

## TRANSFORMATIONAL TRUTH

March 12 and 13, 2021

Questions for Katy Faust

1. How can we best support a child who has lost a parent? Is there a way the church as a whole can support these children better?

**a. Fill the void.** Ladies, you may notice that a motherless neighbor girl will linger in your kitchen to chat with you even when your kids have left to play in the other room. Lavish her with motherly attention. Ask about her life, validate her girl-ness in whatever form that's taking (soccer player, artist, writer). Pull her into your life, especially the female-exclusive/centric activities. Let her help you with dinner, plan the baby shower, etc. Men, you have a critical role to play in the lives of fatherless children. Pull boys into the world of men by including him in what you're doing whether that's changing the oil, walking the dog or reading the bible. Carefully affirm the fatherless girl's femininity and encourage her toward virtue.

**b. Carefully validate.** Do not initiate the conversation about their parental loss. But if they bring it up, do not minimize or explain away their pain. Rather, validate their loss. "You're sad because you are missing out on something you deserve." "Your dad is really missing out because you are a great kid." "You're not crazy for missing your mother, that's the natural longing of every child. I'm so sorry you don't have her in your life."

2. Would any specified criteria in favor of the child's rights be morally moot should the couple decide not to adopt or have children, or is there another aspect?

Not exactly sure what the question is but let me answer it this way. Not every couple can or will have children. But every child has a mother and father. If a child exists, so do their mother and father, and those bonds should be recognized and respected both in our personal lives and in policy decisions.

3. The law seems intent on removing parental rights over the children, did you look into this as well?

Parental rights are under threat. Thankfully, there are numerous groups who are seeking to address those threats (The Heritage Foundation just launched [an initiative](#) that seeks to safeguard parental rights.)

Them Before Us is the only organization solely devoted to defending children's rights to their parents. Children's right to their mother and father will never be in conflict with parental rights, rather it will strengthen parental rights.

In the wake of rapidly expanding reproductive tech and the redefinition of marriage, various states and countries are now redefining parenthood to include "intent" as a basis of parenthood, or simply doing away with a biological basis of parenthood altogether. (See Canada's Civil Marriage Act of 2005 which deems all parent/child relationships "legal" rather than biological.) If the state can ignore the right children have to their parents, it's easier to ignore parent's right to their own child. What the state gives,

the state can take. If we defend children's claim to their parents, we naturally strengthen parental claims to their own children.

4. How can the church better support children whose parents have gone through a divorce, etc?

First, the church must do a better job of addressing divorce. We have been too casual about divorce for too long. We haven't been willing to have the hard conversations with our friends in struggling marriages encouraging them to work it out, get counseling, and die to themselves so their children have the homelife they deserve. We have swallowed the cultural lie that "adults need to be true to themselves" and "if the adults are happy the children will be happy." They won't. And we need to bring that reality to adults in struggling marriages and walk with them as they address their marital problems.

But for those children of divorce, I would recommend following the advice above: carefully validate. Don't initiate the conversation about the divorce, but if the child brings it up, validate their pain. "You're struggling because you're not supposed to have to split time with your mom and dad. You are made to have 100% of mom and 100% of dad every day." "You don't have to be excited about your dad's remarriage- I know you're still mourning the death of your parent's love." "It sounds like it's been hard to adjust to sharing your home with a new woman and her three children. I get why you feel you have to compete for your dad's affection now." Sometimes we think if we acknowledge the loss the kids will feel bad. The exact opposite is true. It's a relief to have an adult who recognizes and validates their loss.

5. How do we balance a potential lack of maturity and context of certain situations in the child with the intrinsic needs of the child when it comes to adoption?

I assume the questioner is asking about the lack of maturity of the birth parents which may lead to choosing adoption. This is a reality in many adoptive situations- that the birth mother may feel unprepared or lack the maturity to parent. The first and best solution is for those around the birth mother (and hopefully father!) to help them do hard things, and make sacrifices in their own lives so they are prepared to welcome this child together, for life. If the birth mother chooses adoption, it's in the child's best interest to maintain contact with the birth parents to the degree that it's safe for the child. At minimum, the child should know their adoption story and be free to ask the adoptive parents for more information throughout their life.

6. Please tell us the mission of Them Before Us, ie trying to change laws, make laws for surrogacy, abolish gay adoption, etc.

We have a very modest goal: A global takeover of all conversations about marriage and family.

We aim to change hearts AND laws. We are busy publishing [stories of children](#) who have lost a parent due to intentionality so the world can fully understand the cost to kids when adult desires are prioritized above their rights. We reframe [trending news](#) to help people look at cultural happenings from the perspective of children's rights.

But we also want to give children a voice in [policy debates](#) in the US and abroad. We have filed amicus briefs at the Supreme Court and sent letters to state legislators to center the policy conversation around the rights of children. We have created video content for allies overseas and spoken at international conferences. The good news is, this child-centric approach is effective across the globe.

7. How can I address the needs my adopted children have now that they are grown and their “wounds” are manifesting themselves?

In my work of gathering stories of kids, I have found that often they don't fully process their loss until they have been out of the home for about 10 years. It takes some time and distance, and often the founding of their own family before kids start to reflect on how their own childhood wounds have impacted them. So, don't be surprised that they may be curious about their origin stories or voicing struggles for the first time as adults.

As the adoptive parent, the biggest thing you can do is allow them to be honest. Don't get defensive. If you do, they will likely feel like they can't share freely or ask questions that only you can answer. Being open with you will likely feel like a relief.

My adopted friends have found the book [Primal Wound](#) to be a helpful resource when it comes to understanding why they feel the way they feel. It has helped many adoptees to name their feelings and struggles which is often a first step to resolving their trauma.

8. How do you answer people who say it's better for a kid to be adopted by gay parents than be in foster care or never get adopted? Is that true?

First a proper understanding of adoption is important- adoption doesn't exist for adults, adoption is for kids. Here's the Them Before Us [position statement on adoption](#).

I've addressed this specific question in a couple places. Here's [an article that I published last week](#) in response to Bethany Christian Service's decision to serve LGBTQ adults. And [here's a video](#) that also addresses that question.

The short answer: the ideal adoptive home is that of a married mother and father, thus adoption agencies should prioritize prospective married men and women as adoptive parents. But the ideal is not always available thus a same-sex or single adoptive/foster parent is sometimes the best placement. But those exceptional adoption cases do not justify ignoring the fact that there is an ideal- the married mother/father home.