

SUMMER 2020

FAMILY

north carolina

PINK OR BLUE?

Guiding Parents Through
the Transgender Issue

An Inside Look at
Adoption: Q&A with
Adoptive Parents

The Triumph of
School Choice

ISBN 0-9785025-1-5

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 The transgender trend has taken off in recent years, and now parents find themselves raising their children in a culture that increasingly regards biological sex as irrelevant. Our friends at Minnesota Family Council, along with several organizations across the political spectrum, have assembled a resource guide to equip parents to respond to the transgender issue. This guide will help parents understand the details and consequences of the transgender trend, and provide them with concrete steps they can take to protect their children and their rights as parents.

14 **An Inside Look at Adoption: Q&A with Adoptive Parents**
 Tony and Lesley Biller live in Raleigh and are parents of four biological children and six adopted children, all between the ages of 10 and 20. Chris and Dani Irving live in Wake Forest with their two adopted sons, ages 4 and 7. The Billers and the Irvings graciously share their experiences as adoptive parents, and provide encouragement and advice for those couples who may be considering adoption.

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 Hear insights from experts featured on NC Family's radio show and podcast. Kristan Hawkins provides updates from the front lines of the pro-life movement through her work as President of Students for Life of America; Jake Roberson, Director of Communications for the National Center on Sexual Exploitation, advises parents on protecting their children from online predators; Jackie Bonk, Director of Project Rachel, opens our eyes to the deep and lasting trauma experienced by women who have had abortions; and Luke Goodrich from the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty reminds us why religious freedom is a bedrock value of our nation.

20 **The Triumph of School Choice**
 Dr. Terry Stoops, Director of Education Studies at the John Locke Foundation, has been active in the school choice movement for years. With so much misinformation being thrown around about school choice and its effect on public schools and their students, Stoops shares concrete data and statistics proving the importance and popularity of school choice across North Carolina.

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DEPARTMENTS



A Brave New World?

On June 15, 2020 and in the following days, I noticed many of my Millennial peers posting on Instagram and Twitter, celebrating the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County Georgia* as a victory for freedom and liberty and an end to “discrimination.” In one swift act of legislating from the bench, our nation’s highest court redefined “sex” discrimination in federal employment law to include “sexual orientation and gender identity.” The effects of this ruling remain to be seen, especially since COVID-19 has necessitated some degree of isolation from the world around us. But soon, our children will be back in school; we will be back in our workplaces; and our churches will be meeting in sanctuaries once again.

So, while we may not yet have seen the impact of this ruling, I can assure you we will. And it will not be the impact many people—like my friends on social media—imagine. Perhaps Justice Alito put it best in his dissent on the *Bostock* ruling when he said, “...[T]he position that the Court now adopts will threaten freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and personal privacy and safety. No one should think that the Court’s decision represents an unalloyed victory for individual liberty.”

Now more than ever, parents need advice and resources to guide them in raising their children amidst a radical and vocal transgender movement, and in responding when they face transgender policies in their children’s schools—and they will face such policies. Our friends at Minnesota Family Council have assembled a comprehensive transgender resource guide for parents, and our article “Pink or Blue?” serves as an introduction to this guide. With most parents schooling their children at home right now, there has never been a better time to review this helpful information and prepare yourselves and your children for the brave new world we will all face once in-person schooling resumes.

We also know that many parents may have discovered during the COVID-19 pandemic—if they didn’t know already—that not every child learns the same way, and not every form of schooling suits every child. We hope this discovery will garner more supporters for the school choice movement, and this magazine features an article outlining “The Triumph of School Choice” by Dr. Terry Stoops of the John Locke Foundation. Dr. Stoops presents statistics on not only the value of school choice in North Carolina, but also its popularity across a wide range of demographics.

Finally, some of the best knowledge comes through experience, and two families with significant experience on the adoption front have graciously shared their stories with us in this issue. Tony and Lesley Biller, and Chris and Dani Irving have adopted multiple children, and they provide advice, encouragement, and insight for anyone seeking an inside look at adoption.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Family North Carolina* magazine! Please feel free to pass this issue along to others, and you are welcome to contact NC Family to request some extra copies to pass out to friends, family, and your communities. 📄

Calley

Calley Mangum is the Communications Associate for the North Carolina Family Policy Council and is Editor of Family North Carolina.



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Editor

Calley Mangum

Design

Leslie Crane

Circulation

Eileen Brown
Heather Greene

Contributors

Tony and Lesley Biller, Eileen Brown, Brittany Farrell, Traci DeVette Griggs, Chris and Dani Irving, Makenna McCoy, Jere Royall, Terry Stoops

President

John L. Rustin

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Internet

Visit us on the Internet at ncfamily.org, where you can read selected stories from this issue, including endnotes. Publication of website addresses of other organizations featured in our stories does not constitute endorsement by the North Carolina Family Policy Council of those groups or the contents of those sites.

Subscriptions

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North Carolina, they are coming for you! And they have made it very clear; you can read their strategy documents. North Carolina is always listed, so don't just think it's going to stop in Virginia.

—Kristan Hawkins, on the shifting focus of abortion activists to the states

I do my religion on Sunday, in church.

—Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-California), on contraception and faith

Many Christians look at the world through disillusioned eyes and fear the way culture is changing, but a Christian worldview gives us courage to live in the world, and to advance the kingdom by engaging, not retreating from the world.

—Russell Moore, President of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

We pause to plead today for an end to laws in our country that make it legal to murder a child. We plead for your mercy. Oh God, we confess that under the guise of protecting women, we have destroyed women, including the lives of 500,000 little women this last year whose bodies you were beautifully knitting together in their mother's womb. We confess that under the guise of promoting freedom, we have stolen freedom from a million little boys and girls over the last year who were defenseless against our machinations. We confess that we have dressed up abortion in all kinds of language about our rights and our privacy and our plans for our lives. But in the end, a million children over the last year are dead, and we did it.

—David Platt, prayer before the 2020 March for Life in Washington, D.C.

In America, we do not punish prayer. We do not tear down crosses. We do not ban symbols of faith. We do not muzzle preachers and pastors. In America, we celebrate faith.

—President Donald Trump, Feb. 2020 State of the Union address





PINK or BLUE?

Guiding Parents Through the Transgender Issue

by Brittany Farrell

Editor's Note: Portions of this article are reprinted with permission from "Responding to the Transgender Issue: Parent Resource Guide," produced by the Minnesota Family Council.

The excitement that accompanies a gender reveal party invitation is nearly universal. Siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends gather to celebrate the joy of new life and focus on one of life's most basic facts—the human species is comprised of males and females. Shortly after finding out a new human being has come into existence, but long before knowing that being's personality or preferences, ultrasound technicians and blood tests uncover whether this new creation is a boy or a girl. That determination is a scientific fact. No matter how badly mom and dad wanted a "Momma's boy" or "Daddy's little princess," nature speaks a truth with facts: Junior is male or female, and his or her body tells the tale.

Over the last decade or so, these facts of life have been seen less as facts and more as suggestions—at best—and shackles—at worst. A combination of misguided, but often well-intentioned groups have tried to erase the facts of life and expose children as young as possible to the idea that sex is changeable and dependent on nothing more than feelings. Many parents and adults who work with and care about children are justifiably concerned at this growing trend to push the idea of changeable genders and force gender affirmation at earlier and earlier ages, particularly in schools.



A surprising combination of groups, including Family Policy Alliance, The Heritage Foundation, The Kelsey Coalition, Parents of ROGD Kids, and Women’s Liberation Front, have answered the pleas of desperate parents for a resource to help navigate these increasingly intense and dangerous waters. Despite their sometimes strong areas of disagreement, these unlikely partners have a shared concern: the negative consequences that result when society regards bodily sex as irrelevant. NC Family hopes that the following introduction to “Responding to the Transgender Issue: Parent Resource Guide” will give parents the confidence to have important conversations with both their children and school leaders, while better understanding the role of science and parental rights on the topic of transgenderism.

Like many Americans, the authors of this guide believe that schools, adults, and children need more information

and more empowerment to properly respond on the topic of transgenderism. This guide can help readers understand the consequences of the transgender trend and its implications in schools, as well as explain parental and constitutional rights and encourage parents, communities, and schools to work together.

Words Have Meaning

One difficulty in discussing or considering gender identity, rather than biological sex, is that gender identity is an individual’s self-perceived or desired status as a male, female, both, or neither. Therefore, it is subject to change over time, making it impossible for a stable set of guidelines, rules, or parameters to govern its impact on everything from language to athletics. Sex, on the other hand, has natural limitations and advantages, because it is unchangeable.

Additionally, discrimination is a term heard often in discussions related to gender policies. Discrimination is the “recognition and understanding of the differences between one thing [or person] and another,” and can sometimes involve “the unequal or unfair treatment of a person based on one or more personal characteristics.” Boys and girls are different. Molecular biology—not feelings, hormones, or surgery—determine whether a member of the human species is male or female. It is not bigotry to acknowledge the biological differences between men and women.

The Facts Of Life

Increasingly today, personality diversity is squashed in favor of gender stereotypes, often by the very people who claim to disbelieve in gender stereotypes. Rarely do children’s personalities and preferences at a given moment completely conform to the societal expectations for their sex. Certainly, children should not be led to fear that their unique preferences indicate a need to change their identity or their bodies.

Sex stereotypes vary between cultures and historical eras, and conformity to them is not an accurate indication of one’s biological identity. Boys and girls have a wide variation of personality traits and preferences that in no way contradict their sex. To the contrary, encouraging kids in their non-stereotypical interests may help them to understand that there is no rigid or fixed way to be a boy or a girl.



THE GENDER AFFIRMATIVE MODEL

Examples	Ages	Risks	
Social Transition	Change hairstyle, clothing, name, pronouns, access restrooms of the opposite sex	Toddlers to adults	Increases likelihood of persistence
Puberty Blockers	Gonadotropin-releasing hormone analogs such as leuprolide and histrelin	Early puberty, around 9-11	Brittle bones, joint problems, ³² impaired memory. ³³ Puberty blocked kids go on to use cross-sex hormones in nearly 100% of cases, ³⁴ which causes permanent sterility.
Cross-Sex Hormones	Testosterone for girls, Estrogen, plus androgen inhibitor for boys	Around 14 to adult	Sterility if used after puberty blockers. For women: lowered voice, weight gain, balding, possible cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, bone density loss, and increased risk of cancers (breast, cervical, ovarian, and uterine). For men: breast growth, gallstones, weight gain, blood clots, sexual dysfunction, possible cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and breast cancer. ³⁵
Sex Reassignment Surgery	“Top” surgery: Double mastectomy or breast implants; “bottom” surgery: Alterations to or removal of, genitalia or reproductive organs	Around 14 to adult	Loss of sensation, infections, irreversibility. Post-surgical complications to genital SRS are common in both men and women. ³⁶
Legal Document Changes	Changing sex recorded on birth certificates, school records, or other official identification	Any age	Inaccurate recording of vital statistics; mistaken sex in medical care.

www.GenderResourceGuide.com

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The “gender affirmative” model enables and encourages false beliefs that children have about themselves.

The “gender affirmative” model that is being increasingly used in schools and by many medical professionals enables and encourages false beliefs that children have about themselves. Parents and medical professionals do not encourage an anorexic child to lose weight, even when she is insistent that she is overweight. Instead, as Dr. Ryan Anderson points out in his book *When Harry Became Sally*, children “need medical professionals who will help them mature in harmony with their bodies, rather than deploy experimental treatments to refashion their bodies.” Sadly however, too many children who express individuality in play and personality find themselves subjected to the opposite of this approach.

There are no long-term studies to support medical interventions for children who are confused about their sex, yet parents are increasingly being told by medical professionals to assume that the best way to treat their child’s transgender feelings is with social and medical transition. Doctors are now under pressure from transgender activists to enable medical transition without questioning the patient’s motivation for doing so, even when the patient is a child. Thus, children are being medicalized based on a self-diagnosis. As a result, some individuals are reporting that they were offered prescriptions for cross-sex hormones and referrals for surgery instead of appropriate psychological treatments.

Physical and Mental Health

Before taking cross-sex hormones, puberty blockers are used to prevent secondary sex characteristics like breasts or facial hair from developing in children who are transgender-identified, so they can successfully mimic the opposite sex later in adolescence. **100% of children who use puberty blockers go on to use cross-sex hormones, which leave them infertile.** Furthermore, puberty blockers have been observed to lower IQ, to increase depression symptoms, and to harm bone development.

FAST FACTS HEALTH



One study showed that when a teen announces a transgender identity to their peer group, the number of friends who also became transgender-identified was **3.5** per group.²



In just seven years, there has been a nearly **2,000% increase** in children seeking treatment for sexual identity confusion in the United Kingdom.³



Up to **98%** of children who struggle with their sex as a boy or a girl, come to accept their sex by adulthood.⁴



Identifying as transgender or nonbinary may be linked to autism spectrum disorders. Children with autism spectrum disorders are **7 times** more likely to want to be the opposite sex than the general population.⁵

After sex reassignment surgery, transgender-identified people are nearly **20 times** more likely to die from suicide than the general population.⁶



Studies show that **100%** of children who use puberty blockers will go on to use cross-sex hormones, leaving them permanently sterile.⁷



Girls as young as **13** are undergoing double mastectomies and boys as young as **17** are undergoing full genital sex reassignment surgeries.^{8,9}



The **long-term effects** of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones have not been studied.¹⁰



Science demonstrates that there are **two** sex chromosomes—two X chromosomes in females and an X and a Y in males—in nearly every single cell in our bodies.¹¹



Some transgender-identified patients are being prescribed cross-sex hormones on their very **first** visit to a clinic.¹²



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Many young people who identify as transgender have a serious coexisting mental health diagnoses that may be leading them to identify as such. One study looked at mental health in 1,347 transgender and gender nonconforming youths retrospectively between 2006 and 2014 and found that these youths had 3 to 13 times higher rates of mental health conditions compared to youth who do not identify as transgender or gender nonconforming.

A Level Playing Field

An entire resource could be written about the deleterious effects of the transgender movement on athletics. Basic quantifiable, biological facts make it clear that no amount of therapy—mental, hormonal, or surgical—can erase the physical differences between men and women. **For example consider:**

- Males' bone structure generally results in broader shoulders and larger feet and hands, granting an advantage in sports like volleyball, swimming, and basketball.
- Their larger hearts and lungs allow males to carry more blood and oxygen to the body's tissues.
- Before hormone levels are interfered with medically, the average male body has four times more testosterone than the female body, bringing about increased muscle mass and strength, and increased bone size and density.

Even more important than athletic competitions are athletic facilities. Good school policy will respect the physical differences between the sexes without resorting to an unverifiable gender identity as the determination of who can use certain bathrooms, showers, and locker rooms. Policies that strip girls of their right to privacy reinforce the notion they are not in control of who can see their bodies when they use intimate facilities. With concern about invasion of privacy and sexual assault at an all-time high, it makes no sense to tell young women to drop their guard.

The primary concern related to facilities is not that transgender users will seek to harm anyone in the locker room, but rather that ill-intentioned criminals will take advantage of this crack in the door to prey on women. A 2018 study showed that there were three times more voyeurism offenses in Target retail stores after the public announcement of their mixed-sex restroom and fitting room policy. Furthermore, a UK investigative report by *The Times* found that of 134 reported incidents that included voyeurism, harassment, sexual assault, and rape in swimming pool and sports center changing rooms, 120 were committed in mixed-sex spaces.

Parents As Primary

Parents are increasingly finding out that their parental rights may be ignored, overridden, or even terminated if they do not toe the gender affirmative line. Still, the U.S. Supreme Court has found that parents have a fundamental right "to make decisions concerning the care, custody, and control" of their children. Parents have the right to teach their children that there is a difference between the sexes,

and they must be proactive on this issue. Depending upon individual state laws, parents may even have the right to control their child's exposure to sensitive materials like transgender-themed books and curricula in the classroom.

Here are some tips for parents as they exercise their rights:

- **At school**
 - Review the classroom curricula that your child will be using for the year, especially asking to see anything that pertains to gender, sexuality, intimate relations, family life issues, and bullying.
 - Request notification when gender, sexuality, diversity, or family life issues are going to be presented to your child in the classroom, during school presentations, or during anti-bullying assemblies.
 - If you encounter concerning material, express your concern and displeasure to your teachers and school administrators, including the principal, school board members, and superintendent. Encourage like-minded parents to do the same. A sample letter is included in the full resource guide.
- **At home**
 - Be overly communicative in expressing your unfailing love for your children and their uniqueness as individuals. Discuss the incredible specialness of boys being boys and girls being girls, and how amazingly different and similar individuals of each sex are.
 - Stress kindness and love, not just in your family relationships, but also in how your own children view and treat others. No child should be bullied, belittled, or teased for being different in any way. Encourage your children to love their classmates the same way you love your children.

Take Heart

How we approach the transgender issue in our schools will make all the difference in the lives of all children, and especially those who are struggling to accept their bodies as male or female. Every child deserves to hear that there is nothing they need to change about their body in order to gain acceptance from their peers or the adults in their lives. Young people need to know they are beautiful just the way they are, and there is no one better positioned to bring this positive view of human identity to public schools than parents.

By respectfully speaking out, parents can help to ensure that school boards hear what the research makes clear: our sex does not change according to our feelings, and school policy that ignores that fact ends up hurting our kids. Many school boards are pressured by outside activist organizations to pass policies that treat bodily sex as irrelevant, but parents are the real stakeholders in a school, not activist groups.

Take heart knowing that objections to the transgender issue are coming from people across the political spectrum. This is not a “right” or “left” issue. Take courage, gather a community, and speak up—our children deserve nothing less. 🏳️‍🌈

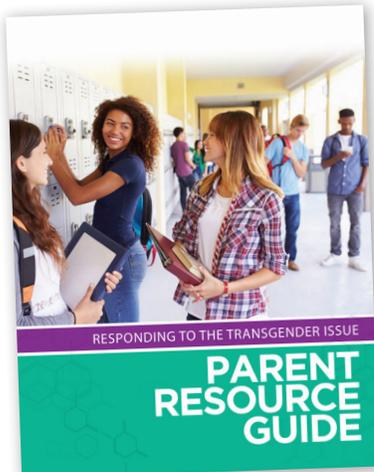


Brittany Farrell,
NC Family Contributing
Author and Researcher

Thank you again to our friends at the Minnesota Family Council for compiling and publishing the Parent Resource Guide.



This information is even more relevant and timely considering the U.S. Supreme Court's unfortunate decision in Bostock v. Clayton County Georgia, which redefined discrimination based on “sex” in federal employment law to include “sexual orientation” and “gender identity.”



If you would like a copy of the full *Parent Resource Guide*, please mail this form to NC Family with an enclosed donation, or visit my.ncfamily.org/ParentResourceGuide and we will send one to you.
(North Carolina Family Policy Council, P.O. Box 20607, Raleigh, NC 27619)

Name _____

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Cornerstone Luncheon

NC Family hosted members of our Cornerstone Community in our office for a special luncheon to kick off 2020. Anna Beavon Gravely, president of the NC FreeEnterprise Foundation, spoke about North Carolina's dynamic and highly competitive political landscape ahead of the 2020 Elections.



New Staff Members

NC Family welcomed two new staff members to our team. Heather Greene joined us as the Administrator this past March. Heather is originally from Virginia, and now lives in Franklinton with her husband and two children. Makenna McCoy joined NC Family as our Summer Intern in May. Makenna is studying politics, philosophy, and economics at The King's College in New York City, but she hails from Greenville, NC. We are excited to welcome Heather and Makenna to the NC Family team!

CORNERSTONE COMMUNITY

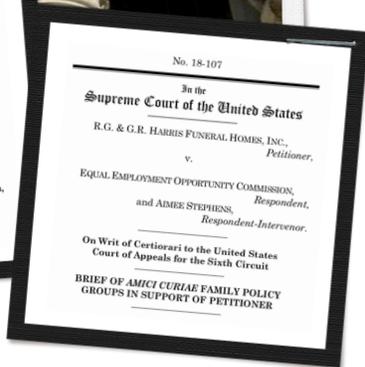
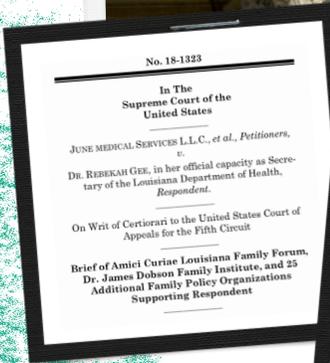
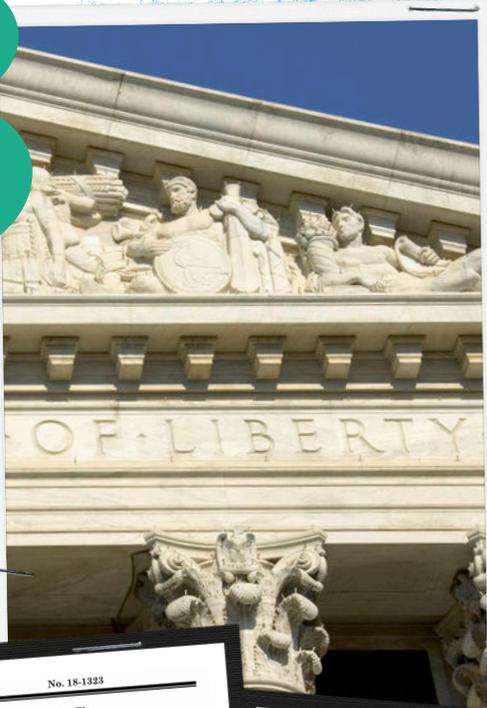
The "cornerstone" is the chief foundation on which something is built, and NC Family's Cornerstone Community provides a foundation on which NC Family can stand and fight for Biblical family values in our state and nation. NC Family is fully sustained by the generous donations of our supporters, and our Cornerstone Community commits to an important partnership of prayer, support, and financial contribution for our long-term work. We could not do what we do without the chief foundation of our Cornerstone Community.

Will you consider investing in the future of families in North Carolina and join NC Family's Cornerstone Community? Here is how you can partner with us:

- **Donate \$300 or more each year**
- **Sponsor a table at one of NC Family's Major Speakers Dinner Events**
- **Pledge to give a monthly gift**

To donate, go to [NCFamily.org](https://www.ncfamily.org) and click on the DONATE button.

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U.S. Supreme Court Amicus Briefs

While NC Family has primarily been active on the legislative and executive sides of our government, we have become increasingly aware of the critical issues impacting families that are being decided by our nation's judicial system. One of the most important ways we can be involved in judicial proceedings is through the filing of friend-of-the-court briefs, or amicus briefs.

- **June Medical Services v. Russo:** NC Family signed onto a brief in support of a Louisiana law that would require physicians who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at a local hospital. Unfortunately, the nation's highest court ruled against this law, against protecting women's health, and in favor of abortion providers.
- **R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission:** NC Family joined 23 other state family policy organizations in supporting Harris Funeral Homes as its case came before the Supreme Court. SCOTUS's **Bostock v. Clayton County Georgia** ruling in June went against Harris and decided that "sex" discrimination in the current federal employment law includes "sexual orientation" and "gender identity."



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Greenville Dinner

Former Atlanta fire chief Kelvin Cochran spoke at NC Family's Major Speakers Dinner in Greenville in March. After 34 years in fire service, Chief Cochran was terminated from his position as Atlanta Fire Chief for writing a book for a Christian men's Bible study that affirmed Biblical marriage and sexuality. He sued the City of Atlanta and was awarded a major settlement in 2018. In Greenville, Chief Cochran shared his inspiring story of how God prepared him throughout his life for the difficult experiences he would later face when he was discriminated against because of his faith.

An Inside Look at Adoption

Q&A with Adoptive Parents



Biller Family



We heard God talking to us the way He typically does: through His Word, through His People, through the circumstances He put us in, and by that very quiet urging deep in our souls.

Tony and Lesley Biller live in Raleigh, NC, and are parents to four biological children and six adopted children, all between the ages of 10 and 20.

Q: How did you know God was calling you to adopt? Was there a point in your lives when it suddenly hit you that this was the right choice, or was it a gradual realization?

A: For us it was a gradual process. We were not looking to adopt or host. God started moving the pieces into place long before we had any idea the path He had us on, or the consequences of particular prayers we made over the years.

But that's the thing: this was God's doing. Not our own. Not only was this not our idea, it was counter to what we had planned and contrary to the little rules we agreed would govern hosting or adoption. God has made clear to us that He had different plans for us.

How did we know it was God's will for us and not an emotional response or reaction to what we ate for breakfast? How can you ever be certain whether God is leading you or whether you are simply rationalizing your desires as being the will of God?

Well, we knew because we heard God talking to us the way He typically does: through His Word, through His People, through the circumstances He put us in, and by that very quiet urging deep in our souls. Through the solid convergence of these four, God spoke to us. The more we prayed about it, the louder all four seemed to speak to us.

Q: How did the process of adoption go for you? What were some of the most difficult moments, and some of the most rewarding moments?



A: The adoption process is slow, tedious, and often frustrating. Lots of paperwork.

Those kids rocked our world ... in a good way. Service to orphans is work God finds pleasing. It cast a different light on much that we had previously held onto as important. More though, it expanded us. Adoption continued that same growth one finds in marriage and having children, pushing us further outside ourselves to unconditionally love for the purpose of loving another.

Caring for orphans is difficult. We don't always know how to prepare for tomorrow. This process brought us to our knees repeatedly as we found ourselves without answers and feeling ill-equipped. Caring for them brought us much closer to God and to a deeper understanding of what servanthood means. Trusting unto Him and finding Him not in any way lacking is probably the largest single blessing of the orphan experience.

Adoption also positively affected our biological kids. They were zealous advocates the entire time to adopt. We have seen a true, mature spirit of service grow in each of them. Just as the process grew the parents, so too has it grown our children.

For us, adoption was a profoundly faith building experience. When you serve Christ, He draws you closer. A few folks encouraged us by telling us that we were being the hands and feet of Christ to these children. That may be, but while we reached out in Christ's love, He also reached out to us. It was incredible. Our friends in Christ showered us with love, food, prayer, and support. We wanted for nothing, not even furniture. God provided it all in overflowing abundance. God's people are the real thing, the hands and feet of Christ. We were loved. Still are.

Q: What advice would you give parents thinking of adopting? Was there anything you wish someone would've told you before you began the process?

A:

- 1. Make sure mom and dad and the kids are united and determined to do this. If you're not all excited and feeling called to adopt, do not move forward until you are.**
- 2. Talk to families that have adopted. Look for and talk to families that you have heard have had difficulties. Adoption is not easy, and having unrealistic expectations can create frustrations for all involved.**
- 3. Everyone has their eyes on the stress of the new kids. The stress from the changed family dynamics can be more difficult on your biological kids, particularly where the "new" kids outnumber the original kids. The process was at least equally disruptive to both sets of kids, but nearly all the focus naturally goes to the new kids.**
- 4. Structure is king! We've made rules for EVERYTHING! It started about Day 3 when we were consuming more than a gallon of milk a day. First new rule: limits on milk consumption.**



Irving Family

Chris and Dani Irving live in Wake Forest, NC, and are parents to two adopted boys, ages 4 and 7.

Q: How did the process of adoption go for you?

A: We were blessed to have relatively smooth adoptions. We met with adoption consultants in October 2012. On November 1, All Saints Day, we first heard about a baby that was due on [Dani's] birthday, February 8. The following day, we applied for that baby. The baby was born on the night of the Super Bowl, February 3, 2013. We flew to Phoenix, Arizona the next day to meet Christopher Paul Irving. Two weeks later, we flew back to Wake Forest as new parents!

In March 2016, we had a videoconference with our Adoption Consultants to start the process again. We found out we'd have to do all the extensive paperwork again, and it looked like it would take a long time to go through the process again. However, later that afternoon our consultants contacted us. They told us that they had reached out to the agency we had adopted Christopher through, and that agency actually had a birth mother situation available NOW. They asked if we were interested in learning more. Of course we said, "Yes!"

Two weeks later, we found out the birth mother selected us. Patrick Joseph was born on April 22, 2016, and he completed our family.

Q: What resources were available to you as you went through the adoption process?

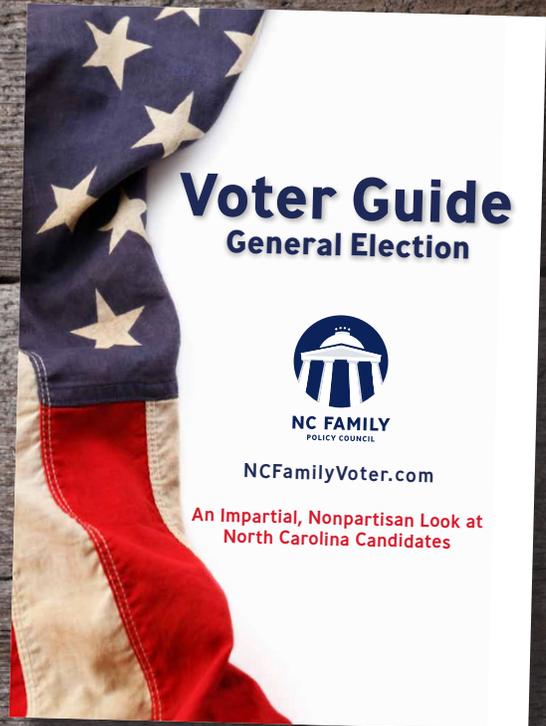
A: The greatest resource we had was our INCREDIBLE Adoption Consultants, Adoption Information Services (adoptioninfosvs.com). They answered all of our questions and were always there for us. They were connected with adoption agencies across the country and helped us navigate the entire process. We also love Formed and Holy Heroes (holymen.com).

Q: How have you personally grown through adopting children?

A: Realizing that we did not have control was our greatest lesson throughout the adoption process. Learning to lean completely on the Lord, to give up the illusion of stability or control and realize it was all in His hands. Whether or not we would adopt and what the timetable would be was completely out of our control. We have grown as people, and I've been stretched tremendously as I've become a BoyMom. They are loud, rambunctious, and have so much energy! They talk nonstop and eat us out of house and home! They have definitely pushed us out of our comfort zone. I've become a baseball and football mom, which I never imagined. But I am embracing it all!



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2020 NC Family Voter Guide

Every election cycle, NC Family produces a comprehensive, nonpartisan Voter Guide to help North Carolina voters know where candidates stand on key issues relating to life, faith, marriage, family, and much more. We survey all candidates running for US Senate, US House, Governor and Council of State, NC Supreme Court and Court of Appeals, and the entire State Legislature and compile their responses in this incredibly helpful voter resource.

You can pre-order NC Family's nonpartisan 2020 General Election Voter Guides in bulk for distribution at your church, civic group, and in your neighborhood today!

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Kristan Hawkins, President of Students for Life of America



Traci DeVette Griggs: Kristan, there has been an increasing polarization among the states, with many states passing strong pro-life laws aimed at protecting the dignity and rights of the unborn, and providing help to pregnant mothers. While several other states have moved in the opposite direction, lifting restrictions on abortion, even to the moment of birth in some cases. So, what do you make of all of this?

Kristan Hawkins: So states like New York, California, and Illinois, they're rushing to firm-up abortion during all nine months of pregnancy for whatever reason—and taxpayer funded—because they already have a Post-*Roe v. Wade* America in mind. [...] This is what we need to be doing as well in the pro-life movement. This is why our states need to be passing more abortion restrictions, more laws making abortion unthinkable and illegal. As you all know, this is a two-pronged goal. Our vision isn't simply to make abortion illegal; it's also to make it unthinkable. And so it's not just passing a law saying no more abortions; it's also passing laws that assist women and give women the truth so no woman ever feels like she has to choose between her life and the life of her child.

Jake Roberson, Director of Communications for the National Center on Sexual Exploitation



Traci DeVette Griggs: Some kids seem to be more vulnerable online than others. Can we as parents do some things to make our kids less vulnerable when they are on the Internet?

Jake Roberson: We know in general that human beings are looking for connection, and that's true for children the way it is for adults. The less interpersonal connection that we're getting, the more susceptible we might be to getting that connection in places that we wouldn't otherwise. [...] I think there's a silver lining for parents in that one of the best ways that we can help protect our kids is by being somebody who wants to connect with our kids, who wants to spend time, play games, share meals with our children. That's just good advice in general, but it does make a difference. As our kids are feeling connected with us as their parents in the real world, that's going to help them be less vulnerable to seeking that out elsewhere, and more likely to talk to us if they do encounter it.

Jackie Bonk, Director of Project Rachel



Traci DeVette Griggs: So, Jackie, there are often long-term effects of abortion, and women and men don't necessarily find that they are having difficulty until years later. In our culture today, some people suggest these difficulties are either fabricated or overblown, but how do you know that these long-term effects are real?

Jackie Bonk: From experience primarily, and some research too. There's certainly data out there on long-term effects of abortion, on the physiological, the spiritual, and the psychological. The wounds in general from abortions are complex and quite deep, and they reach more than one aspect of the person. I would say that the emptiness resulting from the loss of innocent life is vast, and a woman who is experiencing some psychological consequences is going to display shame or regret or unreconciled grief. She may have experienced depression or anxiety, [...] eating disorders, substance abuse. One of the biological consequences that is pretty well known now is that the procedure of abortion increases a risk of pre-term birth in subsequent pregnancy. And then on the spiritual side, the woman may have seen herself as a basically good person before the abortion, in a good relationship with her God. And now she becomes distanced from God and maybe sees herself as one that's committed what is an unforgivable sin. So those are some of the long-term effects of abortion, and we don't see these sometimes until 10, 20, 30, 40 years later.

Luke Goodrich,

Vice President and senior counsel for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty



Traci DeVette Griggs: Religious liberty is being attacked by some these days as a guise for discrimination. Can you tell us why this important freedom is essential in our country's legal, political, and historical landscape?

Luke Goodrich: Absolutely. Religious freedom is such a

bedrock value, and even if you're not a religious person, there are many reasons to stand up for religious freedom. Religion produces schools and hospitals and nursing homes and halfway houses that care for the most vulnerable in society. Religious freedom also protects all of our other rights because the basic premise of religious freedom is that there's something inside each one of us that the government simply cannot touch. But the most important reason to protect religious freedom is that it is a fundamental human right. It's rooted in who we are as human beings—that we all have a thirst for transcendent truth. By its very nature, we can't act on our conscience under compulsion; we can only embrace truth authentically if we embrace it freely. So when the government coerces us to go against conscience, it's violating who we are as human beings, and violating a fundamental human right.

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Family Policy Matters is a 15-minute radio show and podcast featuring interviews with national, state, and local experts on a wide range of policy issues important to North Carolina families. *Family Policy Matters* is hosted by Traci DeVette Griggs and airs each week on over 15 radio stations across North Carolina. You can listen and access a full transcript on the NC Family website at NCFamily.org. *Family Policy Matters* is also available as a podcast on your favorite podcast app.



You may also stream *Family Policy Matters* online at www.ncfamily.org

The Triumph of School Choice

by Terry Stoops, Ph.D.

Public schools are one of the few institutions that are shielded from consumer choice and competition. Taxpayer dollars flow to school districts children are compelled to attend, regardless of parental satisfaction or outcomes. At the same time, the few other options available are constrained by government regulation or remain off-limits for families of modest means. The school choice movement stands in opposition to a system conceived in monopoly, and is dedicated to the proposition that not all schools are created equal and students are not homogenous.

A Long Road

The idea of school choice began in 1869, when Vermont established the first state voucher program, the Town Tuitioning Program. Four years later, Maine created a town tuitioning program of its own. **For 150 years, Vermont and Maine have directed government funds to any public or private, non-religious school in or outside those states for students who do not have access to public schools in their area.**

But the modern school choice movement did not begin in earnest until the 1980s, with the passage of homeschool laws in North Carolina and other states, followed by the launch of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program in 1990. In 1991, Minnesota became the first state to approve charter school legislation, a bill that would form the basis for the charter law passed by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1996. Then, private school choice began to accelerate. The North Carolina General Assembly passed private school voucher programs for lower income and special needs children in 2013 and an education savings account (ESA) for special needs children in 2016.

This year, nearly **539,000** students are enrolled in **65 private school choice programs in 28 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.** An estimated **3.2 million students attend public charter schools in 45 states and the District of Columbia.** The U.S. Department of Education estimated that there were nearly **1.7 million homeschooled students in the United States in 2016.**

In North Carolina, data from the 2018-2019 school year show that around **80%** (1.4 million) of school-age children in North Carolina **attended a district school, 8%** (estimated 142,037) **attended homeschools, and charter and private schools each enrolled around 6%** (109,051 and 102,400, respectively). Of those who attend a private school, only about 11% receive a voucher or ESA from the state. While charter, private, and homeschool enrollment continues to increase, district enrollment has decreased slightly over the last few years.

Parents Speak

In fact, the massive success of the school choice movement in North Carolina and elsewhere has spawned an entire industry of special interest groups, progressive activists, academics, politicians, and union-supported enterprises that attack schools of choice and their supporters. For all of their efforts to attack the private religious schools, public charter schools, and homeschool programs that an increasing number of families are choosing, they have one especially glaring problem—public opinion.

Public opinion, particularly in the African American and Hispanic communities, is not on their side.

A January 2020 Civitas Institute poll of 800 registered voters in North Carolina found that a majority welcome the availability of educational options. For example:

- **81%** agreed that parents should have the ability to choose where their child attends school.
- **76%** said that the child's parents/guardians are best suited to determine where a child should attend school.
- **57%** believe that state lawmakers need to do more to expand educational options for families.



As more parents experience the value of educational options for their children amidst the coronavirus pandemic, we feel these statistics are particularly timely and relevant, and should serve to encourage support for school choice across our state.

A supplemental Civitas poll of 300 non-white registered voters in North Carolina found that 78% would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports programs giving parents and families more educational options for their children.

The Civitas Institute poll mirrors findings from national polls, which found overwhelming support for school choice generally, and among non-white populations.

- According to a 2020 American Federation for Children poll, **68% of African Americans and 82% of Latinos support the concept of school choice.**
- EdChoice's 2019 Schooling in America Survey reported that around **seven out of ten African American and Hispanic respondents support vouchers and tax-credit scholarships.**
- A 2019 RealClear Opinion Research survey found that support for school choice is strong across all demographic groups. Moreover, **nearly 70 percent of respondents would choose a non-district school if they had the opportunity.**

Results Matter

Most of the early studies of school choice focused on three core issues, all based on the legitimate concerns voiced by skeptics and opponents of private school choice. These issues are:

1. Academic outcomes of students participating in private school choice programs and those remaining in public schools.
2. The relationship between private school choice and the cultivation of civic values.
3. The effects of private school choice on racial integration.

In recent years, empirical research on the issue has broadened its scope to include fiscal effects and non-test score measures of academic attainment (i.e., high school graduation, college enrollment, and college graduation rates).

Academic and social achievements for private school students appear to be contingent on several factors, including program design, the quality of private schooling in the jurisdiction, and the students who have access to the voucher, tax credit, or education savings account. As many would expect, random assignment studies in particular suggest that test scores increase for students who participate in private-school choice programs. Surprising to some is the finding that even those students who remain in public schools may benefit indirectly from them. Established

programs appear to improve academic outcomes for specific recipients, particularly African American students, and in certain subjects, particularly math.

Compared to private school choice, there is a much larger body of research on charter schools due to the rapid growth of the charter school movement and its ability to attract bipartisan support. Empirical studies find that charter schools have consistent benefits, particularly for low-income and African American students. In most cases, these benefits are confined to certain types of charter schools, particularly urban and “no excuses” charter schools—schools with strict codes of behavior and higher academic expectations. There is still work to be done to ensure the same level of benefit for Hispanic, special needs, English language learners, and non-disadvantaged populations that attend charter schools, who may not necessarily enjoy comparable gains in test scores and other academic outcomes.

Defending Choice

Empirical research may begin to answer the question of whether private school choice or charter schools are worthwhile enterprises, but it should not be the final word. Even if private school choice and charter schools offered an academic and social environment on par with their district school counterparts, families appear to be more satisfied and engaged in their children's education when they are granted educational options. Moreover, school choice may introduce efficiencies and competitive pressures in education systems that would not be possible when choices are constrained.

Public schools are protected by state constitutions. School choice programs are not. A movement that took decades to build can be taken away through the imposition of burdensome regulation, repeal of authorizing legislation, or the decision of unelected judges. Opponents of school choice in North Carolina have tried each. As such, the preservation of school choice in the United States is dependent on families who are willing to defend their right to choose the schools that best meet the needs of their children, their neighbor's children, and future generations of children. 



Terry Stoops, Ph.D. is Vice President for Research & Director of Education Studies at the John Locke Foundation

The Vaccine That Leads to Life Eternal

Since the coronavirus pandemic hit our state, nation, and world months ago, I have been burdened by a conviction that has both plagued and inspired me. As governmental stay-at-home orders were implemented, hand sanitizer became the hottest commodity on the market, and ordinary people began appearing in public wearing latex gloves and surgical masks to protect themselves and others from transmission of COVID-19, a profound question dawned on me that I just haven't been able to shake: "What if I—what if we—took sin as seriously as we are taking this potentially deadly virus? And if we did, how would our lives and our world be different?"

The Apostle Paul in the first part of Romans 6:23 declares, "For the wages of sin is death ..." So why is it that we treat COVID-19 with such regard and extraordinary measures but are so often ambivalent when it comes to the effect of sin in our lives? (Believe me, I am speaking as much to myself as anyone.)

The Reverend Billy Graham expressed it this way in his column Answers:

"What is it about sin that you don't understand? Let me suggest two things. First, you don't understand sin's depth. Sin is like a deadly disease that touches everything we do and everything we are. [Sound familiar?] Yes, you may be a good and moral person whose life isn't marred by obvious sins. But what about your inner thoughts and motives? What about your pride? What about the things you should be doing but fail to do—the people you ought to help, the person who needs a kind word, the person you ought to be praying for but don't?"

Ouch—now that hits close to home! Do we really consider sin this deeply? Each day, do we wake up and don our "gloves" and "masks" in an effort to shield ourselves from this "deadly disease" that is so prevalent in our lives? Do we carry a bottle of "spiritual sanitizer" for those times when we get too close or make contact with it? Do we honestly live into the reality that just as COVID-19 can result in physical death, unrepentant sin can result in spiritual death and, ultimately, eternal separation from God? I humbly admit that far too often, I do not.

Rev. Graham continues,

"But second, you don't understand sin's cost. Sin is so serious that it cost God's own Son, Jesus Christ, His very life. If God takes sin that seriously, shouldn't we as well?"

It is likely that this grasp of the depth and cost of sin led Rev. Graham to famously avoid even being alone on an elevator with a woman other than his wife in order to escape the mere appearance of impropriety.

But we know that neither gloves nor masks nor sanitizers nor methods of avoidance can inoculate us from sin and its mortal penalty. It is only the gracious and atoning sacrifice of Christ Jesus on the cross that can.

Rev. Graham notes, "The Bible says, 'This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us' (1 John 3:16)."

The second part of Romans 6:23 tells us "... but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rev. Graham goes on to point out how we can receive the gift of eternal life: "Have you ever invited Jesus Christ to come into your life, to forgive you and cleanse you and change you from within?"

While talking about the gift of eternal life in Romans 6, Paul also admonishes that God's grace and Jesus' atoning sacrifice do not give us license to go on sinning. "By no means!" Paul exclaims. Instead, he says, "Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness."

Now that is a weighty command, but one that is attainable if we surrender ourselves to the will and power of God in our lives. Consider the impact on our present culture if instruments of wickedness were turned into instruments of righteousness. Racism and hatred would be eliminated, economic distress would be curtailed, political divisions would be healed, and, yes, sickness would diminish. Praise be to God that Jesus Christ offers the cure—the only cure—for the wages of sin, even as scientists, biologists, and chemists aggressively pursue a vaccine for COVID-19.

So, as we venture out into this "new normal" of a world enmeshed in a global pandemic with gloves, masks, and bottles of sanitizer, let us (myself included) consider the depth and cost of sin in God's economy. May we take sin seriously, seek to be instruments of righteousness and grace in our communities, and love our neighbors as Jesus Christ first loved us. 



John L. Rustin is President of the North Carolina Family Policy Council



North Carolina Family Policy Council
PO Box 20607
Raleigh, NC 27619



**“ For the
Christian,
our policies
should
reflect our
values. ”**

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