



A Monthly E-Newsletter For CenterPeace Parents Volume 13 June 2022

LGBTQ+ Pride Month: Opposing Shame, Secrecy, and Isolation

By Sally Gary

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On the surface, I have nothing in common with the global celebration of LGBTQ+ Pride. Images of Pride that I've seen over the years haven't necessarily depicted me or my experience as a gay woman, at least not on the outside.

But let's be clear – these images that have formed much of what we think when we hear about “Pride,” about it being nothing but a debauched, lascivious orgy of sordid folk who have no reverence for God – don't show us the full picture of Pride. Because I have friends who have gone to Pride for years, with their families and with people from their churches. They don't fit the image I have stuck in my head. Here's what the national celebration of LGBTQ+ Pride is really about.

Pride is about making a 180 degree pendulum swing away from shame. Shame that has been heaped on wrongly, vehemently, lethally, for generations. Pride today is about recognizing that the days of secrecy and isolation because of a difference in our sexuality are over. It's about being able to hold our heads up with pride – as opposed to shame – for who we are. In contrast, it's about celebrating who we are as people, as a community that has long been ostracized and rejected by the very places who were supposed to love us the most – our families and churches.

Sometimes, when you haven't heard the words, “I'm proud of you,” just for being you... it takes a whole month of parades and people around the world recognizing you to even begin to make up for the loss.

Everyone reacts differently to the pain of being unwanted and left out. The revelry, the over-the-top flamboyance of the parades that is more readily portrayed is a response to the pain. It's a 180-degree pendulum swing from being ignored and bullied, cast out and abused. From the agonizing pain of always feeling less than around those most dear, because of something you didn't choose and can't make go away.

Does Pride represent all of us? In a way, yes. In the sense that all of us have experienced the pain mentioned above. Most of us, though, will never don a rainbow thong and climb atop a float gliding down Main Street. We won't be part of the most outlandish portraits of Pride that are most often captured by the media. The vast majority of us simply want to live our lives, content to be known and loved in our communities, worshipping in our churches, experiencing the joys and sorrows of creating families, and contributing to the well-being of society, without making a whole lot of racket. But we want to feel proud of who we are and where we come from, just like everyone else. And sometimes, when you haven't heard the words, “I'm proud of you,” just for being you – from the ones you're supposed to hear it from the most – it takes a whole month of parades and worldwide recognition for you to even begin to make up for the loss.

So if you're wanting to know what to think about Pride, ask your LGBTQ+ child what it means to them. Then tell them that you're proud of them for being your lesbian or gay or trans or queer child (however they describe themselves), for making it through all the extra struggle that comes with being different in a world that often doesn't understand. Ask them if and how they want to celebrate Pride. And then join them in that celebration.

Nourish Your Faith

By Chris Albrock



AWESOMELY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

David finds a reason for praise in a place we're often hesitant to look: within himself.

"I will give thanks to You, because I am awesomely and wonderfully made." (Ps. 139:14 NASB).

David was led to joy and gratitude because he saw something awesome and wonderful about himself. Often, because of harmful circumstances that have happened, or hurtful things others have done, or heinous mistakes we've made, we feel bad about ourselves. We question and critique our bodies, our performance, our worth and our existence. We sometimes only see what appears to be awful about ourselves. But David finds joy and gratitude in noticing what is awesome and wonderful about himself.

I invite you to close your eyes. Now, consider one of two perspectives about yourself: either that of a good friend, or your own perspective that would come if you adopted a positive and compassionate view of yourself.

With either perspective in mind, complete this statement: "Because I am _____, OR because I can do _____, I know I am awesomely and wonderfully made." Take time to fill in those blanks with multiple things. Keep your list going until you can't think of anything else. Now, with that list in mind, give thanks to God. Say aloud: "I give thanks to you God, because I am awesomely and wonderfully made."

Leave this space with the joy and gratitude that come by seeing what is truly remarkable about yourself.



“Having just one supportive person in an LGBTQ person’s life can decrease their risk of suicide by 30 percent.”

– AMIT PALEY

Ceo and Executive Director,
The Trevor Project



ANDY & LORIE HARBERT

By the time our son Joey was 15, we had been worried for some time that he was gay. There were several awkward conversations and Joey's denials, but mostly we did what good worried Christian parents do: we prayed, we read Christian books about gay people (instead of talking with them), and we kept our fears to ourselves. Later that year, when Joey did come out to us, we were ready (or so we thought). We did one important thing right: we assured him that we loved him. But because we loved him, we needed to fix him.



At the time, the dominant Christian teaching was "ex-gay," and it appeared to fit perfectly with scripture and our preconceptions. There were the familiar "clobber" scriptures, but a pivotal favorite was 1 Corinthians 6, which mentions "homosexuals" and says, "such some of you were." Scripture seemed to reinforce our parental guilt as well: "the way he should go" was straight, Joey was departing from it, so we must have really botched the "training up" process.

After Joey came out to us, I shared some of our ex-gay reading material, and I was ecstatic when Joey's response was "Dad, for the first time, I have some hope." Armed with hope, it wasn't long before Joey and I headed to a local ex-gay ministry to work the program and get on the straight path.

I knew something was amiss within five minutes of arriving. They gave us long intake forms, full of

questions about our participation in every possible dysfunction and demonic perversion (much of which we'd never heard of). We confidently checked "no" on all of it, but I privately wondered "what are we getting into?" Nevertheless, this was God's plan, so we were soon immersed in the prescribed regimen of counseling and study. Our family isn't perfect, but it didn't take long to see that we didn't fit the dysfunctional family mold that the ex-gay ideology needed us to fit. Worse, the process of trying to make us fit their narrative was damaging to both our faith and our relationship.

I had put all my eggs in an outcome that the church said was the way of faith, but the fruit was everything opposite of the fruit of the spirit. Questioning that "faith" was slow and painful, but Joey was gracious to give us time. A catchphrase of the ex-gay movement was "change is possible;" they were right, but it wasn't Joey who needed changing.

Eventually we arrived at an acceptance and love of all of Joey, not just the straight part that we had always loved. By the time Joey was in college, we were having all of Joey's friends over for parties and learning to do what should have been natural all along: love, accept, and appreciate people made in the image of God. Later, we would meet and spend time with boyfriends, and none of the earlier fears materialized: no one had a coronary and the crosses didn't fall off the wall.

What led to our change? I wish I could tell you that we re-examined Scripture and resolved all our questions. But for me, before I dealt with clobber scriptures, I first had to deal with weightier matters of the law: things like my judgmental attitude, hypocrisy, fear, and misplaced faith. All of that is a work in progress. The biggest factor of all was dealing with a question we were asked at a CenterPeace retreat: "what do you believe about God?" Accepting Joey was one thing but accepting a God that loves Joey even more than we do ... that made all the difference.



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post- conference workshop for parents

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