# FamilyLife Today® Radio Transcript

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## Made in God's Image

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| Guest: | Andrew Walker |
| From the series: | God and the Transgender Debate (Day 2 of 3) |
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**Bob:** Transgenderism as an identity is something that has become at least accepted, if not advocated, in our culture. Andrew Walker says that's going to mean conflict for those of us who believe the Bible.

**Andrew:** It's very possible that if you're a family member of someone who's identifying as transgender, you might be the very last person in that person's life that is willing to speak truth to them, because it's likely that in a corporate setting or in a job setting that person has been given full acceptance to identify as transgender. Their social network might identify them by their preferred gender identity, and you as a family member might be the very last person who says to them, "Listen, I love you, but I'm not going to affirm this identity in you, because I don't think this is how God made you."

**Bob:** This is *FamilyLife Today*. Our host is Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine.

How can we as Christians be people who are full of truth and grace when the world is changing around us? We'll talk about that today; stay with us.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us.

We are talking about something this week that—you go back 20 or 30 years and we would have thought, "This is so cordoned off that it's way out of the mainstream." Today, the subject of transgenderism is front and center and being celebrated and affirmed in our culture.

**Dennis:** And it's in the news and it's in our schools. There are a lot of symbols of transgenderism in our country, and we have Andrew Walker with us again on *FamilyLife Today*. Andrew, welcome back.

**Andrew:** It's good to be here.

**Dennis:** Andrew is the author of a new book called *God and the Transgender Debate*. This is a sign of the changing times, that there are transgender restrooms for people to go into.

**Andrew:** That is definitely one of the newest horizons that we're seeing around these gender debates. There are also kind of pressure points in the culture where there have been enormous public policy disputes that you've seen happen in places such as North Carolina, and there have been proposals in other states, and they're very, very controversial, even to bring this up.

**Bob:** I was in our local grocery store the other day and they have single use bathrooms that are unisex. I don't have any problem with single use bathrooms that are unisex.

**Andrew:** Which is, to me, one of the win-win compromises that would allow the culture war kind of issues to kind of subside around transgenderism. Because if you can have single stall restrooms, it doesn't matter if you're a boy, girl, male, female. If you need to go to the bathroom, you need to go to the bathroom.

**Dennis:** The only thing is I feel sorry for women, because men…I'm sorry.

**[Laughter]**

You with me?

I mean, there's just a difference between the restroom for women—

**Bob:** We've moved to the scatological here on *FamilyLife Today*.

**[Laughter]**

Maybe for the first time in 25 years.

**Dennis:** I think so.

**[Laughter]**

But seriously, I mean, there's a certain part of human dignity that is respected when you go back to the book of Genesis in chapter one, where it says, "In the beginning God made them male and female, in the image of God He made them."

**Andrew:** Yes, and I would say it's very wise to create bathroom policies and locker room policies on sex difference, because again, males and females are comprehensively different. Yes, we're both humans, we're both equal in the eyes of God, but God made us different, made us different down to the level of our chromosomes, to our anatomy and our physiology, and even how we think. So it is good to make restroom policies based on that need for privacy.

Privacy is a serious issue, and that's one of the issues that I think has kind of raised the eyebrows of a lot of Christian parents in the public schools.

**Bob:** Andrew, this is just a symptom of the public discourse that goes on over this issue, and I think as Christians we're trying to ask ourselves the question, "How can we celebrate, affirm, rejoice in the personal dignity of every human being, affirm that every human is created with dignity in the image of God?"

How can we do that and also hold to the idea that God creates us male and female, knowing that there are some people who say, "I understand myself differently, and who are you to impose your understanding of self on me, and can't you just leave me to be who I think I am? How can you say you affirm my dignity and not allow me to embrace my own sense of self?"

**Andrew:** Because, again, one of the most beautiful teachings that Christianity has to offer is that you are more than your moral choices, you are more than your personal identity, and because you are made in the image of God I can fundamentally disagree with you and still respect you and still love you and still be kind to you. But to push back a little bit on your statement, the person who says, "Why are you judging me or wanting me to live according to your way?" is, in the same way, putting judgment on me and wanting me to conform to their expectations.

So this is a question, really, we want to ask of what should society believe about how God made us as male and female, or what does it just mean to be male and female under the law? So we can acknowledge that there's going to be a very statistically few circumstances where individuals are going to experience gender incongruence or a mismatch, but I don't think it's wise to create public policy based on these narrow exceptions.

We want to create public policy based on the standard rule of how God made us as male and female and to uphold those biological distinctions and those sexual distinctions and to uphold the privacy rights of women and children. I often hear in these debates about transgender individuals just want to go to the restroom, and I fully understand and recognize that. But their opinion isn't the only opinion in this issue. There are women and there are children to consider as well. So, we need to be thinking through as a society what's a more board, comprehensive, compromised solution that upholds everyone's dignity and everyone's privacy.

**Dennis:** That's a tough assignment, because as a follower of Christ I'm called to love, but that doesn't mean I'm called to change the rules of how society operates just because of a certain segment who wants to have it differently.

**Andrew:** Well, and sometimes—people will often recite the golden rule here, Matthew 7:12, "Treat others the way you want to be treated," as kind of a *quid pro quo* that "I'll affirm what you want affirmed if you'll affirm what I want affirmed."

That's not what that passage means, because Jesus is always talking about what is in our best interest. So what that means is we're going to disagree on what should be affirmed, because at root we're asking the question of what is God's goal and purpose for us in how He made us as male and female.

**Dennis:** Yes, you're talking about a worldview at that point.

**Andrew:** Absolutely.

**Dennis:** Our worldview as followers of Christ is going to clash with those who have a secular worldview.

I want to talk about something you mentioned earlier but we didn't really unpack. You talk about gender dysphoria, and basically that's where a person gets confused, and they're not self-identifying according to biologically how God made them. Talk to the person who's listening to us right now who may have experienced gender dysphoria or gender confusion. Is he in sin, is she in sin, to grapple and struggle with a temptation like that?

**Andrew:** To be very clear, I do not think someone who experiences gender dysphoria is sinning when they experience gender dysphoria. I place gender dysphoria in the same category as I do depression. We wouldn't say someone who experiences depression or struggles with depression is sinning when they have depression. What we would say is, "Listen, we live in a Genesis three world and a Romans eight world, where this world and all of creation has been wrecked by sin, and sin manifests itself in brokenness and brokenness down to the level of our minds and our bodies and our DNA."

So, I do not think someone who is experiencing these psychological challenges is in themselves sinning when they have experiences. I think what begins to become sinful is when someone says, "Okay, I'm going to ignore how God made me, I'm going to ignore the truth of my biological sex, and I'm going to choose to identify and affirm what I'm experiencing in my mind."

**Dennis:** And I'm thinking of another temptation, like lust.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** It's clear in the Bible that being tempted to lust is not sin; it's when we grapple and begin to play with it and toy with it and cave into it and allow our minds to go there. We have a choice of whether or not we act on what we're thinking and what's tempting us.

**Bob:** Well, and those of us who experience the temptation of lust know that there are things we can do in our lives to turn down the intensity, the frequency. There are

practices we can entertain that will help us deal nobly and honorably with lust. Is it true with people who experience gender dysphoria that if they will take on certain spiritual disciplines they can actually turn down some of that gender dysphoria in their lives?

**Andrew:** Well, I want to be clear that if someone's a Christian and experiencing gender dysphoria, I don't want to promise them that someday—

**Bob:** —that's going to go away.

**Andrew:** —that's going to go away. I can't make that promise. What I can say is that the Bible says that when we are weak, Christ is strong, and His grace is sufficient in our weakness. So what the Holy Spirit does, when the Spirit comes into our lives, is He works to conform us into the image of Christ, and Christ comes into our lives and we find Him more satisfying than the brokenness of our struggles.

**Bob:** Well, and you said something; you said, "In our weakness." So we're classifying gender dysphoria here as a weakness; that's where some on the other side would say, "This is not a weakness; this is who I am, and to classify it as a weakness is a wrong characterization," and this is where we have to decide what's our source of truth. Is it how we feel, is it what biology says, or is it what God says in His revealed Word? Do you think the Bible is clear on gender identity and how God has made us male and female?

**Andrew:** I do. I mean, there's obviously no verse in the Bible that says, "Here's what gender identity means, *x, y,* and *z*," but when we look at the earliest passages in Genesis, what we see is God making male and female equal, but distinct, and part of what makes male and female unique and complementary is the fact that each possesses a reproductive ability that the other needs in order for there to be reproduction.

So I would make the case that our gender identity is based on our composition as how God made us biologically, down to the level of our chromosomes, but then also, our reproductive ability is important here as well. This doesn't mean if you're struggling with infertility that you're not a male, you're not a female, but what it means is that one of the distinguishing marks that makes us clearly male and female is that reproductive ability.

So there is more to being male and female than our reproductive anatomy, but we're never less than our reproductive anatomy, because of how God made us.

**Dennis:** Let's say there's a listener right now who has a family member who has maybe come out and said, "I'm transgender. I'm a trans-male," and you knew the person as a female growing up. Coach that adult in how to deal with another adult who is choosing to place their bets on something that goes against God's design.

**Andrew:** So, a lot of my answer on this depends on the nature of the relationships and the proximity that this person has to this person who's identifying as transgender. If this is a close person to me, if this is a family member, if this is a sibling or a child of mine, my own conviction is that I would not be willing to refer to that person by their new pronoun or by their new name or refer to them as their new gender identity.

And why is that? Because, first-off, as a Christian, I feel like I am to speak the truth in love. I think I have the relational capital to speak truth to that person, and that person ought to know that my love for them is bigger and stronger than what this disagreement is right here. So that person ought to know that I'm going to be here loving them regardless of how they identify, and they ought to be able to have a level of assurance that, even if I'm disagreeing with them, it doesn't mean I hate them, it doesn't mean I want to discriminate against them; it doesn't mean I want to do them any harm at all.

But more importantly, it's very possible that if you're a family member of who's identifying as transgender you might be the very last person in that person's life that is willing to speak truth to them, because it's likely that in a corporate setting or in a job setting that person has been given full acceptance to identify as transgender.

Their social network might identify them by their preferred gender identity, and you as their family member might be the very last person who says to them, "Listen, I love you, but I'm not going to affirm this identity in you, because I don't think this is how God made you. You know I love you, you know I'm not going anywhere, and nothing about your circumstances is going to change that. But because of what I know to be true of you, based on what I know is true of the Bible, I'm going to refer to you as your biological sex and the name that you were given."

**Dennis:** You know, that's one thing to do within a family, but today in the corporate community there are laws that are being enacted now that say if you and I are going to work together and if I decide that I'm transgender, you have to refer to me by my new preferred sex. What would you do if you were in a job where you were required to speak in terms of pronouns of the new sex of the person?

**Andrew:** I think it's really important, right now, to emphasize that I think there's a conscience issue here that each Christian is going to have to grapple with for themselves, especially in kind of the more ambiguous settings, like a corporate setting or a workplace setting. So, first, I want the Christian to do what their conscience is comfortable with.

With that said, if you are being forced to sign something or forced to assent to something that you are uncomfortable with and that you disagree with and that you think violates Scripture, you need to raise that concern with your employer, and quite frankly, you need to be willing to pay the price for your conscience.

I have a lot of people contact me about different dilemmas that they're involved in in various work environments, and the assumption in their question to me is that there is an easy resolution to their ethical dilemma. And sometimes, there's simply not a resolution other than obeying your conscience and paying the price for your conscience.

And that's going to be something that we have to really grapple with in the coming days and years as the transgender revolution continues to march on, that there are settings that are going to be very difficult for Christians to enter into in the future, and I say that with great regret, because I want Christians to be everywhere in the culture, being salt and light. But there are going to be some places—corporate settings, educational settings, counseling settings—

**Bob:** The military—I mean, the list goes on.

**Andrew:** —medical settings—that might produce a conflict with a Christian conscience. So what I would recommend is always obey your conscience, and never go against what your conscience is telling you.

**Dennis:** And don't forget to just pray and ask God for wisdom in how to confront the issue. Bob, you were asked by a follower of Christ how to handle this situation?

**Bob:** Yes. He came to me and said, "Here's what we've been told at work. This person is to be referred to with the preferred pronouns, and that's now corporate policy."

And he said, "What do I do, because it's a violation of my own conscience to do that."

I said, "Well, here's the first thing I'd do: I would avoid pronouns. So I would refer to that person by whatever they're choosing as their given name."

Now, you may say, "Well, if they're choosing Amanda as their given name, that has a female connotation."

I'd say, "Well, okay, but it's different than you assigning a gender when you call them by a given name." So I would say, rather than saying, "Here's what she said," I'd say, "This is what Amanda said, and Amanda thinks we should do it this way, and I think we need to listen to Amanda," and I would just avoid the pronouns altogether.

But I think to your point, we have an example in Scripture of what you do when you live in a culture that's hostile to your views and you're called upon to violate the views, like eat meat offered to idols or bow down to King Nebuchadnezzar. What do you do? Daniel winsomely appealed; Daniel went before the authorities and said, "I'd like to propose an alternate solution."

He did it respectfully, he did it with humility. He had an approach here that said, "O king, you're the king, but here's how I'm going to appeal, knowing that there's a lions' den out

there and there's a fiery furnace out there and we may face those things, and if we do we have to trust God in the midst of them; we don't back down from our convictions just because of the furnace or the lions' den or the unemployment line is in our future."

**Andrew:** Acts, in chapter five, says we have to obey God rather than men.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Andrew:** And so, we want to honor conscience, on the one hand, and too, something else you just said: I think we have the mechanisms and the ability to respectfully let an employer know that this is an infringement on our conscience. You don't lose your religious liberty just because you enter into a certain work environment. So this means, you know, you may not want to be entering into lengthy legal dilemmas but because we have a first amendment in this country, you have as much right as anyone else to register a concern with an employer. And I would say, if that's something you want to do, be prepared to do that, do it winsomely and kindly—

**Bob:** —and humbly.

**Andrew:** —and humbly.

**Bob:** —and with meekness, and that's—a lot of people go around asserting their rights, "Well, you can't make me do this." Just go in appealing with humility. "I want to be a good employee here, but this causes me to violate my conscience."

**Andrew:** But I would say, to kind of round out the pronoun, naming controversy, you always want to ask the question of, "What is my relationship with this person, and in what context am I in a relationship with this person?" Because I think that is going to kind of shape our response in various outcomes and circumstances.

**Dennis:** I think what you're challenging all of us to are a couple of things: first of all, know what you believe the Scripture teaches about male and female. Genesis chapter one, God did not stutter. He said He made us "male and female, in the image of God He created them."

A second thing you're challenging us to, and we've hit it repeatedly in this conversation today, is that of being loving, kind, and respectful toward other people. That may mean you take the conversation to a private place where you talk to your boss, and as, Bob, you were saying Daniel did, he appealed to the king, but he did so in a way where we could get a hearing and he could be understood, and he asked for grace to be able to continue to stand for what he thought was right.

**Michelle:** *FamilyLife Today* is brought to you by FamilyLife in Little Rock, Arkansas. And although FamilyLife is located in the United States of America, we understand that our cultures vary but the issues facing us are similar. We all have joys in life, we all

struggle and we all want to love and be loved. And we want your family, your marriage and your relationships to succeed.

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I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our global broadcast manager Rhonda Street. I also want to thank our editor Larry Loraine. For Dennis Rainey and Bob Lepine, I'm Michelle Hill and I invite you to join us again for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

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