

“Supporting Parents Whose Adult Child Identifies as Transgender”

Some parents of adult children who identify as transgender are silently suffering and experiencing intense bewilderment, hurt, and grief. Worries may consume them, and if their secret became known in their faith community, their parenting would be analyzed, their family would be dissected, and the sincerity of their faith questioned. I’ve had those feelings as one of my adult children transitioned over three years ago. I was silent for three years – yet the whole time, I felt alone, broken-hearted, conflicted, dejected, and despondent. The longer I suffered in silence, the more unrelenting the pain. Love, laughter, and every good thing from the Father seemed distant.

We, the faith community, have an unbelievable opportunity to offer parents empathy, compassion, and love, *just like Jesus would*. Families need your prayers and your tender-heartedness, *not your distance*.

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (NIV, 2011, Gal. 6:2).

What the faith community can do to support parents whose adult child identifies as transgender:

- Pray for them.
- Love and care for their hearts.
- *Wait* until they request to be added to the prayer chain before adding them.
- Practice compassion. Know that learning and understanding gender identity does not necessarily equate with approval.
- Stifle your recommendations until you’ve earned the right to share them.
- It’s paramount that adult children who identify as transgender do not feel forced to abandon their love of God due to rejection from their families or their faith community.
- Help parents actively work through their devastation. Remind them that their adult child is alive and made in the perfect image of God.
-

“Supporting Parents Whose Adult Child Identifies as Transgender”

- When you encounter or meet a transgender individual, embrace that you are meeting a child of our MOST HIGH GOD who is deserving of your respect and kindness.

Strengthen the parents you hold in your hearts by reciting Apostle Paul's prayer *“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches, he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen* (NIV, 2011, Eph. 3:14-21).

By Remi Smith, founder and CEO of Compassionate Caring Ministries, whose mission is "To bring compassion, love, and support to parents whose adult child identifies as transgender."