



10 WAYS TO LOVE YOUR TRANSGENDER NEIGHBOR

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On Tuesday, the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution “On Transgender Identity” that calls for Christians to “love our transgender neighbors” and to “seek their good always.” But what does that look like in practical terms? In light of that question, I thought it might be useful to post some reflections on how we might love our transgender neighbors. I’m sure there is more that might be added to such a list, but here are ten ways to love your transgender neighbor.

1. BE A FRIEND

And by that, I mean be a real friend. Don’t make changing them a condition of your friendship.

“A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity” (Prov. 17:17).

2. LISTEN

Your transgender neighbor may have a story to tell, and you need to hear it. Not just for their sake, but for yours. There’s nothing better to wipe away erroneous caricatures than to listen to someone else’s story. Listening doesn’t equal submitting to an unbiblical ideology. It just means that you care and are open to learning.

“He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him” (Prov. 18:13).

3. FEEL COMPASSION

Understand that your transgender neighbor often feels distress over the conflict between their biological sex and their perceived gender identity. There can be a real sense of alienation that they feel from their own body. For some, the experience is quite agonizing. How would you feel if you had to walk a mile in their shoes? We all experience some measure of brokenness due to the fallenness of creation. So we too know what it means to groan (Rom. 8:23). Of all people, that ought to summon forth a compassionate response to our transgender neighbors.

“And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col. 3:12).

4. SHARE THE GOSPEL

The gospel is good news for sinners. It is the true story about a Creator God who loves sinners and who has made a way to reconcile them to Himself through the death and resurrection of His own Son. It's the best news in the world. How could we possibly withhold that from any friend?

"Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

5. SPEAK THE TRUTH

Friends are candid about differences. You don't have to be mean, angry, or haughty to speak truthfully. You can do it in a way that is winsome and that shows concern but does not disdain. In short, you can speak the truth in love.

"But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

6. BE CANDID ABOUT DIFFERENCES

This is a necessary corollary to speaking the truth. A true friend will always find a way to communicate differences that matter. A friendship that glosses over such things can degenerate into flattery and superficiality. Sometimes the truth about God's word brings a confrontation no matter how nice and compassionate you try to be in delivering it. But don't let the fear of confrontation keep you from being candid.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy" (Prov. 27:6).

7. OPPOSE BULLYING

Christians must lead the charge to condemn acts of abuse or bullying committed against our transgender neighbors. Take your stand with the oppressed. Speak up for them. Do it even if it costs you social capital or risks subjecting yourself to the same bullying. This is the kind of sacrificial love that bears witness to the way Christ has loved us.

"My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent. If they say, 'Come with us, Let us lie in wait for blood, Let us ambush the innocent without cause...' My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path, For their feet run to evil, And they hasten to shed blood" (Prov. 1:10-16).

8. RECEIVE YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

We should befriend our transgender neighbors even if they are not Christians. But some of them will repent of their sin, trust Christ, and become Christians. When they do, be prepared

to rejoice and to receive them with open arms as brothers and sisters in Christ. Make sure they know that they are received as full members into the body of Christ.

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).

9. STRENGTHEN YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Some new converts may experience a complete deliverance from the alienation that they feel from their own bodies. Others may continue to struggle. Be prepared to walk with them and to strengthen them for what may be a very difficult obedience. God has given them everything that they need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3), and a part of God’s provision for them is your friendship and encouragement.

“But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13)

10. PRAY

The Devil wants to destroy. Jesus wants to save (John 10:10). Pray for your transgender neighbor that Jesus might have his way. In his own prayer for wayward Peter, Jesus modelled how we might intercede:

“Behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail” (Luke 22:31-32).