

Transgender

Sex: whether you're biological male or female.

Gender: the behaviour, psychological traits and cultural assumptions associated with a particular sex. Usually assigned at birth based on your genitals, and reinforced socially and by other biological changes.

Gender identity: your personal conception of whether you are a man or a woman (or somewhere in between).

Sexual orientation: who you are sexually attracted to. Seen as separate from the above categories (e.g. a transgender woman could be attracted to women).

Transgender (often abbreviated to *trans):** someone who believes their gender identity is different to what people expect it to be based on their outward appearance. "Trans man" usually means a person who is biologically woman but sees their gender identity as a man.

Gender Dysphoria is the sense that your gender identity (internal) doesn't match your assigned gender (external).

How should we respond?

Compassion. Whatever we think about society or politics, we are talking about real people in real pain. Our first response needs to be compassion, rather than making theological points. Listening to a person's story really helps with this.

Affirm the goodness of gender. Gender is part of God's good design for human beings, and is part of what it means to be made in God's image (Gen 1:27). But remember that we also live in a fallen world, which means that reality now is often complex and/or painful.

Affirm the goodness of our physical bodies. The biological reality of our existence isn't incidental or insignificant. The Bible affirms us as whole people: physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual. Don't make one reality more important than another.

Say something about Jesus. He welcomed people on the margins of society. I think if Jesus was around today you'd find him hanging out with transgender people.

Galatians 3:28 says: *"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* This doesn't do away with gender (as some queer theologians would claim). What it does say is that Jesus doesn't welcome people based on their ethnicity, their social status, or their gender; you're accepted on the basis of what Jesus has done, whatever your gender. Which means that those who find themselves somewhere in between are accepted too.

Don't ask whether they've had the surgery yet!

Imagine if I walked in here and said, hi, how's your penis! It's none of your business.

You don't win a prize for figuring out someone's transgender.

Whether you can guess or not, better to wait until the person tells you. And when they do, it's better not to say, "I knew it!"

What names and pronouns should you use?

Some people suggest you're condoning a lie if you use the names and pronouns that don't fit with a person's biological sex. But I think I would place more value on the relationship first, and then talk about it when it's appropriate.