

## *Pk's Perspectives ... Standing Firm with Christ*

What is a man? What is a woman? Until just a few years ago, these questions would have hardly been controversial. But now one cannot answer them without fear of offending someone who identifies as transgender. *But this is where ground zero of the debate really is:* whether the category of maleness and femaleness means anything concrete at all. In theological terms, we call this *ontology*, which is the study of being.

When a male claims to be a female, or a female claims to be a male, that is not only a psychological claim, but also a philosophical and biological claim about one's being. From Genesis 1 onward, Scripture teaches that males and females are biological and embodied beings with immutable natures. We cannot change who we are.

This is where the true debate resides. Christianity views reality through the authoritative lens of Scripture, which speaks of male and female as beings defined by their anatomical and reproductive organization (Genesis 1:26-28). Hormones or surgery cannot override the underlying realities of our genetic structure. If culture tries to define male and female apart from anatomy and reproductive organization (allowing "gender identity" to be a determining factor), male and female become fluid, absurd categories. Hence where we are as a culture.

The transgender worldview is an active thwarting of one's nature. It is akin to defying limits or swimming upstream against a current: you might try, but eventually limitations and the strength of the current are going to sweep you up against your will. This reality of nature leads to one of the most important truths: **actual** transgenderism does not exist. Sure, there are people who may have genuine confusion over their "gender identity" (a conflict called gender dysphoria that calls for professional and compassionate treatment), but the idea that there are persons truly "trapped" in the wrong body is false. Scripture does not allow for such a dualism between the body and the "self."

Flowing downstream from the reality of our nature as male and female is the idea that males and females should flourish in accordance with their being. A thing experiences its fullness of being when it lives according to what it is and what it is designed to do. The issue of flourishing connects to transgenderism because, from a scriptural worldview, we understand that a person can never thrive or flourish apart from living in harmony with God's design in creation. A person might claim to flourish according to how he or she defines flourishing, but flourishing is not a term left to the eye of the beholder.

Drug addicts might see their intoxication as a form of flourishing, but this we understand as a cheapened form of flourishing that will, over time, result not in the fullness of their being but, rather, in their undoing. Defined biblically, flourishing understands and welcomes the idea of limitations and boundaries (Psalm 119:44-45). We are not purely autonomous beings who can create and re-create our nature and our paradigms for flourishing. Flourishing is a pathway we are called to live in line with, not against.

To love our transgender-identifying neighbors is to seek their good. We cannot teach or imply that any form of transition will actually achieve what they desire: the joy of flourishing. When one reads in-depth about the scourge of depression, anxiety, and suicidality even among persons who have undergone some degree of transition, we realize something essential to this discussion: true flourishing cannot come at the expense of rejecting our nature and our embodiment. It simply cannot happen.

Central to our ethics as Christians is the command to love our neighbor. This means seeking their flourishing (Mt. 7:12). Undoubtedly, activists will disagree with our motives of love. In fact, they will see our definition of love as opposite their own. To that, we must simply accept the cost of biblical conviction and do whatever we can to convey that we're not interested in anything less than their relationship with God and their flourishing as human beings. *~from an article by Andrew T. Walker*