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newsletter

*"Let him who is without sin cast the First Stone"**And Jesus also said, "Go and sin no more." – John 8*

MINISTRIES

A Mother's Reflections on Her
Transitioning Son*By Grace A.*

My 34-year-old son was fifteen when he announced he would no longer go to church. He was sixteen when he went to live with his Father in another state. He was eighteen when he announced he was gay, and he was thirty-three when he told me he was embracing a female identity by taking hormone replacement therapy and transitioning from male to female.

We have had a loving relationship since he left my home at age sixteen. I think it has been easier in our relationship not to live near each other. He has lived the way he wants to, and I have not had to see his lifestyle "in my face" regularly. We see each other in person once or twice a year. I always go to him. He does not come to me. We text regularly, and when we talk over the phone, we always FaceTime.

When he was living as a gay man, I had all the feelings I list below but it was a situation that seemed clearer to me. I could grasp it better because he was still "my son," he was still "a man," he was still "the boy" I gave birth to and raised as a male.

Throughout our entire relationship, since he left home, I have never been able to say much about his lifestyle. I never felt like it was what God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit were directing me to do. I have been in his life as he has allowed me to be—on his terms. I have trusted God to do the work in him, reveal truth to him, reveal His love for him, and save him from the deception that the core of my heart and spirit knows enslaves him.

When he told me he was transitioning, my response was to tell him, "I don't know what to say right now except that I love you. I have always loved you, and I will always love you." I had noticed over months while looking at him when we talked via FaceTime that his features had softened, that something was different, but it had not occurred to me what he was doing.

After that first conversation, I began having nightmares as the realization of what he was doing to himself came crashing down on me. This is a small account of the emotions I have experienced.

Fear of what the hormones were doing to his body gripped me.

Concerns for his safety and well-being are constant.

Grief and the loss of the familiar relationship we had as mother and son were overwhelming. My son does not realize that mothers relate differently from mother to daughter than we do from mother to son and vice versa. No matter how he wants to

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Help! My Child Just Came Out as LGBTQ — How Do I Respond?

You want to keep the conversation open with your child as much as it is possible (Romans 12:18). Even though you have been confronted with a reality that may be against everything you raised your children to know, we can try to keep the relationship alive. Tensions will run high and everyone in the family will have strong, uncomfortable feelings they are trying to express.

As we work with parents, we find some of these points helpful in hopes of maintaining relationships. While our suggestions have more to do with stabilizing you in the situation you face with your children, we also offer some possible relational advice.

Your experience will also be different whether your child is still in your home and under your care or if they are adults and living away from your home and care.

1. **Ask their forgiveness if your first response was reactive.**

Parents often have an understandable but rough first response. Perhaps you were so caught off-guard that your fears and anger just poured out. Sometimes we think that, if we respond strongly, they will come to their senses and turn from their direction. You can come back from this! Many parents need to be reminded that this is a spiritual battle involving some deep deception that may have been developing for many years. It will feel much more like it is a flesh and blood battle of right and wrong. This is your child coming to you with what can feel like the worst news possible. Asking for forgiveness for overly emotional or bad responses can reopen the doors and help to heal wounds.

2. **Be as respectful and calm as you are able.**

Thank them for telling you how they are feeling. Acknowledge that it must have been difficult for them to share with you. Listen well. Ask caring questions. Tell them that you don't know what to feel or say but that you can reassure them you love them and care about what they are experiencing. Remember, it took a long time for them to approach you, and you can ask for time to respond, if necessary.

3. **Humble your hearts in prayer.**

Pray for your own heart first. Ask God to reveal your heart to you. Ask Him to use this situation with your prodigal to root out the same kinds of things in your heart (Romans 2:1-5). Ask Him to humble you and give you understanding. "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2). You can pray many kinds of prayers as you seek the Lord. "Lord, where is there pride in my heart?" "Lord, where am I not obeying You?" "Lord, why am I so angry at my child's decision?" "Lord, where am I struggling to trust You?" As you turn your prayer towards interceding for your prodigal, trust Him

to direct you and to make Himself known to you. Often, we try to twist God's arm into doing our will. Thank Him for how He's using this situation to draw you closer to Him. Thank Him for bringing that child into your life. Thank Him for His Word and His promises. Thank Him for His faithfulness, His comfort, and His restoration. Offer your fears to God and let Him work in you.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6).

4. **Take inventory of your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs.**

This is a healthy process for every parent. It is important to know what you believe and why you believe it. The thought of sexual sin or deception for your child would rightly produce strong feelings. You have been in a long, sacrificial relationship with your child who has just come out to you. Perhaps in the past, you have known your biblical values on sexual sin and broken humanity. Do you know how the Gospel impacts these beliefs? Are you clear about what you feel you already know? What are your fears? Does this produce shame in you? What about this invites you to feel anger? Take inventory, talk with God and safe loved ones about your discoveries. Can you find God's answers, comfort, and help in the Scriptures?

5. **Do not lean on your understanding.**

God is still writing your story and theirs. Remember, this is not your burden to fix the situation or their heart. Only God is the healer of the brokenhearted. "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me (the Messiah) because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners..." (Isaiah 61:1). Stand firm on the Word without compromise. This relationship is like a door that can be locked from either side. Keep the door open if they leave it open, but you cannot force their side of the door to be open. Having a relationship with them is good, and God can use that to reach them. But God can reach them



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change that fact, he is not a female. The way we relate to each other is not really changing. I realize this, but I do not think he sees that.

Grief and Loss of family acceptance. My family and even my husband (my son's stepfather) do not want anything to do with the situation. They do not want to see this process. They do not want to see him or see pictures. They will pray for him but minimally allow me to talk with them about it.

Grief and Loss of a Godly legacy for myself and my son. This means there will be no children for him and no grandchildren for me to nurture and love.

Anxiety about relating to him now and possibly saying something that would alienate him and destroy our relationship. He identifies as she/her now. Even after a year or more, I cannot refer to him as she/her. I will not be able to. There is a struggle to be true to my convictions without alienating him.

Anger at Satan for the lies he has trapped him in and so many others.

Anger at God for not yet rescuing him and for not removing the blinders from his eyes to see the truth.

Guilt and Anger at myself for not praying diligently enough for him and questioning what I did wrong as a parent when raising him.

Guilt and Fear that I might be "two-faced" if he (and others in his life who are so supportive of his lifestyle choices) knew the unwavering stand I have about this.

Frustration as (it appears) evil is winning, and that there has been a shift in what is considered "normal" in society.

Pressure from him to accept the situation. "Be happy, you now have a daughter." But for me, I am grieving the death of my son.

Pressure to take a stand one way or the other. To either accept and embrace this transition or completely reject it.

Trust and Hope in God to redeem the situation, reveal the truth to him, save him, and restore him. I must release this daily to God and know that He is working even though I cannot yet see it. It is the only way for me to have peace and to have rest. I stand on biblical scriptures to keep my hope alive. I am seeing a counselor



to help with tools to process, and I have the support of a group of friends with whom I can talk openly and who pray with me for my son.

FSM Staff Comments: We do come alongside the many parents who are in the same situation that Grace is in with her adult child. The "pressure" she mentions to take a stand one way, or the other is not only coming from within, but many parents are facing this pressure as their loved ones have given them an ultimatum—"Accept the entire package of me without question or you will lose me forever!" Shocking stuff. Parents who are facing this trans conversation already feel that they are losing their children. Godly, compassionate, affectionate mothers and fathers face these feelings and many others under the fear of receiving the ultimatum. See our resources for parents elsewhere in this issue.

FSM

Some Trans Q&A Responses

What is transgender?

Though this category is still in a state of continual change and redefinition we will offer the following: *Transgender* is an umbrella term that is used to describe anyone whose inner sense of gender is, to varying degrees, not in agreement with the biological reality of their body. This is about perception and feelings. We also acknowledge that the discussion of this topic is complicated. There are also other terms that do not fall under the same umbrella with *transgender*, e.g. cross-dressing, intersex, Xenogender, etc.

If males and females are made in God's image, does that mean that God is both male and female?

We will briefly answer this huge question by laying some foundation. God is an invisible (1 Timothy 1:17), non-physical Person (John 4:24). God does not have the limitations of a physical being (Job 11:7-10) or frail human characteristics as we do (Numbers 23:19). Though the Bible often uses physical descriptions to describe His spirit-being, that is for our understanding. Scripture also tells us that the physical creation and the humanity of mankind reveal things about who God is (Romans 1:18-20). In short, God is neither male nor female. He is spirit.

Joseph – "There are things about God that we cannot fully know; however, I'd say that God is the fullest expression of all

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of masculinity and femininity. When He created mankind, he made male and female two distinct genders but having varied relational and emotional capacities of masculine and feminine traits. Thus, each of us reflects God in some beautiful and unique way!"

Jim - Nowhere in scripture does it say or indicate that God is both male and female. Scripture fully describes God using male pronouns and words such as Father and the Lord God, all have masculine foundations. When the Son came to Earth, he came in a bodily form as a male."



God created humanity in His image (Genesis 1:27). Psalm 8 declares,

⁴"what are mere mortals that you should think about them,
human beings that you should care for them?"

⁵Yet you made them only a little lower than God^{al}
and crowned them^{al} with glory and honor.

⁶You gave them charge of everything you made,
putting all things under their authority—" (vs. 4-6 NLT).

Wow! What a glorious description of humans! We carry about in our human form something that is different than all the rest of creation. We are image bearers. Created in His image, God created a binary expression of either male or female. We are equally carrying God's divine image, and we also carry His image together. One gender is not more desirable than the other. One is not better than the other. This does not mean that male and female are the same with the same functions. Male and female are not interchangeable. Instead, male and female are gloriously different. That matters, and that is good. Patricia Weerakoon in her book, *The Gender Revolution* stated, "Difference in form and function does not mean difference in value and worth." We wholeheartedly agree.

Laura Beth – "Scientists have discovered over 6,500 biological differences between men and women, and nearly every part of the body has differences in the design that point to a binary creation of two distinct sexes. Every part of the body is designed for the roles that God gave us and to be a witness of those characteristics of God He displays differently in male and in female. If male and female design was that important to God, then we must believe that He has reasons far above what we are able to understand.

I have a child who has been transitioning. Recently they asked us to use their trans name and asked us to use new pronouns. What should we do?

Jim - In the interest of being a person known for the truth, I'd recommend a very kind, but firm response based off what one knows to be the truth. "I've known you all of your life, and because of my love for you, I cannot agree to go against what I know to be true."

Linda Seiler from her book, *Transformation*, writes: "Under no circumstances would I affirm my child in a false identity contrary to God's design. However, I need wisdom from the Holy Spirit as to how to navigate that conversation" (p. 261-262). Please see the featured mother's testimony in this issue.

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Staff

For more information about each staff member, including links to any blogs, please visit firststone.org/staff.



Laura Leigh Stanlake
Ministry Director



Jim Farrington
Men's Minister



Joseph Thiessen
Office Administrator



Bronwyn Welch
Women's Minister - Intern

without you. God wants you to be a witness of your faith and that His commandments are good and trustworthy. The temptation to compromise may tell your child that God is not good, that He is holding out, and it's better to determine your own morality. "For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does" (Psalm 33:4).

6. Mourn the Grief.

Get the grief out! Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). Find a safe place to process with others, such as a support group for parents of LGBT prodigals. Express your grief over what has happened. Some find in the Psalms expressions that echo what they feel. Confess to God where you may have had expectations and beliefs that God had not promised. God did not promise your child would never make bad decisions or suffer brokenness in their lives. He did not promise you would have an easy, perfect relationship. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). Learn to know God in this painful place. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

7. Redirect your heart back to God.

The psalmists often cried out to God about their suffering and persecution, and the Psalms record this process of directing the heart back to God amid suffering. They proclaimed God's salvation and faithfulness and placed their hope in God even before they saw God's answer. Direct your heart towards God. Proclaim His promises over you. Proclaim His goodness and faithfulness. Jeremiah did this as he poured out his anguish before God. While lamenting what he believed God had done to him (Lamentations 3:1-18), he suddenly made a turn. "Remember me," he cried! "Remember my bitterness." Then he proclaimed, "Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me. This I recall to mind; therefore, I have hope. The Lord's lovingkindness indeed never ceases. His compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness! The Lord is my portion. Therefore, I have hope in Him" (Lamentations 3:20-24).

8. Make a list of scripture promises you can cling to.

Memorize some of them. Remind yourself of what He has done for you in the past and how He has not failed

you. Tell others of His goodness and what He's doing for you and how He's teaching you and changing you in the process. Let your trial be a testimony to others. "Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises. In You our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and You delivered them. To You they cried out and were saved; in You, they trusted and were not put to shame" (Psalm 22:3-5). Memorize verses about God's virtues like Isaiah 40:27-31 or Psalm 61:1-3.

9. Examine your heart. Have you made this relationship an idol?

Don't allow this or any trial in your life to rule over your mind. We must not make our relationship with God revolve around another person, including our children. That is idolatry. What is your hope based on? Is your hope in a particular outcome, or is your hope set on eternal things, of

the coming kingdom of Christ? "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). Ask God what He wants you to be doing. Perhaps He is using this situation to refocus your spiritual life. Maybe He wants to use you to reach other hurting, broken people. Don't sit on the sidelines, ask God to use your pain to reach others. "We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:3).



10. Give yourself grace as you wade through the complicated emotions and find support.

Remember, you are not going to solve this overnight. You will NOT have one conversation (or many) and immediately change their mind, especially if they have been thinking about these things for a long time. Be patient and wait for the Holy Spirit's timing. "A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense" (Proverbs 19:11). "Through patience, a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone" (Proverbs 25:15) "The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride" (Ecclesiastes 7:8).

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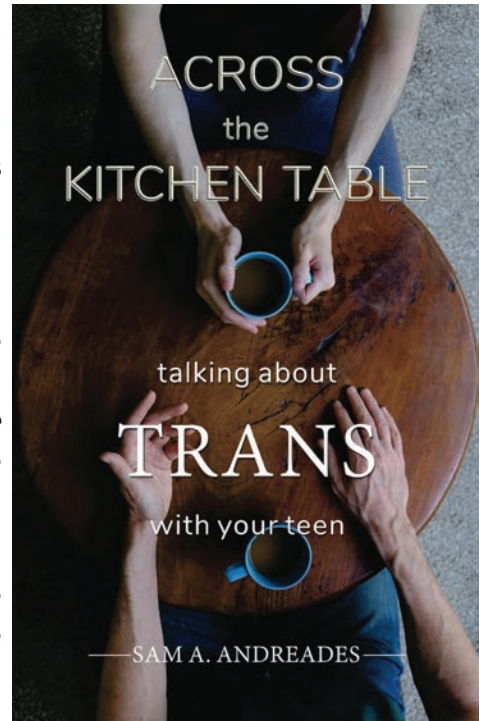
Book Recommendation

Across the Kitchen Table: Talking About TRANS with Your Teen by Sam A. Andreades

We have been so thrilled with this new resource published by HarvestUSA! Though we have recognized for several years that the conversation about trans was surging ahead at astonishing speed, we were also struggling to keep up. Our parents' support group and ministry inbox were becoming burdened with the trans conversation.

Late last year, we ordered this book, and we began to devour the contents. The author has given us history, language, definition, and most importantly, a pastoral response. This is not a book for parents of teens only. *Across the Kitchen Table* will be helpful for church leadership, prayer and deliverance teams, and anyone else who wants to understand just how to engage in this difficult conversation.

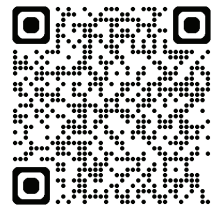
This work is full of compassion and truth. He holds together the beauty of design while addressing our disordered desires. Though this is spiritual warfare, there is a way to respond with compassion and uncompromised truth. We can engage the difficult questions of identity, feelings, design, deception, and societal pressure with some grace and sanity. *by Laura Leigh Stanlake, Ministry Director*



Recommended Resources on Gender Dysphoria (Trans)

Check out our newest page containing resources on Gender Dysphoria.

www.firststone.org/gender-dysphoria



Recommended Resources for Parents of LGBTQ+ Prodigals

Podcast

The Bridge Between Us podcast, Melinda Patrick -The Bridge Between Us Podcast discusses how to love our child well while not compromising Truth.

Support Groups

- *Be Steadfast* parents' group www.firststone.org/parents-group
 - In Person - Third Fridays from 7:00-9:30 p.m. in the Oklahoma City Metro
 - Online - First Mondays from 7:00-8:30 p.m. CDT for people **outside** of OKC.
- *Oasis Online* offered by Desert Stream Ministries www.desertstream.org/oasis First Thursday of every month, 7-8:30 PM CDT

Books

- *The Prodigal Prayer Guide* by Laura Perry, Francine Perry, and Carolyn Morgan
- *Parenting Prodigals* by Phil Waldrep
- *Reaching Your Prodigal: What Did I Do Wrong? What Do I Do Now?* by Phil Waldrep
- *Until Your Prodigal Comes Home: Encouragement Along the Way* by Irene Bennett
- *When I Lay My Isaac Down* by Carol Kent

Support Groups

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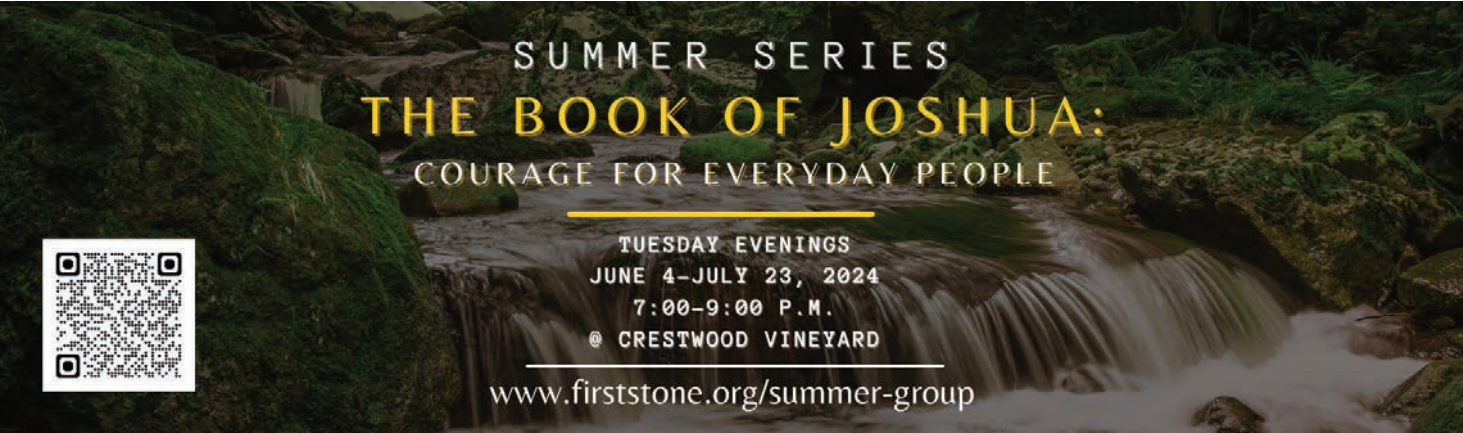
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