about their gender) will revert to the natal sex through puberty. What we should do then is have confidence in the statistics ***and not mess the child up along the way.***”

## A Final Word

Truth. The final word in all of this is truth.

Truth spoken with compassion and care, with sensitivity and love, but truth nonetheless. Encouraging a false narrative will do no one any favours.

We need to confidentially speak what is true in relation to sex and gender, affirming reality, and encouraging acceptance of our physical being, understanding our embodied selves as male or female. Narratives that disguise or distort reality are misguided and do not actually result in human flourishing or wholeness.

It’s not only untruthful to affirm these distortions, it’s unloving and harmful to the individual. The most beneficial therapies focus on helping people accept themselves and live in harmony with their bodies.

And I would argue that nothing is more healing than being able to define yourself as one beloved of God, created with purpose

(holistically male or female), and that this reality – that you are a child of God – is your true identity. This is the truth that the world needs to hear, the hope that it needs for whole and healthy flourishing, and the reality that we need to be affirming, with love and compassion.

*“You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.” Psalm 139:13-16, NLT*

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[https://www.jstor.org/stable/230427#:~:text=According%20to%20most%20biologists%20and,Wilson%20\(1856%2D1939\).](https://www.jstor.org/stable/230427#:~:text=According%20to%20most%20biologists%20and,Wilson%20(1856%2D1939).)
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<https://www.heritage.org/gender/commentary/sex-reassignment-doesnt-work-here-the-evidence>

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\*Historically, 'gender' and 'sex' are words used to describe and define the anatomical and physiological differences between men and women. Modern terminology uses 'sex' to refer to biological characteristics and 'gender' to refer to the individual's and society's perceptions of sexuality, identity, and the concepts of masculinity and femininity. This article is using 'gender' and 'sex', as defined in the historical sense.

This article is not intended to be offensive or divisive in nature, but rather to open a channel of respectful conversation about a subject that is deeply important to many people. I do not encourage discrimination, hate-speech, or sexism towards anyone, at any time, but, particularly in this instance, towards anyone who does not share this point of view.

\*\*This article also purposely does not address or discuss the issues surrounding chromosomal abnormalities or intersex conditions.