

Struggling with Gender Identity is Not a Sin LGBTQ Community Needs to See the Love of God

GREENVILLE, S.C. — At a time when discrimination and hate are running rampant, believers must stop lashing out in judgment and begin a dialogue of compassion, acceptance and love for those struggling with gender identity according to author Gerri Edwards. Edward's son Ryan struggled with gender identity before passing away in 2016. She chronicles their story in her upcoming book, "Mercy Triumphs Over Judgment."

Edwards believes this should be Christians' time to shine. "Jesus wasn't afraid of the unlovable, untouchable or misunderstood. Christ led by example, showing that we are called to love, not to judge. We forget that not extending a giving, loving hand to one who is hurting is a sin as well and can be very damaging," she said. A recent study found LGB youth were five times more apt to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts. She cites another study that found that more than half of all transgenders in America face bullying at school and harassment at work. A whopping 63 to 78 percent suffered from physical or sexual violence.

While some Christians seem quick to show compassion for those struggling with other issues, the LGBTQ community is often shunned, Edwards believes. "The act of homosexuality is a sin. It is very clear in the Bible. Here's where we get it wrong: An adulterous affair is no different than the act of homosexuality to God. Yet, Christians are often more accepting of the adulterer than the homosexual."

Our culture is to blame according to Edwards. "Society labels you when you are different or don't go along with the norm. Those who struggle with gender identity are tempted by the cultural message that you must seek validation from society and not God. They need to realize that nothing will validate them until they accept that their identity comes from Christ and the power of what He did for them on that cross."

Edwards points out that struggling with gender identity doesn't diminish a person's value. "God has used every strange and odd character He could find on the earth for His purpose. What makes you think He is going to use what is familiar? There are so many people, young and old, who are hurting because no one has accepted them for who they are."

If you have a friend or family member who is struggling with gender identity, take heart Edwards says. "Surrender your expectations and give it to God. Love them just the way they are. They need your love and support because the world is eating them up. You don't need to have all the answers. That is God's job, not ours. You don't have to understand everything, you just need to walk in His ways. Our identity is in Christ. Once we begin to pursue understanding, I believe God can get in there and change hearts and minds," she said.