

# Male Leadership in the church

## (Part 1)

### Introduction

Some New Zealanders may have been puzzled by the apparent inability of their then-Prime Minister, Christopher Hipkins, to give an intelligible response to the question 'What is a woman?' at a post-Cabinet press conference in April 2023. Hipkins holds a Bachelor of Arts with majors in political science and criminology. Yet despite his tertiary education, it evidently did not occur to him to note that chromosomal factors primarily differentiate males from females in humans. Instead, he eventually responded that “people define themselves; people define their own genders.”

Some may find this response perplexing, but it is evident that Hipkins is echoing a view shared by many influential and vocal figures in politics, academia, and media. A deep dive into feminist theory, gender studies, queer theory, and Marxist analyses of the family would be needed to fully grasp the rationale behind the assertion that “people define their own genders.” In place of that tedious exercise, consider these helpful comments by psychology professor Michael F. Mascolo in *Psychology Today*, an online publication offering straightforward content for non-experts:

We often hear that “gender is socially constructed.” What does that mean? Is it true? The popular idea that gender is socially constructed might be summed up as follows:

*There is a difference between “sex” and “gender.” Sex is “biological” while gender is “psychological,” “social,” or “cultural.” A person’s gender can be different from a person’s sex. Gender is thus “socially constructed” in the sense that, unlike biological sex, gender is a product of society. If society determines what is masculine or feminine, then society can change what is considered masculine, feminine, or anything in between. No one needs to be locked into fixed gender categories. Any individual is free to identify their gender as they see fit.*

Psychology Today is not a peer-reviewed journal, but Professor Mascolo is well credentialed in his field.

The prestigious American Psychological Association (APA)—the largest organisation of its kind in the US—operates at a more academic level and plays a major role in shaping psychological programs in the field. Under the heading 'A glossary: Defining transgender terms,' we find the following on the APA webpage:

Gender identity: An internal sense of being male, female or something else, which may or may not correspond to an individual's sex assigned at birth or sex characteristics.

Gender nonconforming: Describes an individual whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the gender norms associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Genderqueer: Describes an individual whose gender identity doesn't align with a binary understanding of gender, including those who think of themselves as both male and female, neither, moving between genders, a third gender or outside of gender altogether.

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2018/09/ce-corner-glossary>

Then there's the World Health Organisation. With its 194 member states, it plays a major role in setting international health standards, and it has this to say on its webpage:

Gender interacts with but is different from sex, which refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. Gender and sex are related to but different from gender identity. Gender identity refers to a person's deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's physiology or designated sex at birth.

[World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

The widespread view that gender is a social construct has played a key role in the development of what is often euphemistically termed 'gender-affirming medical care.' Such 'care' includes usually irreversible hormone therapy and life-altering surgeries like mastectomies and phalloplasty. These treatments are framed as essential to align physical makeup with self-perception, but my understanding of Scripture compels me to conclude that such 'care' undermines God's plan for an individual's sexual identity and results in the mutilation of the temple wherein dwells God's Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Clearly, we should always show compassion to fellow human beings suffering emotionally, physically, or spiritually. Yet as Christians, we cannot justify imposing a self-chosen gender identity on the bodies God has given us. Again, we recognise that in a fallen world many suffer from distressing psychological problems, but we are persuaded that—regardless of feelings—gender expression should conform to the body.

#### Creation Order and Gender Specific Roles

In the mind of the secularist, gender is simply the result of chance—an undesigned consequence of the evolutionary process. Given this position, there is every reason to separate gender identity from reality if it satisfies a felt need. However, as biblical theists,

our views on sex and gender are informed by the Genesis account of creation and the lessons that inspired writers draw from this account. We will argue that the binary of male and female is fundamental to God's plan for humanity (Part 2). In the biblical scheme, manhood and womanhood are built into the very nature of creation and are complementary, not interchangeable. That's why, for example, crossdressing is described as 'an abomination' (Deut. 22:5), while homosexuality is contrary to nature itself (Rom. 1:27).

In particular, we want to focus on the fact that Scripture prescribes certain gender-specific roles for men and women within the body of Christ—roles that have nothing to do with social mores and everything to do with the complementary nature of male and female expressed in the creation event.

Rex

Christians meeting at 360 Peachgrove Road Hamilton

Please accept our invitation to attend worship services with us at the times and location advertised. Under What to Expect we explain format and give Scriptural explanations for our practices.