

“This book resonates with gospel clarity and gospel compassion. It will empower you to share the good news of Jesus with those who grapple with gender-identity issues. The book is smart, wise, persuasive, and practical.”

RUSSELL MOORE, President, the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission; author of *Onward*

“I have been waiting for a resource that would provide me with a clear, loving, and gospel-centered analysis on the topic of gender dysphoria, and I have finally found it. This resource will be incredibly helpful in assisting the body of Christ to be a light in today’s cultural climate.”

JACKIE HILL PERRY, writer and artist

“Andrew T. Walker is one of the young bright lights in the evangelical church. Here, he helps the church both understand and compassionately respond to today’s challenges on gender identity.”

RYAN T. ANDERSON, Senior Research Fellow, the Heritage Foundation

“The transgender debate is one that easily arouses passions on both ‘sides.’ With gospel clarity and Christ-like compassion, Andrew Walker skillfully navigates a path between folly and cruelty. In so doing, he helps us to see why the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news for the transgendered. I highly commend this clearheaded and warmhearted introduction to one of the most challenging issues of our time.”

ROB SMITH, lecturer in ethics, Sydney Missionary & Bible College

“Andrew Walker brings a sharp mind and pastoral heart to a complex and often painful issue, and the result is a hugely helpful resource for the church today, full of wisdom, grace and truth. I recommend it highly.”

SAM ALLBERRY, speaker with Ravi Zacharias International Ministries

“The post-Christian West says that we are what we think we are, not what our bodies reveal us to be—and this is one of the chief challenges to Christianity today. That is why *God and the Transgender Debate* is so important. It is a countercultural, compassionate, must-read book.”

DENNY BURK, President, the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

“This is exactly the book I have been longing for and praying that someone would write. Andrew T. Walker brings biblical clarity to a minefield of complexity and controversy. He sets out a clear pathway to help Christian leaders and all believers navigate tricky terrain with grace, gentleness and genuine love for transgender people.”

JONATHAN BERRY, Director, True Freedom Trust

“Walker has done what many could not. He has not only given the church a tool for greater understanding of this area, but has done so with grace, conviction, careful study and thought, and deep love for others. This is not only a timely book; it’s a timeless resource for anyone desiring to serve and love their neighbor as themselves.”

TRILLIA NEWBELL, author of *Enjoy and Fear and Faith*

“What should Christians think and say about those who feel their gender is out of line with their biological sex? Should we accept that or silently acquiesce? Andrew Walker rightly says no, but in a compassionate manner that recognizes the psychological struggles and the suffering of people who experience alienation from themselves as God made them.”

ROBERT P. GEORGE, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence,
Princeton University

“Christians must begin to think and speak biblically, in truth and love, about this issue. Andrew Walker has provided a steady foundation from which the church can begin to grapple with this cultural shift.”

KAREN SWALLOW PRIOR, author of *Fierce Convictions—
The Extraordinary Life of Hannah More: Poet, Reformer, Abolitionist*

“This book combines an extraordinary range of attributes. It tackles a contemporary issue; it is marked by humanity and compassion; it respects the Bible; it is open and honest; it is full of Christ-like love; it is usefully practical; and it places the discussion in the context of the big picture of the Bible. It is a model for the open and sensitive discussion of many contemporary issues.”

PETER ADAM, retired Principal of Ridley College, Melbourne, Australia

“This is an extremely important book, not just in Andrew Walker’s practical treatment of the tricky and confusing topic of transgenderism, but in the very truthful and compassionate way he deals with it. This is really a book about how we love the gender-dysphoric person with the full grace and glorious truth of the gospel itself. It is a uniquely beautiful and very practical book. Absolutely ‘Must-Read’ material.”

GLENN T. STANTON, Director of Family Formation Studies
at Focus on the Family

“I am so pleased this excellent book has been published. Its biblical depth and sensitivity are well worth the price alone. The closing chapters are especially important regarding the role of the church, the effect on children and the resultant tough questions that arise.”

COLIN BENNETT, Vice-Principal, Moorlands College, Hampshire, UK

“Gender-identity questions are among the most radical of our time—and the church is not prepared. Andrew T. Walker has thought deeply about these things, and is an invaluable guide for faithful Christians walking through the heat and confusion of this debate.”

ROD DREHER, author of *The Benedict Option*

“The Bible says to love your neighbor and to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. How can Christians love our transgender neighbors compassionately, without compromising our faith? Andrew Walker puts us on the right path.” ERICK ERICKSON, Editor, *The Resurgent*

“Andrew Walker’s tender application of God’s word to our muddled lives today should make this book one of the first places to turn for Christ-like grace and truth as we seek to love all our neighbors as ourselves.”

ED SHAW, author of *The Plausibility Problem*; co-founder of livingout.org

“This book puts the hand of the suffering into the hands of the Savior, and therefore, this is the book that I will put into the hands of parents struggling to know how God’s word speaks into loving a child who struggles with gender-identity issues. In addition to its loving pastoral care and biblical family guidance, this book models how to discern the times, and to respond with Christian hope.”

ROSARIA BUTTERFIELD, author of *Openness Unhindered* and *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*

“Andrew T. Walker has written a book not about the debates but about people. It is clear, and clarifies matters in a way which will help us all.”

PETER BARNES, Editor, *AP Magazine*, Australia

“Andrew Walker offers overdue clarity, compassion, and practical wisdom on one of the most difficult questions of our day. Along the way he demonstrates not only that we need not choose between truth and love, as we are often told, but that especially on these issues of human identity, we cannot. This is such an important book.”

JOHN STONESTREET, President, the Colson Center for Christian Worldview

“One of evangelicalism’s brightest young stars helps us understand how the gospel can be good news, and how the church can be a faithful community, for somebody experiencing gender dysphoria. If you are looking for a one-stop resource for responding biblically to questions about transgender and gender fluidity, look no further.”

BRUCE RILEY ASHFORD, Provost and Professor of Theology and Culture, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; author of *Every Square Inch*

“Topics like this require a mixture of compassion and clarity, and Andrew Walker writes with both. This is a hugely helpful introduction to a complex, controversial, and often painful subject.”

ANDREW WILSON, Teaching Pastor, King’s Church London;
author of *The Life We Never Expected*

“Andrew Walker’s short book deals well with the emotional issues surrounding this difficult area, and is a kind and clear lesson in how to respond with godly love and wisdom. This book will help us all to care and counsel well.”

SIMON MANCHESTER, Senior Minister, St Thomas North Sydney

“We need an extra measure of wisdom and an extra measure of compassion in walking with people who struggle with their gender identity. Andrew Walker demonstrates the kind of wisdom and compassion we will need in the days ahead.” TREVIN WAX, author of *This Is Our Time*

“This is both a resource for and a challenge to the church: a challenge to be compassionate, convictional and gracious communities where those suffering with gender dysphoria find hope in the gospel, grace in God’s promises, and willing fellow travelers for the hard journey home.”

DARREN MIDDLETON, Convener,
PCV Church and Nation Committee, Australia

“Andrew Walker writes on a tough subject with courage and compassion. This is the book Christians need to read to cut through the politically-correct noise and get to the heart of one of the most contentious issues of our time.” DAVID FRENCH, Senior Fellow, National Review Institute

“Andrew Walker has given us a much-needed resource for understanding the questions around transgender issues. With clarity and gentleness, he calls us back to a biblical vision of humanity, creation, and gender, and invites us to see fidelity to that vision as the most loving way we can engage with a confused world.”

MIKE COSPER, Founder of Harbor Media; author of *The Stories We Tell*

Andrew T. Walker

GOD
and the
TRANSGENDER
DEBATE

What Does the Bible Actually Say
About Gender Identity?

The logo for 'the goodbook COMPANY' features the words 'the goodbook' in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with a stylized, curved line above the 'o' in 'good' that arches over the 'b'. Below this, the word 'COMPANY' is written in a smaller, all-caps, sans-serif font.

the goodbook
COMPANY

*To Matt and Carey Murphy,
who have taught both my family and their community
what it means joyfully to follow Christ in broken bodies
amid a broken creation.*

God and the Transgender Debate:
What Does the Bible Actually Say About Gender Identity?
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FOREWORD

Dr R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

The Christian church in the West now faces a set of challenges that exceeds anything it has experienced in the past. The sexual revolution is fundamentally restructuring our culture's collective understanding of family, society, and the very meaning of life.

These challenges would be vexing enough for any generation. But the contours of our current challenge have to be understood as part of a larger project which is affecting every square inch of society. This revolution, like all revolutions, takes few prisoners. In other words, it demands total acceptance of its revolutionary claims and the affirmation of its aims. This is the problem now faced by Christians who are committed to uncompromising faithfulness to the Bible as the word of God, and to the gospel as the only message of salvation.

The crisis this revolution poses to the church of Jesus Christ is tantamount to the sort of theological challenges posed by the Trinitarian and Christological controversies of the early church, the Pelagian controversy faced by Augustine, or even the theological challenges faced by the Reformers themselves. In each of these controversies, the true church understood that it could not embrace any

theological conviction which might undermine the central truths of the gospel. Even in the face of stiff cultural and political opposition, the faithful church has always recognized its call to hold fast to the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1 v 3).

Even more than the movement for the normalization of homosexuality, the transgender revolution challenges the most basic structures of society. Transgenderism disagrees with thousands of years of consensus regarding gender and human identity shared by almost every culture, including those not influenced by Christian morality. Now, for instance, some preschools in Europe prohibit the use of gendered pronouns, eradicating terms such as “girl” and “boy” from the schools’ idiom. This example is one among many demonstrating why the transgender revolution raises questions that we cannot possibly avoid.

Moreover, the transgender revolution represents one of the most difficult pastoral challenges that churches in this generation will face. Just as churches include many people struggling with same-sex attraction, churches will be ministering to men and women struggling with gender confusion. This kind of confusion concerns the very core of our being, and cannot be pushed to the periphery of our consciousness. Our gender identity is fundamental to our self-knowledge. A biblical response to the transgender revolution will require the church to develop new skills of compassion and understanding as we encounter persons, both inside and outside our congregations, who are struggling.

The ideological assumptions driving the transgender revolution did not even exist until very recently. This revolution required certain epistemological and moral shifts in order for it to emerge as legitimate. Transgenderism is birthed out of Western society’s challenges to the

institution of marriage and out of the project of social revolutionaries to redefine sexuality and normalize same-sex relationships. These shifts deconstructed objective social norms and instead advocated a “social construction” of reality.

The reasons why Christians must confront the transgender revolution and why we must faithfully preach the gospel to transgender persons are because we love God and we love our neighbor. The sexual revolution is a failed experiment: one that will only result in personal tragedy and cultural chaos. The church should be a place of refuge for the casualties of the sexual revolution. We must point others to the redemption and healing found in the gospel of Christ. We must be a people who look to the gospel as we await the redemption of all things—including gender and sexuality—and the fulfillment of all of God’s promises in Christ Jesus.

This book is the type of resource the church needs in these challenging times. Theologically careful and full of pastoral wisdom, Andrew not only unpacks the history and ideology of the transgender revolution; he also shows us how to respond faithfully to the challenges it poses with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This book should be in the hands of pastors, lay leaders, and church members everywhere.

The sexual revolution poses challenges that are not simply going to disappear. The church must be ready to meet these challenges with biblical fidelity and Christ-like compassion. The church must move forward, confident that the Scriptures are sufficient, clear, and have the power to transform broken lives. We must remember that Scripture gives God’s people a comprehensive worldview which equips us to wrestle with even the most challenging ethical dilemmas of our time. Finally, we must hold

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fast to the gospel, knowing that it alone provides the only true remedy for all our troubles and struggles, and the only sure answer for all our questions and doubts.

*Dr R. Albert Mohler, Jr.
President, Southern Baptist Theological
Seminary, Louisville, USA*

1. HE HAD COMPASSION

Jesus debated issues. But much more than that, he loved people.

All kinds of people came to speak with him during his time on earth. The religious insiders. The socially excluded. The handicapped. The undesirables. The rich, the poor, the young, the old. Those whose lives had been messed up by others, and those whose lives had been messed up by themselves.

And Jesus loved them all, made time for them all, and respected them all. He didn't always agree with them (and he disagreed with the religious insiders more than anyone). But he always loved them—especially those who came to him hurting. In a lovely phrase taken from the prophet Isaiah and applied to himself, Jesus described his approach to them:

*A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick
he will not quench. (Matthew 12 v 20)*

The visual imagery Jesus uses is important to remember and beautiful to see. Jesus will not let fragile people

crumble or collapse beneath the weight of their struggles. Jesus wants to take those who feel they are close to flickering out and help return them to brightness and warmth. Jesus is tender and gentle toward those who think they cannot go any further.

He described life with him as “rest,” and invited the burdened to come and enjoy it:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

(Matthew 11 v 28-30)

So if you're reading this close to your breaking point, if you're feeling that your spark is very, very dim or that you're too broken to stand—or if you know someone who is in that situation—Jesus says, *I get that. I see that. I love you, and I want to help. I may not always agree with you, but I will only disagree with you because I want the best for you. I've come to stiffen you, not to snap you. I don't snuff out flickering candles. I want to fan them into flames.*

Jesus loved people. That's important for me to remember as I write a book with the word “debate” in its title. And it's good for you to remember as you read a book with the word “transgender” in its title. Because at its heart, this debate isn't about a debate. It's about people: precious people made in the image of God who are hurting, who are confused, who are angry, who are scared, who may have been told by their family that they are unwelcome. It's about some people who are delighted with how culture has shifted when it comes to gender identity, and other people who are concerned about how culture has shifted.

What would Jesus do? He would listen to us, and he

would love us, and when he disagreed with us, it would always and only be out of compassion, never oppression. There is no hurting person he would mock, or shun, or insult, or sneer at. He is so determined to pursue what is best for all of us that he died—excluded, mocked and rejected—to secure it.

If this isn't the Jesus you have heard of, then I'm sorry. It is the Jesus who I seek to live with and for. And it is the Jesus whose words you'll hear in this book as we take a careful look at what the Bible really says about gender identity, and what that means for people who experience uncertainty or struggles with their gender identity; for those who love those who experience those struggles; and for churches who are (or should be) seeking to support those who experience gender-identity conflicts.

WHY THIS BOOK?

I'm writing this book because there's a revolution happening in Western culture that is exploding our assumptions and traditions of what it means to be a man or a woman.

This revolution is flipping over the tables of centuries-old norms. And there's some good that can come from it. It is good, for example, that people who experience distress about their gender identity are able to talk more openly and honestly about their struggles and feelings without everyone in society thinking they are a freak. Society is now attempting to help people who experience doubts and struggles with their gender identity, rather than push those people to the margins.

With that revolution comes a debate—a debate about what it means, if anything, to be a man or a woman. In this debate, there are many voices. Some are loud; many are quiet. Some are unfair and strident, from a variety of

perspectives. Others are measured and kind, from a variety of positions. Some are well-represented in the media, and others struggle to be heard.

I think it's important that God's voice is heard in this debate. That's what this book is about. It is not a medical or psychological study, nor is it a statistical analysis or political manifesto. It's aiming, as clearly as possible, to let God's voice be heard.

This is a book for busy, thoughtful people who want to consider what the Bible says about transgenderism, how that applies to situations they'll likely face, and, possibly, what that means for the struggles they or their loved ones are experiencing now. I'm writing for you if you want to learn more, love better, and are open to considering what God has to say about sex and gender in his word.

The only assumption taken in this book, and an assumption I'd ask you to be open to if you do not already subscribe to it, is that the Bible is God's word. Maybe you accept that truth; maybe you do not. But it is worth taking a look at every available resource to see what guidance it has for such a difficult, painful, emotive issue. And so the only favor I ask is that you read this book right through and see it as a whole. This is a hard issue, and it is not a simple one. Each chapter is, in many ways, reliant on other chapters, and no one chapter says everything that I think needs to be said.

Here's where we're heading. We'll begin with three short introductory chapters, to gain a grasp of how we've gotten to where we are as a culture, what it means to be transgender, and why and how people reach such different positions in this debate.

In chapters 5 to 7, we will examine what the Bible says about humanity, and therefore about gender.

Chapters 8 to 11 ground that in the real lives of ordinary people:

- what this means for those who wish to love transgender neighbors
- what Jesus says to those who experience gender dysphoria or who identify as transgender
- how Jesus challenges local churches to show compassion to every person that enters our churches, regardless of who they are and what they think, while also taking seriously the truth of God's word
- how parents might speak to their children about gender identity.

At the end, there is a chapter of answers to important questions that the previous chapters haven't dealt with.

There's one more reason I've written this book: I'd love for the church not to be constantly playing catch-up in the culture. We shouldn't let it always be the case that the church addresses an issue only when the broader culture takes it up first. Christians lagged behind, for example, in showing a compassionate grace-and-truth response to homosexuality. Some of us forgot about truth. Most of us forgot about grace.

I pray that this won't happen again when it comes to gender identity. When it comes to speaking truth, showing compassion, and seeking justice, the church should be leading, not following. I hope this book is a contribution to that cause.

This book is not the last word on the subject or the last word in this debate. It won't satisfy every objection or answer every question. It's a start, not a finish.

In Matthew's Gospel we read of Jesus that...

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (9 v 36)

Using Jesus as my example and my guide, I hope to offer in this book a compassionate way forward; a way that is different and, I believe, offers greater hope than many of the other voices in this debate. I hope it is helpful to you, even as and when it is provocative. My greatest prayer above all is that, if and when what you read is hard to hear, you will remember that the God who speaks to you in the Bible is the same God who loves you so much that he came, lived, and even died to strengthen bruised reeds and fan flickering flames.