

Did God Put My Gender into My Genes?

November 2022

“I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”
(Psalm 139:14)

When the psalmist wrote those words, he wasn’t kidding. Consider our beginnings. A newly fertilized egg sets into motion a pre-programmed, step-by-step sequence that leads in nine months to a baby that is ready to be born.

If a baby starts out as a single cell why do some cells become bone cells in the foot, while others become brain cells in the head? It actually takes many cells working together, sending signals back and forth to cause this to happen. This requires an astonishing amount of information. Some of that information is programmed into the egg by the mother’s ovaries when she makes it. Most of the rest of the information is stored inside the nucleus in the DNA of the fertilized egg.

One of the more astounding things that scientists have learned in recent years, is just how densely the information in our DNA is packed. Inside an area so tiny that it is only visible with a microscope, the DNA inside the nucleus of each human cell contains about 200 gigabytes of information. This DNA stores more information in a smaller space than any other substance as yet known to man. This information is one of the greatest evidences that living things didn’t evolve from simpler organisms. In fact the only place we know of where this kind of sophisticated information originates is in a mind.

One type of information found in our DNA is the information needed to develop baby boys and baby girls. Normally, a boy has one X and one Y chromosome while a girl has two X chromosomes. These chromosomes contain “Master Control Genes” that control the development of the characteristics that show maleness or

femaleness. During development of a boy, because every cell and every organ in his body is influenced by his “male genes,” it is not too much to say that every cell in his body is male. Similarly for girls, every cell is female, fine-tuned to coordinate with other cells.

In recent years the discussion of transgenderism has come to occupy many conversations. People who call themselves transgender believe themselves to be the opposite sex of their birth. Unfortunately, it is becoming more common for those who believe they are transgender to have surgery or hormone treatment to provide the appearance of sexual characteristics that they cannot naturally have on their own.

There are two problems with this scenario. One is spiritual; the other is physical. The physical problem arises in that after a person has been born male or female, surgery and hormonal therapy cannot actually change his or her gender. This was determined at the moment of fertilization. The program that unfolds over nine months merely reveals what already exists in the pre-written information of the DNA. Hormonal therapy can make a man look more feminine, as can surgery, but it can’t change his genes, or his brain that previously developed as male.

The spiritual problem stems from a lack of trust in God’s Word which tells us that God was intimately involved in our lives knitting us together as we were formed so that we are not accidentally male or female. (Psalm 139) Being created male or female is real; transgender identity is imaginary.

We must lovingly and truthfully deal with those who are self-deceived and misled by Satan into believing that they are transgender. What they need more than anything is not a change of appearance but a change of heart. This cannot be accomplished on their own. They need the same grace and persuasion by the Holy Spirit that we and all people need. Thankfully, the same God Who created human beings male and female also created a way to redeem them. That way was to have His own Son bear our sins in His own body on the cross, so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life. He is uniquely capable of bringing wholeness to people who are suffering under the misbelief of being transgender.

Dr. Doyle Holbird is professor of biology at Bethany Lutheran College.

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