

ARTICLE 21: THE BODY, SEX, AND GENDER IDENTITY

Summary

The body is sacred—including its sexed nature—and a fundamental aspect of our identity.

Detail

Our bodies are sacred. We are not just persons who *have* bodies; we *are* bodies. Body and soul share an integral union, mutually integral to our personhood: we are embodied souls, and ensouled bodies.

The body's sexed nature, as male or female, is not only significant but bound up with our creation in the image of God. Jesus reaffirms the diversity of the sexes as ethically significant and grounded in the structure of creation. Jesus also recognizes the exception of those "born eunuchs" (which is analogous, if not equivalent, to intersex conditions) while simultaneously affirming the male/female binary as normative for creation. Christ's incarnation and resurrection affirm the body's foundational significance.

Followers of Jesus ought to identify in accordance with our bodily sex, not present ourselves in ways that will intentionally introduce confusion as to our identity as male or female, and not seek to alter our body's sex through hormone therapy or sex-reassignment surgery.

We recognize some of our members are born with an intersex condition (a *biological* reality) and others experience gender dysphoria (a *psychological* reality): both of these are *real* and *can be painful*. If this is you, you are loved by God, created with dignity, value, and worth, and an invaluable part of God's world and church. We want to walk with you, love you, and serve Jesus together, as a church family where there are no "second-class citizens," only image-bearers who are members of Christ's body.

While our conviction is that gender should be understood *within* (rather than in *addition* to) one's biological sex, there is great flexibility in how one expresses their gender, so long as one is not deliberately seeking to identify or present themselves in opposition to their bodily sex. King David was a "real" man when he wrote poetry and played the harp; Deborah was a "real" woman when she led Israel into war. Jesus wept over Jerusalem like a mother hen (Matt. 23:31); the woman of Proverbs 31 buys property, runs a business, has a strong back, and provides for her family.

We cannot expect those who have rejected Jesus as Creator and Redeemer to live in line with the Creator's order and purpose. God calls us to exercise judgment with one another in our church body, pressing each other towards holiness in the way of Christ, and trust him to deal with those outside.³

Scripture

- Genesis 1:27 / So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
- Matthew 19:4, 11-12a / Jesus answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female... not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth"
- Deuteronomy 22:5 / A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.
- 1 Corinthians 5:12-13a / For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside.

³ "Can I call someone by their preferred pronoun when it differs from their biological sex?" We believe this is up to the conscience of the individual. For a "yes" perspective, see, "What Pronouns Should Christians Use for Transgender People?" by Greg Coles (available at www.centerforfaith.com). For a "no," see, "He, She, Ze, Zir: Navigating Pronouns" by Andrew T. Walker (available at www.erc.com).