

# 08 Transgender Identities

## LEADER GUIDE

### **BIG IDEA:**

Transgender identities can be confusing and misunderstood. This week is devoted to understanding the transgender conversation, especially the role that gender stereotypes play in that conversation, and to help your students understand what the Bible says about our sexed (male and female) embodiment.

### **Tips for Conversation:**

This topic is by far the most contentious, volatile, debated, and confusing in our series thus far. It will be important to pay *extra* attention to your language and posture here, especially if there are students in your group who identify as trans\*. (“Trans\*,” with the asterisk, is just a catch-all identity term that includes transgender, nonbinary, genderfluid, and other similar gender identities.) Here are a few things you need to know as you venture into this week’s lesson.

First, all the guidance we gave in the previous week carries over to this week, so please review what we said there, including the language cheat-sheet.

Second, the perspective given in this video is *one* perspective. We do believe it’s true and biblical, but it will clash with what some students in your group (who have engaged this topic already) will have heard from the broader culture. The stories we share in the video (personal stories from Heather and Kat, and a scientific perspective from Dr. Laidlaw) reaffirm a biblical perspective, but some people might criticize the video for not sharing other stories. For instance, this video does not include stories from people who have transitioned and say they are much happier that they did. It would be good for you to be prepared to address this concern if it comes up. We chose to share these stories in particular because we believe they 1) resonate with a Christian worldview, 2) are true to

science (in the case of Dr. Laidlaw), and 3) are different from what youth are likely to encounter in the broader culture.

Third, be sure you approach this topic humbly and graciously. It's okay to tell your students that you're still learning about this topic and that you have a long way to go. They will appreciate your humility much more than if you pretend to know more than you do.

Fourth, as with our previous conversation about same-sex sexuality, assume that there will be people in your group who identify as trans\* (publicly or privately), experience gender dysphoria, or know someone who does. Even if you don't actually have someone in your group who is trans\*, it's good to avoid an "us vs. them" posture when we go about this topic and to model this posture for your students who aren't trans\*.

Lastly, as you'll see, gender stereotypes play a big role in the trans\* conversation; however, these affect every person, not just trans\* people. (This week's video includes stories from Jackie and Millie, who aren't trans\* but have been impacted by gender stereotypes). Thinking carefully about how gender stereotypes shape our world can create great conversations that are relevant for everyone. Don't let non-trans\* people check out during this week's conversation—there's much here for *everyone* to wrestle with!

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### Questions for Small Group:

1. Have gender stereotypes affected you personally? Do you ever feel like you don't match up to someone's standard of masculinity or femininity? Or do you know someone else who's been affected by this?
2. Do you think Christians in general have handled the transgender conversation well? What kind of conversations or education would you like to see happening in the church?
3. The video said that the Bible doesn't mandate gender stereotypes (for example, men to always act masculine, etc.). Do you believe this to be true?



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## Additional Resources:

**VIDEO:** Full-length interview with Heather Skriba

**BOOK:** Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say*.

**TOOL:** Weekly devotional

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## Counselors Who Specialize in Gender Dysphoria

Dr. Charity Lane (Wheaton, IL) -

<https://www.heritageprofessional.com/staff/charity-r-lane-psy-d/>

Dr. Corey Gilbert (Salem, OR) - <http://healinglives.com>

Sasha Ayad (Houston, TX) - <https://inspiredteentherapy.com>

Dr. Mark Yarhouse (Wheaton, IL) -

<https://www.wheaton.edu/academics/faculty/mark-yarhouse/>

Dr. Juli Sadusky (Denver, CO) - <https://www.juliasadusky.com/about>

