**How to Talk to Your Kids About Gender**

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From the minute Michelle and I got married, we had godly people around us modeling marriage and family. By the time we were preparing for our first child to enter the world, we’d watched moms and dads around us closely, taken a few parenting classes, and drilled our close friends as to the “keys to successful parenting.”

But nothing really prepared me for the conversation I recently had with my kids.

My sons and I were sitting in the corner of a Dunkin’ Donuts when a young man I’d counseled in previous years came over and said hello. It took me about 30 seconds to realize whom I was speaking with. This young man was now identifying as a transgender woman. I’d heard he’d made this decision but hadn’t yet bumped into him. We chatted briefly and shortly thereafter left to get the kids to school. Once we got in the car, I hoped my kids wouldn’t press in and ask too many questions about the encounter. But of course they did. This is 2016, and my kids go to public school. We have a TV in our home, and they are generally observant teenagers. Unfortunately I hadn’t rehearsed this “lesson” in my parenting arsenal.

Talking to my kids about transgender issues wasn’t in the parenting class Michelle and I took years ago. But here’s what I said.

**God Made Gender**

I reminded my kids that way back in the early pages of Genesis it says that God created gender: “Male and female he created them” ([Gen. 1:27](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.%201.27)). We don’t get to choose our gender. Whether one is male or female is in the creative power and wisdom of God. Someone may struggle with “feeling” male or female, but that doesn’t *make* him or her different than God intended.

In the beginning, God determined that two genders were the perfect expression of his image. In the man and in the woman, then, God’s image is displayed—both in the individuals themselves and in the way they relate to each other as same (human) and as distinct (gender). One isn’t better than the other, nor did God design a way for humanity to switch between the two.

**We All Struggle with Identity**

I want my kids to be able to adequately navigate the waters of sexual identity for themselves. This is a watershed issue in our day that isn’t going away.

So I explained clearly to them how this young man I spoke with identified himself more as a woman. We then talked about how everyone struggles at some level to understand who they are and why God made them the way he did. I reassured them it’s normal to wrestle with such issues of identity, but that gender identity in particular is determined by God, and that transgender expressions won’t “fix” what’s going on within. I wanted them to know that any “gender transitioning” is a shortsighted attempt to fix a common human struggle, and will likely add to the confusion a person already feels.

**Where Worth Is Found**

Ultimately, though, I wanted my kids to have empathy for this young man. They could see from his demeanor and physical mannerisms that he wasn’t doing well. In fact, he’d told me he recently had a mental breakdown and was getting some neurological tests to determine what was going on.

I want my kids to fight the natural bent of their hearts to judge and snicker. I want them to show the grace and compassion that arises from feeling the hurt someone else carries with them. I want them to deeply understand who they are before the Lord—and even if they don’t get that far, that they at least understand who God made them to be. I want them to grasp that without careful answers, you can start down a path that only leads to greater confusion and heartache.

The gospel-less culture around us champions being who you are, but offers only tips and tools that lead you away from being who God created you to be. So absolutely, I want my kids to be themselves. I want them to look different from my wife and me. I want them to have their own adventures, to walk their own paths. But I also want them to be equipped to find their worth in Jesus, so they can help others navigate the tricky roads ahead