

*Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture*

Available June 2015

\$20, 208 pages, paperback

978-0-8308-2859-3

## The Many Unanswered Questions of Gender Identity

In the fog of the culture war, complex issues like gender dysphoria are reduced to slogans and sound bites. And while the war rages over language, institutions and political allegiances, transgender individuals are the ones who end up being the casualties. An expert on human sexuality, Mark Yarhouse offers a Christian perspective of transgender identity that avoids simplistic answers, engages the latest research and listens to people's stories.

In *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, Yarhouse studies and scrutinizes topics and questions like:

- What does it mean to have gender dysphoria?
- Why did the DSM-5 shift its terminology from gender identity disorder to gender dysphoria?
- What's the difference between sex, gender and gender role?
- What's the difference between gender dysphoria and transgender?
- When a child is gender dysphoric, how should parents respond?
- Can a person be transgender and not gender dysphoric?
- What are the problems with having rigid categories for gender?
- In what ways does the Bible speak to the issue of gender dysphoria? Why is sociocultural context so important when evaluating this question?
- Why is it important to understand that being human means experiencing a desire for wholeness? How does this relate to gender dysphoria?
- Why should Christians offer a "reasoned response . . . in a spirit of mutual respect and a pastoral heart of compassion" to people struggling with gender dysphoria? Why are knee-jerk reactions so problematic for the church?
- What are the three frameworks for understanding gender identity concerns (integrity, disability, diversity) and how do they differ? Why would you recommend an integrated framework?
- Why is it important to note that we do not know what causes gender dysphoria?
- Why would you emphasize that experiencing gender dysphoria is likely not a choice someone makes?
- Why is diagnosing gender dysphoria in childhood a challenge?
- What are the different ways in which gender dysphoria can be "prevented" and "treated"?

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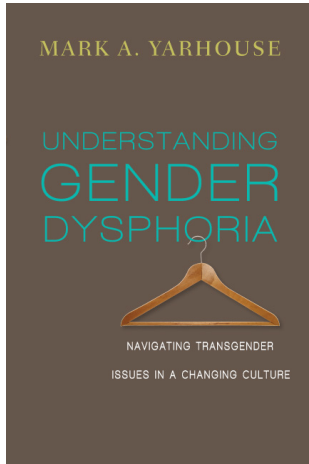
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## “An Exquisite Gift of Understanding”

“This work is a tour de force. With his unique combination of Christian evangelical theological sophistication, clinical sensitivity and compassion, and scientific acumen and mastery, Yarhouse establishes in this compelling book why he is the most important voice reflecting on the complex challenges of sexuality today.”

— **Stanton L. Jones**, provost and professor of psychology, Wheaton College

“I deeply respect the work that Mark Yarhouse has done in this field and have benefited greatly from his thinking.”

— **Bill Hybels**, senior pastor, Willow Creek Community Church

“*Understanding Gender Dysphoria* is a deeply practical and timely book. Many of the variables surrounding the transgender community are nuanced and intense, yet completely unknown to the evangelical world. Mark provides helpful working knowledge of key terms, concepts and relevant issues. And with humility and great care he directly addresses how individual Christians and the broader evangelical church can respond. Although this book is academic in nature, it should be required reading for all church leadership. This is my new go-to book for the Marin Foundation’s work with evangelicals on the topic. Mark’s research must be paid attention to.”

— **Andrew Marin**, author of *Love Is an Orientation*

“This book is a must read for pastors, educators and those who want to engage the cultural discussion around human sexuality. Yarhouse is a first-rate scholar, educator and therapist who also loves Jesus and Scripture. He deeply cares for people and the church. His approach to this complex topic is not to tell the reader what to think, but to teach the reader, who then can wisely discern how to apply the information to their particular context. This book educates so that people can lead wisely, pastor compassionately and build community that lives out a great commandment to love God and others.”

— **Shirley V. Hoogstra**, president, Council for Christian Colleges & Universities

“It’s hard to keep up with current words and acronyms for sexuality and gender, much less understand what they really mean. Even more challenging is evaluating and engaging these issues from a Christian perspective. Thank God – literally and truly – for Dr. Mark Yarhouse! Yarhouse articulates a goal many Christians will quickly claim as their own: to rise above political and ideological battles to provide ministry, pastoral support and compassionate care to all persons. Yarhouse helps us begin to put this ideal into practice by explaining gender dysphoria, transgender, and gender normativity and non-normativity, based on stories, professional counseling experience and research, some conducted by him and his

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# ENDORSEMENTS

**Mark Yarhouse** (PsyD, Wheaton College) is the Hughes Endowed Chair and professor of psychology at Regent University where he directs the Institute for the Study of Sexual Identity and is a core faculty member in the doctoral program in clinical psychology. A licensed clinical psychologist, he practices privately in the Virginia Beach area, providing individual, couples, family and group counseling. Yarhouse has published over eighty peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters and is author or coauthor of several books, including *Ex-Gays? A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation*, *Modern Psychopathologies*, *Understanding Sexual Identity: A Resource for Youth Ministers*, *Sexuality and Sex Therapy* and *Sexuality and Sex Therapy*. He serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Psychology and Theology* and *Christian Counseling Today* and has served as an ad hoc reviewer with *Journal of Homosexuality*.

graduate students. He treats all persons equally, asking of us all, 'How does gender permeate our lives – and how should it?' His voice is clear and serious, his perspective well-informed and studious, and his heart pastoral and concerned for the well-being of individual persons, especially those who seek support and community within Christian churches. If you've wondered how Christians and churches can support people with gender dysphoria who are seeking a meaningful story, lifeway and community, read this book!"

— **Jenell Paris**, professor of anthropology, Messiah College

"Mark Yarhouse has written yet another important contribution to the church's discussion about LGBTQ issues, this time focusing specifically on questions related to transgender people. This book is informed by studious attention to the Bible, sound theological reasoning and deep psychological wisdom, all of which is sifted through a compassionate heart that wants to see people experience the deep love of Christ. This book is a must read for any Christian who wants to think Christianly about what it means to be transgender. Mark's pastoral posture and commitment to biblical truth is a model for every evangelical Christian."

— **Preston M. Sprinkle**, vice president, Eternity Bible College Boise extension

"Speaking as a pastor to church leaders, I enthusiastically commend my friend Dr. Mark Yarhouse for his unflinching courage, heartfelt compassion, biblical loyalty and rigorous scholarship in addressing the painfully complex and controversial issue of gender dysphoria. This book is an exquisite gift of understanding that I believe is absolutely essential to the church's crafting of ministry to hurting people that reflects the grace and love of Jesus. Unwrap and use it as soon as possible!"

— **Andrew McQuitty**, author of *Notes from the Valley: A Spiritual Cancer Travelogue*