



Family Sunday School

Lesson 3 - Rev. Danilo Cortez

Introduction:

Pastor Danilo (Danny) Cortez says the story of the 99 and the 1 sheep helped him to decide that his church's stand on LGBTQ+ relationships was wrong, and to risk his job to oppose it.

Parents: When should you talk to your children about sexual orientation? Stephani Stancil, PhD, Children's Mercy Hospital, suggests "early and often." She says, "By the start of puberty, which can be as early as 8-9 years old for girls and 9-10 years old for boys, the goal would be to have had several (if not many) "mini" conversations about topics that set the foundation for healthy relationships with friends, their own bodies and, eventually, romantic relationships." For more information on how to hold these conversations, go to <https://www.childrensmercy.org/parent-ish/2019/06/tips-for-talking-to-your-kids-about-sexual-orientation/> or <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2015/03/13/answering-kids-questions-about-lgbt/>

And an excellent TED talk for parents—"It is in our power to make sure that no child grows up conscious of some unspoken expectation that they're straight or unconsciously thinking that straight is superior." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCIBp3YOIeM>

Start the Fun!

What Does Your Family Look Like?

Who is in your family? What about your neighbor's family? Think of the many families in our church. Families do not all look the same, and that is okay. The important thing that matters is having people around who love, support, and help each other get through the ups and downs of life. Here are a couple of videos about families.

For younger children- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hukxf8H1Sy0>

For older children- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpCyiyNqzlE>

Read together

The Rev. Danilo “Danny” Cortez

From "Holy Troublemakers & Unconventional Saints". by Daneen Akers

The Rev. Danny Cortez is a pastor. He also has a son who recently came out as gay. And when his teenage son came out to him in 2014, he did something more than express his support: He decided to talk to his Southern Baptist congregation about it — even though doing so likely meant getting kicked out of the church.

"That morning I came to church, my blood pressure was super high. I felt so much stress, and everyone was wondering what's going on," Cortez recalls. "But I remember as I was speaking, I felt empowered like I hadn't felt in such a long time. I knew that what I was sharing that Sunday was important."

What's more, his son Drew was there in the pews to listen.

"I felt vulnerable," Drew says. "I just remember thinking what was going to happen after this. This is our life now."

At the time, Danny told his congregation why he had changed his mind about LGBTQ people. He reminded them that Jesus taught about how someone could tell a good tree from a bad tree by the good fruit that grew on it. He had thought, "Does the idea that everyone must be heterosexual seem to bring more goodness and love into the world? Or does it seem to bring more bitterness, isolation and fear into the world?" He explained how the story of the 99 sheep and the 1 also caused him to change his thinking. He started to see that Jesus cared deeply about those who were marginalized and rejected.

Danny also told his congregation about the moment his son came out. He told them he was grateful that God had already led him to have a change of heart and mind--now he could just love and accept his son without any conditions. "When I sat down," Danny said, "I felt like this weight had just been lifted out of me, and people knew where we stood."

As a result of Danny's sermon, the congregation split. Danny and other members went on to form an LGBT-inclusive, nondenominational church, separate from the Southern Baptist Conference. Danny hopes that someday the church will be unified in its acceptance of all people.



Discuss

Ask: Danny took a chance explaining his change of heart to his congregation. What did he lose?

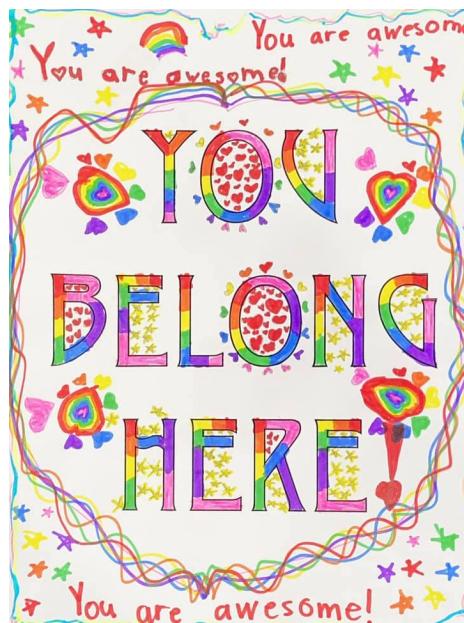
Discussion points: Danny lost his job as a pastor at that church.

Ask: What did he gain?

Discussion points: Danny's son knew that his dad really supported him, so their relationship probably deepened. Danny started a new church that he felt more comfortable leading. He probably has peace now that his beliefs and his actions line up.

Ask: When Jesus talked about the Church, he imagined one unified Christian church. Now we have 45,000 different Christian denominations in the world. Do you think it is possible for a unified church to exist? Can people who believe different things go to the same church?

Discussion points: This is really a matter of opinion, but I would suggest that everyone in every church has some differences of opinion with other people in their church. It is beautiful to imagine that someday all the churches in the world could unite and be one church.



Pray

Thank God for people like Danny who are willing to risk something big for love. Ask God to help you if you ever have the chance to be brave for love.

Participate

Draw Your Family

You will need:

- Paper for each participant
- black markers
- colorful markers
- paint, crayons or watercolors if desired

What to do:

This activity is best for three or more people.

Sit around a table together. One person should secretly write each person's name on the back of each sheet of paper, then mix them up and pass them around so that no one knows whose paper they get.

One person should call out a part of a face, for example, "Eyes." Then everyone should use a black marker to draw a pair of eyes. Encourage everyone to be creative, making the eyes silly or scary or cute. Then, pass the papers clockwise around the table. Have someone else name a facial feature or detail (nose, mouth, hair, ears, jewelry). Add a neck and shoulders as well.

Continue to creatively draw and pass the papers around until the faces are complete. Then turn them over to see whose face is whose for picture-taking. If desired, color the faces in.



Wrap Up

I John 4 says: "If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him."

God is love and love is love. Whether you fall in love with a boy or a girl doesn't matter as long as you are treated respectfully. Give yourself permission to be you and love yourself, whoever you are.

Take a Moment to Breathe

Wave Breath

For this breathing exercise, it will be helpful to have a piece of paper and something to draw with. You can also use the waves below.

On the paper, draw a wavy line. Next, take your finger and trace the line. As the line goes up, slowly breathe in. As it goes down, slowly breathe out. Repeat this a few times.

Try drawing different size waves or waves that are narrow or wider. See if those patterns change your breathing.

