

Fluid Family: Redemptive Responses When Family Members Identify as Transgender

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1. Creation: God's intent for gender
 - a. God established two genders generally in creation: male and female (Gen 1:27)
 - b. God particularly assigns a gender to each person he has made (Ps 139:13–16)

2. Fall: sin and its effects on gender and identity
 - a. We search for identity and meaning in gender
 - i. We are meaning-makers
 - ii. We are worshipers
 - iii. Identity for us seems often more accessible and controllable in the created rather than in the Creator (Rom 1:19–25)
 - b. Why would someone struggle with transgender?
 - i. The Tree Model
 - c. Gender confusion and gender dysphoria are ways to try to find identity and meaning in the midst of adverse circumstances
 - i. Jim
 - ii. Jill
 - d. Transgender statistics

3. Redemption: our only true identity and meaning come through relationship with God through Jesus Christ
 - a. Isaiah 55:1–3
 - b. Romans 12:1–2
 - c. 2 Corinthians 5:14–17
 - d. Ephesians 4:17–24

4. Restoration: growth in faith and repentance
 - a. What growth in faith and repentance might look like for a gender struggler
 - i. It's a process, perhaps a lifelong one

- ii. Repentance is a twofold process (Rom 2:4)
 - 1. Turning toward God
 - 2. Turning from sinful patterns of thought, behavior, and identity
 - iii. Gradual turning away from finding identity and comfort in changing of flexing gender, and turning toward God for identity and comfort
 - iv. Turning from patterns of behavior related to gender change or flexing
 - v. Avoiding relationships, situations, and venues that might lead to temptation to sin
 - vi. Growth in faith and repentance always involves community
- b. How to help a family member who struggles with gender or identifies as transgender
- i. How family members can help
 - 1. Actively communicate your love to your family member
 - 2. Actively talk about God's love with your family member, and how God's love is meant to transform sinful, distorted worldviews and behavior (Rom 12:1–2; Eph 4:11–16; Titus 2:11–14)
 - 3. Talk with your family member about his or her struggle or transgender identity, but don't make it the subject of every conversation
 - 4. Talk about your own disappointment, fear, and need to process your family member's disclosure
 - 5. Don't make proof of repentance or repudiation of gender struggle a criterion for your love, or inclusion in the family (but, communicate clearly that unrepentant sin must have consequences)
 - 6. Invite your family member to participate in mainstream family activities, as is wise and God-honoring
 - 7. Purposefully enter your family member's world and ask questions to understand the development of the gender struggle and/or transgender identity
 - 8. Prayerfully exercise patience, compassion, and self-control, realizing authentic change will be a process (and that you, yourself, are a sinner in need of the same grace)

9. Set behavioral boundaries meant to protect your family and communicate that sin is destructive
 10. Lovingly live out relational consequences that are wise and God-honoring, always intended to turn your family member to God, rather than to punish for failure to comply with outward repentance
- ii. How the church can help
1. Actively provide authentic community that affirms the blessing of relationship and other-care
 2. Prayer
 3. Discipleship to help the struggler begin to see the inherent goodness of God, and the power of God at work in them to heal and transform (Eph 1:16–21)
 4. Mentoring relationships to help strugglers grow in their practical knowledge of how diversity in expressions of male and female can be lived out in ways that glorify God (Titus 2:2–8)
 5. Exercising discipline for those who resist repentance, with prayer that discipline would turn the heart of the struggler toward repentance
- iii. Finding help for yourself
1. You need time to process this. Your family member has already been processing it for years.
 2. Prayerfully find two or three trusted friends to help you process your situation
 3. Ask your pastor, trusted elders, or other leaders in your church to pray with you and help you process your experience of these circumstances
 4. Appropriately grieve your family member's decision or struggle, and how it impacts you
 5. Grieve your inability to change your family member's decisions, worldview, or heart

6. Be willing to reach out to a trusted counselor for help in processing your fears and emotions
7. Realize that the Lord is using your own difficult circumstances to change your own heart through this process, as well. Pray for the humility to be changed by him, and to see his love in the process

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