

# Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me? Transgender People, Gender and Sex

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## **READING FROM JOHN 14: 2-14**

*“In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going”. Thomas, said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”*

Philip said to him, *“Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”* Jesus said to him, *“Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.*

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it”.*

## **REFLECTION**

[Video](#)

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of November, each year during the Transgender Day of Remembrance we remember those transgender people who have died at the hands of others, or who have taken their own lives because of the discrimination they face

In John 14 verses 2-14, where Jesus says: *“In my Father’s house are many rooms”*, Philip said to Jesus, *“Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”* To be shown does not necessarily mean to see. Jesus tells us there are many rooms, but too often doors are shut to keep people out. To see, means to break through the barriers caused by ignorance, suspicion, rejection, and hate.

So, what have these barriers created? In the United Kingdom transphobic hate crime reports have quadrupled over the past five years. The number of transgender hate

crimes recorded by police forces in England, Scotland and Wales rose by 81% between 2016 and 2019<sup>1</sup>. The crime statistics show that there was an increase in criminal activity of 25% in 2019... and it continues.

In October 2020, an article in the Daily Telegraph reported that hate crimes topped more than 100,000 for the first time. It also noted that police now investigate seven transphobic crimes a day and that offences have hit a record high. Transgender people in the United Kingdom currently have it harder than most. And why?

Then how do we answer that question? A major reason for this is because there are disputes about the origins of these conditions. One group, mainly from the feminist movements argue that it is a paraphilia. This term and their arguments identify it as a disruption to the normal path of development which is driven by sublimated sexual motivations. The other group, which represents a consensus view of the professional medical institutions, argue that it is a personality variation, which is within the normal range of human development. Depending on which identification you choose, the methods of management are almost opposite to one another.

So, what are the consequences? One of these sides dismisses gender identity as a purely social construct, the other places it at the heart of the personality that is created. On one side the transgender person is presented as the perpetrator: on the other that person becomes the sufferer instead. What is seen as compassion by one side is automatically condemned as coercion by the other. It is these differences which provide the background for what has become a toxic dispute.

And what does the Gospel tell us about these disputes? In the Gospel of John, Thomas, said to Jesus: *"Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"*. When Philip said to Jesus, *"Lord, show us the Father"*, he was asking for Jesus to prove his statement, but Jesus did not provide it, instead he described journeys people make. Thus when Jesus responded by saying: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life"* he was telling them not to rely on the sort of evidence that Philip wanted, but follow the example of how he lived his life, and how other people live their lives. He backed this statement up by saying: *"Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves"*

Far too often we do not even try to see or listen to what people say and do, Instead we spend much of our time trying to manipulate science and theology and distort our reporting of how people behave to conform to the agendas and viewpoints that our particular approach or diagnosis dictates. Of course, all viewpoints must be objectively analysed and truthfully examined, most notably in every argument which claims to use science to justify its position.

But when one side attacks the other with accusations of malpractice, and dismisses it with the statement that: *"Their teaching is backed by no credible science but has been adopted by government, the NHS, schools, and therapists"*, and when the other side responds in equal measure, or when any group refuses to consider even the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48756370>

possibility of moving from its entrenched theological stance, then regardless of your viewpoint, or the justice of your position, the capacity for listening is destroyed<sup>2</sup>.

This is not the only challenge to be met. All lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people disrupt the accepted order of any society where gender complementary is socially and legally enforced. This is regardless of the morality of their acts. Today and throughout history, sexual abuse is and has been horrendous. For historical reasons, a sexual motive has always been presumed, but listening to the experiences of gender and sexually variant people shows that the driving forces behind them are those of love and identity instead.

So, people do disrupt gender and sexuality for many reasons. Motives may be misjudged, and many describe the current plight of transgender people as being equivalent to that of the gay rights movement in the 1980s and 1990s. Today we know this to be about love or identity, not dissolution and sex. In the well-known passage in Galatians 3:28, Paul said *“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”*.

For everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Thus without exception, all people, who seek live their lives in ways that fulfil the love of Christ... and that welcome includes, transgender, transsexual, lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people... who seek to express their identities within roles that are true to themselves, and seeks to fulfil the Gospel message must be fully accepted in their own right... If we are truly to build the house of many rooms that Jesus refers to, we must listen and hear from each other with love and respect.

Sadly, and too often, instead of seeking to listen, we use what we hear about each other to condemn them. Listening becomes more difficult if the condemnations become too great, and it may be made impossible if criminalisation occurs. And that is still the position in many countries. To listen and enter with an open mind is all that is asked.

Jesus was despised and rejected because he broke the mould. Today, we remember the many deaths that have been caused by our failures to listen. It is transgender people who suffer greatly in these gender wars. As we now encounter the list of names being screened/read out of those who have been murdered because they have sought to live in ways which are true to their own identities, let us resolve to go forward and make this house of Jesus a home where love can dwell, a house where all are welcomed, and a house which shines with the Love of Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> For my own research in these areas see: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/bibliography.htm>