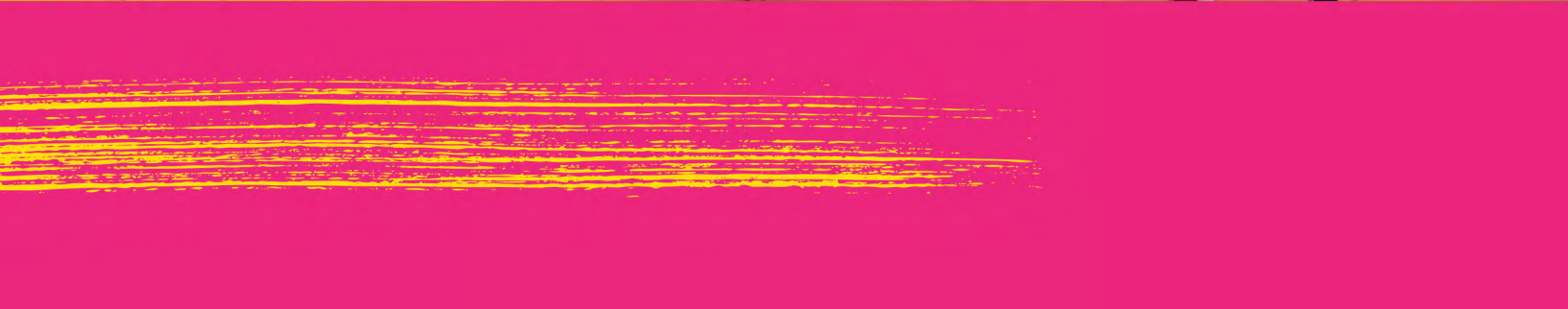
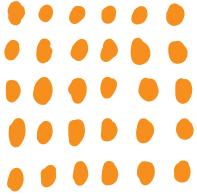




Transformed

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO TALKING
WITH YOUR TEENS ABOUT
GENDER IDENTITY AND
DISCIPLESHIP





Dear Parents,

We are excited to share this Parent Guide to help as you navigate the murky waters of gender identity with your teens. We hope it serves as a helpful resource that encourages and provides you with some practical tools to engage in this conversation.

Many parents today believe that they do not have as much influence in their kid's life as they would like. In fact, only half of U.S. parents believe they have a tremendous amount of influence in their kid's lives.¹ And yet, on matters of morality, faith, and the meaning of life, **youth ranked their parents as their highest influence by far...except in the case of gender and sexuality.**²

So, why is it that teens see their parents as go-to guides for life's biggest questions, but when it comes to issues of identity, they turn to peers and online influences? We think a big reason is parents' reluctance to enter into conversations on these complicated topics.

We understand that parents today face many challenges when it comes to having these conversations. On top of feeling generally unqualified to get into the social, psychological, ideological, and spiritual complexities of gender identity, parents report feeling afraid that their teens may reject them or that this might cause more conflict in their relationship. If you feel overwhelmed, we get it. But we want you to know that **you are not alone.** This resource was built with you in mind.

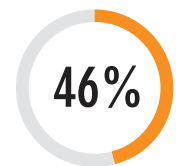
Be encouraged: research shows that the majority of children actually embrace the faith of their parents.³ In short, you are still the most influential voice in your teen's life regarding issues of faith and identity. So, if you are unclear about where your kids stand right now on the topic of gender, it may very well be only because you have avoided the conversation.

But there's hope. If you are willing to step into this space and **normalize conversations about gender, faith, and identity** in your home, you are well positioned to become a powerful influence in your teen's life when it comes to matters of gender identity.

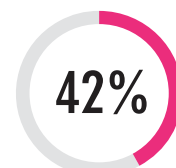
Keep reading to find out how.



PARENTS SAY ¹



I have difficulty talking to my child about gender identity




I never talk to my child about gender identity

1. Family Matters: Understanding the reality of parents in the US. OneHope. (May 2022).

2. Global Youth Culture, US Report. OneHope. (April 2021). www.globalyouthculture.net.

3. Pew Research Center, Sept., 2020, "U.S. Teens Take After Their Parents Religiously, Attend Services Together and Enjoy Family Rituals."



The purpose of this guide is to give you some pointers and recommended resources to help you get started. Whether this is your first time approaching the conversation, or you've been here many times before with your teen, remember that connecting is worth it. It's never too late.

In this guide, we'll help you take the first step, and then the next. We'll answer these questions:

- 4** | Where do I even begin?
- 6** | What does the Bible say about gender?
- 9** | What is the culture saying about gender?
- 10** | What is my teen learning in youth ministry small-group discussions?
- 12** | Where can I find more information?



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Getting Started Tips

As you engage with your kids on the topic of gender identity, it's important to remember that **how** you communicate is as important as **what** you communicate. Here are a few tips to keep in mind as you get started.

1. It's about *talking*, not having “The Talk.”

The thought of talking to your teen about gender and identity might feel overwhelming, but keep in mind, this isn't about having “The Talk.” Rather than putting all the pressure on one big conversation to end all conversations, make it an invitation to an ongoing dialogue. Think 100 one-minute conversations rather than one 100-minute conversation.

2. Don't be afraid to take initiative.

Starting the discussion with your teen shows them that you are not reacting out of fear, but that you are acting out of confidence in what the Bible has to say about an important issue in today's world. So, seek out moments to have this conversation. This subject is not off-limits for today's young people. They are open to conversations about gender and identity and, even if they seem uncomfortable, will appreciate that you have taken the time to talk.

3. Keep cool, calm, and collected.

If your teen approaches you with doubts or questions around his or her gender identity, do not freak out! While you may be panicking internally, it is important to maintain a calm composure. Start by simply listening and thanking him or her for trusting you enough to share. If you're ready in that moment, continue the conversation by asking **clarifying questions**. If you aren't ready or are struggling to remain calm, ask if you could take some time to process what was said, and let him or her know you want to continue the conversation soon.

**Think 100
one-minute
conversations**

**Question
list p 5**



4. What if you already freaked out?

All is not lost. Turn your mistake into an opportunity to model humility by apologizing for your reaction and asking for forgiveness. You could say something like – “I’m sorry I reacted the way that I did. This is a difficult subject to talk about, but I really do want to have this conversation. Would you be willing to forgive me, and could we try to have this conversation again?” A moment like this can provide powerful healing between you and your teen and set the stage for open and honest conversations going forward.

5. Boundaries are a gift: give them to your teen. Boundaries provide stable guard rails as young people discover and grow into their identity in Christ. While this might initially bring to mind disciplinary measures, we think it begins with being intentionally involved in your teen’s social life. Be aware of their friendships and their social media presence, and don’t be afraid to distance them from a damaging social circle. If you do decide to put up new boundaries, take time to discuss and explain the why behind them. Being proactive in your kid’s social circles will allow you to help them make wise choices and to learn from their mistakes.



Clarifying Questions

- » What about being a (boy/girl) feels wrong to you?
- » Is there anyone you’ve talked to who feels similarly?
- » Is there anyone else you’ve shared your feelings with?
- » How long have you felt this way?
- » Would it be okay for us to talk to someone together (trusted pastor/mentor/counselor)?



What does the Bible say?

While our ever-changing culture may have you feeling disoriented, be assured that God's Word speaks with clarity and authority into the gender-identity conversation. At the end of this guide, we've recommended several resources that can help you explore more of what Scripture has to say on this topic. Here, we've highlighted five big ideas from the Bible to get you started.

1. God is the Creator, and you are his creation.

Our culture's advice to people searching for identity is "follow your heart." In a world without a Creator, this message makes sense. If no god or higher power intentionally designed you, then the only identity you have is the one you claim for yourself. But the Bible tells us that we *do* have a Creator. God created all things according to his perfect design, and human beings are his masterpieces. Out of his overflowing love, he intentionally crafted every individual with a unique identity and purpose. If we want to understand who we are and what we were made for, we need to turn to God's Word for answers.

2. God created gender, not gender stereotypes.

Gender is part of God's good design for humanity. Sexist gender stereotypes are sinful distortions of that design that limit the beauty of what it means to be male and female. It's true that God only created two genders, but he also created every individual uniquely. In the Bible, we find that men aren't commanded to be masculine, and women aren't commanded to be feminine. Instead, they are both commanded to be godly. Understanding this point is important because if a young person expresses that they are struggling with their gender, they may really be saying that they do not identify with a certain gender stereotype. Help your teen celebrate their God-given gender by affirming the unique ways they can embrace who God made them to be.



Psalm 139:13-18
Ephesians 2:10
Genesis 1:1-2
Colossians 1:15-17
Psalm 8
Proverbs 8:22-36



Genesis 1:26-28
Genesis 2:18-25
1 Peter 1:13-16
Joel 2:28-29
Judges 4:4-10
Matthew 19:12
Romans 12:1-2
Romans 16:1-15



3. Your body is valuable.

Our world today communicates the idea that your physical body is only a container for your soul or “true self.” This true self is equated with a person’s thoughts, feelings, and desires (which, of course, are always changing). It might correspond to your physical body; but if it doesn’t, according to this thinking, it’s best to alter the outer to match the inner.

Scripture paints a different portrait of human nature. According to the Bible, we aren’t souls inside bodies – we are embodied souls. Your body as much as your mind and heart is essential to your identity. God created our bodies, God eternally united himself to a body, and, one day, he will resurrect and glorify our bodies when he establishes a new creation. In other words, our bodies are valuable before God. Therefore, it matters what we do with them.

4. The struggle is real.

God designed each of us to be an integrated whole: body, mind, emotions, and spirit woven together in harmony to make us who we are. Yet we know from experience that harmony isn’t always (or even usually) the reality. The Bible confirms that we are all broken by sin, and our jagged edges don’t fit easily together. Some people genuinely feel a disconnect between their body and their inner sense of self. Others are genuinely confused by the conflicting voices around and within them.

However, the brokenness and confusion caused by sin is not an excuse to go on sinning. Rather, it should motivate us to surrender ourselves fully to Jesus, relying on him to lead us into increasing faithfulness and understanding as he works redemption in our lives. Jesus made it clear that following him would be difficult, but he also promised it would be worth it. As a parent, you too can acknowledge the difficulties your teen faces, while simultaneously casting a vision of hope for their future.



1 Corinthians 6:19-20
1 Corinthians 15:35-58
Romans 6:12-14
Romans 12:1-2



Luke 9:23-25
Romans 7:21-25
Ephesians 4:17-24
Proverbs 3:5-6
James 1:2-5
1 Peter 1:3-21



5. There is hope!

The Gospel is good news for *everyone*, including people who struggle with their gender identity and sexuality. Each of us is seeking wholeness – healing for the self that has been fragmented by sin. In the Gospel we find that Jesus is the way to that wholeness. He is leading us to fellowship with the Father, and it's there that we will find we are truly ourselves as we were made to be.

So, the hope we have in Christ is twofold:

First, we have hope that as we walk through this life, Jesus walks with us. He joins us in our struggle against sin, and he is able to transform even our worst struggles into opportunities to grow in our love for God and for others.

Second, we have hope that the struggle will not last forever. When Jesus returns and God establishes his new creation, all who believed in him will be raised in bodies that are healed from the effects of sin. There will be no more confusion about who we are; no more painful dissonance within ourselves. In John's words from 1 John 3:2, "we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is."

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work."

- 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17



Isaiah 56:3-5
Matthew 19:12
Romans 8:18-39
1 Corinthians 15:42-58
1 John 3:2
Revelation 21:1-8



What is the culture saying?

Our culture's ideas about gender are based on the division of two key terms: sex and gender.

Sex describes the *biological* aspects of being male or female.

Gender describes the *psychological, social, and cultural* aspects of being male or female.

This new cultural view of gender as separate from biology brings with it a new language to categorize the diversity of people's gender expressions. Familiarizing yourself with this language can help you communicate more effectively with your teen. Here are a few key terms to know.

- » **Cisgender:** Someone whose gender identity matches his or her biological sex.
- » **Transgender:** Someone who identifies with a gender other than the one that corresponds to his or her biological sex.
- » **Non-binary:** Someone who identifies as something other than the traditional binary genders of male and female.
- » **Gender fluid:** Someone who does not identify as any particular gender.
- » **Gender norm:** Culturally formed standards and stereotypes of masculinity or femininity.
- » **Gender expression:** How each person uniquely manifests their gender identity.

Q: Should I use preferred pronouns?

We want to be honest: There are thoughtful Christians who fall on both sides of the pronoun discussion. Some are willing to use a person's "preferred pronoun" as a means of establishing connection and trust. Others choose not to use preferred pronouns out of concern that doing so would validate an identity that is not true to a person's God-given identity.

We strongly encourage you to pray and seek wisdom regarding this topic before making a decision. As a parent, remember you have incredible influence on the developmental formation of your teen. Because of this, we caution you to think very carefully before using a preferred pronoun.

Transformed

GENDER IDENTITY & DISCIPLESHIP

Is your teen currently participating in the *Transformed* small-group series at youth group? Keep the conversation going at home! We've provided an overview of each lesson as well as a 3-day Bible reading plan you can do with your teen throughout the week.



Walking with Jesus
LESSON 1

READING PLAN

The Big Idea

Jesus invites us on a lifelong journey of discipleship. As we walk with him over time, we can bring him our questions and confusion and trust him to lead us into increasing understanding and faithfulness.

Luke 24:13-32 / Proverbs 3:5-8



WATCH IT

Continue the Conversation:

- » What do you believe about gender? What is confusing to you?
- » What does it mean to you to follow Jesus?
- » What do you do when you struggle with your identity or have questions about your faith?



TALK IT OUT

LESSON 2

Divine Design

READING PLAN

Divine Design
LESSON 2

Continue the Conversation:

- » What are some of the messages you've heard online, on TV, and at school about how to find your identity, and specifically your gender identity? What do you believe?
- » Do you ever experience sexism or wrestle with gender stereotypes? If so, how?

The Big Idea

In the beginning, God created humanity in his image according to his perfect design. But we have all sinned, or rebelled, against God by rejecting his design for ourselves. In trying to be our own creators, we miss out on our true, God-given identity and purpose.



WATCH IT

Genesis 1:26-28 / Romans 1:21-27



Finding Yourself

LESSON 3



The Big Idea

We live in a world that preaches instant gratification, but Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow him. When we deny ourselves to follow Jesus, we find our true selves in him, and he leads us to joy and freedom.



WATCH IT



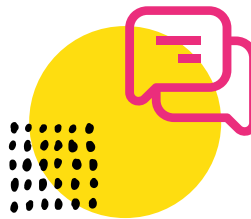
Luke 9:23-25 / Romans 12:1-2 / Romans 6:12-14

LESSON 3



Continue the Conversation:

- » What do you think of the advice to “follow your heart”? Does it work? Why or why not?
- » In what specific areas of your life might Jesus be calling you to “give up your own way and take up your cross” in order to follow him?



Finding Yourself



READING PLAN

LESSON 4



Living & Loving Like Jesus



WATCH IT



Living & Loving Like Jesus

LESSON 4



READING PLAN

The Big Idea

Followers of Jesus are called to love our neighbors, even those who disagree with us. Just like Jesus invites us into a relationship with him even while we are still sinners, we can invite people who struggle with their gender and sexuality into meaningful friendships. We can show compassion toward our LGBTQ friends without affirming their lifestyles or compromising God’s commands.



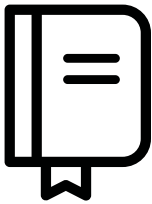
Luke 10:25-37

Continue the Conversation:

- » Do you have any LGBTQ friends? What is your relationship with them like?
- » Do you believe it’s possible to love someone without being “affirming”? If so, how? If not, why?

Recommended Resources

We hope this guide helps you as you begin having open and honest conversations with your teens on the topic of gender identity. But there is so much more to learn! Here we've recommended a few resources that will help you dive deeper into this subject.



Books

[*Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church and What the Bible Has to Say*](#) | Preston Sprinkle

[*God and the Transgender Debate: What Does the Bible Actually Say about Gender Identity?*](#) | Andrew Walker

[*Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality*](#) | Nancy R. Pearcey



Online Resources

The Center for Faith, Sexuality & Gender
centerforfaith.com

Christian Sexuality Discipleship Course
christian-sexuality.com

Preston Sprinkle's Theology in the Raw Podcast
prestonsprinkle.com/podcast

Axis Gender Conversation Kit
Axis is a faith-based organization dedicated to helping parents like you talk to your teens about difficult topics. Check out this 5-part video series on gender and accompanying guide so you can watch and discuss together. vimeo.com/showcase/conversationkit
[LGBTQ+ and Your Teen parent guide](#)



Feed

