Mommy Blogger Outs Her 5-Year Old Son

Last week, a mommy blogger caused a firestorm with her blog post "My Son is Gay" about how her 5-year-old dressed up for Halloween as Daphne from Scooby Doo. Her little boy had had second thoughts about wearing the costume, afraid that people would make fun of him, but she pushed him to wear it to his preschool. "Who would make fun of a child in a costume on Halloween?" she wrote.

Well, lots of people. And she was angry.

"If you think that me allowing my son to be a female character for Halloween is somehow going to 'make' him gay then you are an idiot. Firstly, what a ridiculous concept. Secondly, if my son is gay, OK. I will love him no less. Thirdly, I am not worried that your son will grow up to be an actual ninja so back off."

Her post generated more than 26,000 comments and has gone viral as people blogged about it (like this one).

This mom doesn't have any problem with the idea that her son who likes bright colors and is attracted to a female costume might be gay, but I wonder what his dad thinks.

There is another way to think about boys like this. They don't have to be gender-confused; they are just created by God to be artistic, creative, and emotionally sensitive. They love color and texture, they revel in nuances in sound and light, touch and smell. They are God's gift to us: the musicians, the artists, the poets, the actors. When these boys are supported in their God-given flavor of masculinity (especially by their fathers), they can grow up to be great men who contribute their gifts to the church, to the world, and to their families. They make great counselors, pastors, teachers—and

husbands and fathers.

My dear friend Ricky Chelette from Living Hope Ministries wrote an insightful article "Parenting the Sensitive Soul." He allays the fears of a growing number of parents of young boys who come to his office concerned that their boys are too girly. And Ricky, an incredible artist, writer, singer, cook—and devoted husband of 20 years—tells them their boys are not being effeminate, they are merely expressing their giftedness. He writes about what he explained to a worried dad:

> "I reassured the father that his son did not want to be a girl and the only person that was really saying anything about him being a girl was the dad. But why then was this boy drawn towards things which were typically identified as more feminine than masculine? Simply, he was a very sensitive soul.
>
> "Sensitive boys are real boys. They simply are extremely gifted with particular giftings that manifest in emotionally and aesthetically expressive ways. His little boy's obsession with women's shoes were not because he wanted to be a girl, but more because he was aesthetically and visually oriented—and women's shoes are much more visually exciting than the black, brown or burgundy of men's shoes. Women's shoes have sparkles, bobbles and bows. They come in every color imaginable and are in different shapes and textures. They are an aesthetically gifted boy's dream! And he was not trying to identify as a girl when he grabbed his mother's skirt, put it on, and twirled around. To him, it was similar to our experience of going to the fair and doing drop art projects where we drop paint on a spinning paper and watch it splatter, but even better. As he moved, he created art and beauty as the colors whirled around him and flowed up and down in the air. Better yet, he was the center of it all!

> “The dad looked at me with disbelief, but with a sense of relief. ‘Do you mean he really isn’t trying to be a girl?’
>
> “’Absolutely not,’ I replied. ‘He is simply trying to express his giftedness as best he can. You have a very artistic young man with amazing potential to make this world a more beautiful place. He has the creative and masculine heart of God. You have the privilege of finding ways to affirm those gifts and channel them in a way that he can grow as gifted man of God!’
>
> “It was as though I just found the lost key they had been searching to find for years; suddenly despair was replaced by hope and relief. But those feelings of relief were just as quickly followed by a look of bewilderment.
>
> “’But how do I do that? How do I affirm him in those gifts when I obviously don’t even understand what he is thinking or why he is doing what he is doing?’”

Read the rest of his article to find out: Parenting the Sensitive Soul.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/mommy_blogger_outs_her_5-year_old_son on Nov. 9, 2010.

Hail the Conquering Graduates!

June 10, 2009

I was asked to put together a few resources for the high

school grads at church. I thought I'd share the wealth with the World Wide Web.

Below you'll find helpful and hopefully meaningful resources to guide you as you embark on adulthood. I especially recommend the two blogs. The most valuable resource of all, though, is people. Get involved in your own way on campus and in a local church. But don't just hang out with people your own age—that'll make you boring. Be sure to introduce yourself to your professors and tell them thank you (will likely turn that B+ into an A). I've been teaching and learning from college students for a really long time. So I know quite a bit about college stuff; and a decent amount about life stuff too—you can always ask me anything. The whole world is before you; but you never have to face it, with all its joys and hardships, alone.

Many congratulations and blessings.

Renea

Bookmark This

GoCollege.com

Here you'll find really good tips for getting the most out of the really (sometimes really, really) expensive education you're getting. Classroom lectures, writing assignments, and even exams can be a lot different in college than they were in high school. The tips on this website can help make the transition smoother.

Biblos.com

Biblos.com is this great website I've only recently discovered. It's a one-stop-shop for all your bible study tools including concordances, commentaries, maps, pictures, devotions, and of course the Bible itself in several different translations and languages.

EveryStudent.com

I'm really pumped about this website. It's a place where no question about God or life is out of bounds. When your friends have questions about God and Christianity, or when you have questions yourself, this website can help. In college you'll do a lot of exploring, discovering, and learning about yourself: what you think about God, Christianity, the way the world is, the way it should be. This website is designed to guide you on that journey. Be sure to check out Life Issues, which touches on topics such as sex, beauty, racism, and shame.

Probe.org

Curious about Genesis and evolution? Need help answering the tough questions your friends have about Christianity? Whether you want to learn more about your friend's religion, are struggling with questions like – Why do bad things happen to good people? – or you need a credible source for the paper you're writing, Probe.org is an excellent resource that can help you think through some really tough topics.

Blogs

Living Spirituality

Living Spirituality offers helpful, encouraging, and even sometimes convicting devotionals. It also provides a weekly discussion about real life stuff. These discussions are helpful as we try to live like Jesus in our everyday lives.

Surviving College Life

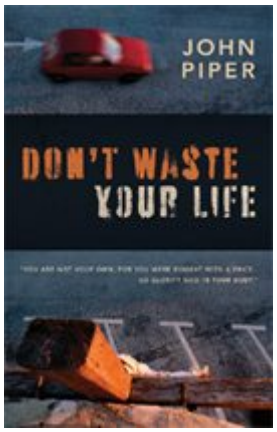
Surviving College Life is a really cool blog that's incredibly comprehensive. Not only will it be helpful as you prepare to arrive on campus. This will be something you'll find useful throughout your college years as you move from dorms to apartments, friendships to romances, and from major to major.

The above link is a list of all the posts divided by topic. So whether you're looking for time management tips, study aids, roommate advice, financial aid resources, or fitness facts, *Surviving College Life* can help give you a heads up and point you in a good direction.

Book Buzz

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2

This brief list of books includes stuff I read in college that was really important to my Christian walk, as well as a few books I wish I had read in college. They're books I hope you will find helpful as you journey with Jesus and strive to think christianly. (Don't worry; they're not just "smart people" books. Most of these are very easy to read.)

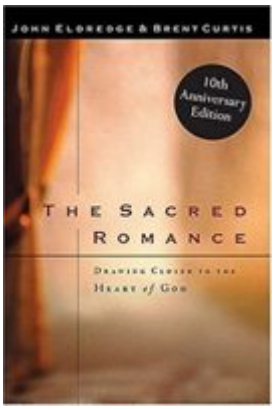


Don't Waste Your Life

—John Piper

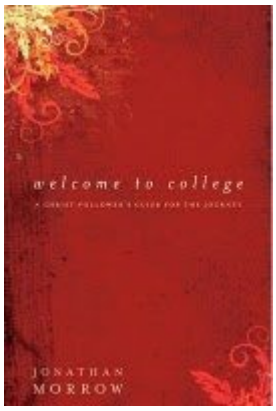
When Christ gave us real life, he gave our lives meaning and purpose. *Don't Waste Your Life* is about living on purpose a life passionate for God and people.

The Sacred Romance: Drawing Closer to the Heart of God



—Brent Curtis & John Eldredge

This is not a girly book; don’t let the title fool you. The Sacred Romance was a really important book for me when I was in college. It helped me understand the big picture of the Bible: the story of God and the story of my own life. It helped me understand the difference between living by the rules and living spiritually.

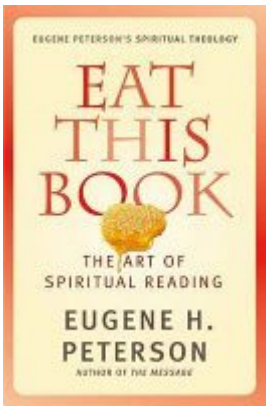


Welcome to College: A Christ-follower’s Guide for the Journey

—Jonathan Morrow

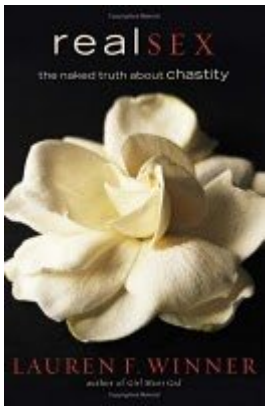
Welcome to College includes chapters on the problem of evil and suffering, Christology, ethics and much more. You will also find a broad collection of practical topics: health, sex and dating, finances, Internet use, alcohol. This book provides unique and much–needed help for navigating the head–spinning newness of college life.

Eat This Book: The Art of Spiritual Reading



—Eugene Peterson

This is a really helpful book about how to read and interpret and understand the Bible, how to let the Scriptures nourish and feed us, how to live the Scriptures as they are the Living Words of God.

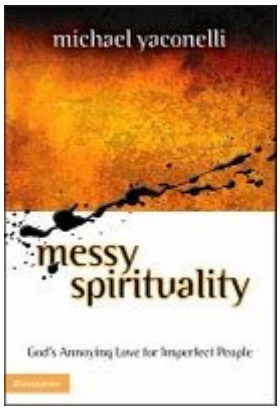


Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity

—Lauren F. Winner

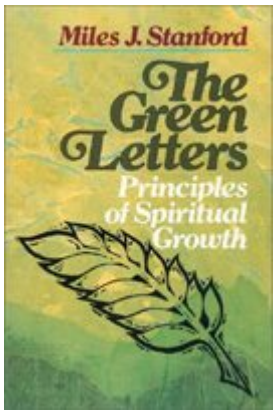
Winner talks about sex in a realistic way. She sorts through the confusing messages we hear about sex from both the world and the church, and helps us think about sex and romantic love within the big picture of God’s story. Real Sex provides biblical and practical guidance for unmarried Christians who desire to honor God with their sexuality and dating relationships.

Messy Spirituality: God's Annoying Love for Imperfect People



– Mike Yaconelli

This small book says big things about what being a Christian looks like. It reminds us that we're all human in need of God's grace; that there's no such thing as the ideal Christian—there's no one-size-fits-all pattern of spirituality.

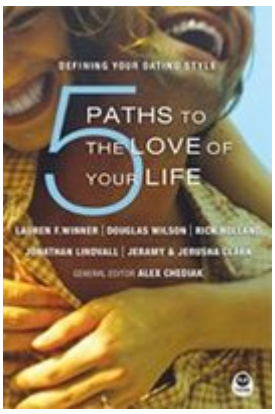


The Green Letters

–Miles J. Stanford

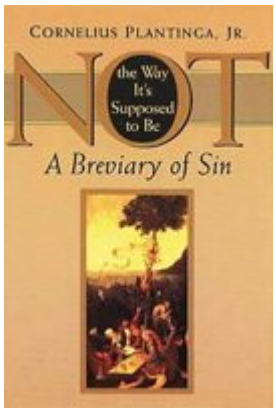
The Green Letters is about spiritual growth. It's one of those books you can pick and choose what you want to read by scanning over the Table of Contents; that is, the chapters don't necessarily have to be read in order. This book will challenge you to live less selfishly, or we could say, less as a self-follower and more as a Christ-follower.

5 Paths to the Love of Your Life: Defining Your Dating Style



—Alex Chediak

There are basically five different approaches to romantic love from the Christian perspective. This book gives you an overview of these five views, their advantages and disadvantages, and the logic and Scripture behind them. So you can decide for yourself which path you relate to most, which enables you to be intentional about biblical, christianly romance.



Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin

—Cornelius Plantinga Jr.

What is sin? What are the effects of sin? How do we think and talk about sin (if at all)? How do we deal with sin? These are some of the questions discussed in this small, but impactful

book on sin. You'd think a book all about sin would be depressing, but Plantinga understands that sin is only the distortion of something originally good; and that though things aren't the way they're supposed to be now, they will be one day soon when Christ returns.

This blog post originally appeared at
reneamac.com/2009/06/10/hail-the-conquering-graduates/

Gay Teen Suicide and Bullying: A Christian Response

The rise in gay teen suicides is alarming and heartbreaking, whether it is an actual rise in suicides or a rise in the reporting and awareness of these needless deaths. Five teens killed themselves in a recent three–week period because of bullying or "outing," but no one knows for sure how many there are.

Teens who experience same–sex attractions are already stressed simply by the difficulties of adolescence. This is painfully exacerbated by the confusion that accompanies unwanted desires and feelings that make them feel "other than," different, like they don't belong. Many of those who struggle with gay and lesbian feelings are very emotionally sensitive, and they can feel their pain more deeply than many of their classmates. They can easily buy into the lies that life is too hard, the challenges too daunting, that the hopelessness is too overwhelming.

When one factors in the excruciating pain of being taunted and

bullied for even being perceived as gay or lesbian, the shame can become too much. If one is overweight, there is a possibility of losing weight; if one is a poor student, there is a possibility of working hard and studying to do better. But if one feels disconnected from and unaccepted by their same-sex peers, and if they can't explain and did not choose the attractions that plague them, then most students will despair, believing there is no hope of anything changing. This is especially true for those who have prayed—many of them every single day—for God to take away their feelings, and He doesn't seem to answer. (There are good reasons for this, but they don't know that.) Gender identity is at the center of one's identity; what do you when you don't feel comfortable in your own skin?

Given these stresses, Christians could and should be the first ones to reach out to the marginalized, the ostracized, and the bullied. Every single person is precious to God, made in His image, and deserving of dignity and respect.

The emphasis needs to be on "teen suicides," not "gay suicides." Any time a young person takes his or her own life it is horrific and unacceptable—and, may I repeat myself, heartbreaking.

I am grateful for the way the media is highlighting the problem of bullying. This is a problem we can do something about—regardless of our particular beliefs about sexuality.

My friend Randy Thomas, executive vice—president of Exodus International, responded to the highly publicized suicide of Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi on the Exodus blog (Exodus is a ministry to those dealing with unwanted same-sex attractions):

> Christians we need to speak out strongly against bullying and condemn vicious and violating behavior like this. God is the author of every breath. As long as there are Tylers in

> this world we have to defend their right to freedom and self-determination. We must afford them at least the very basics in human respect [and] dignity and defend them from those [who] would exploit and abuse them . . . . God is the author of every breath, and when we look into the face of another we are seeing a dim reflection of Him.
>
> Whether they know Him or not.{1}

Christians should be at the forefront of the anti-bullying movement. Bullying is the opposite of the second greatest commandment, to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Mark 12:31). The Gospels are full of stories of Jesus standing up for the underdog; consider how He stood up to the religious bullies who had entrapped a woman caught in adultery (John 8). When it comes to bullies, what would Jesus do? Stand up to them. Defend the bullied. Communicate that they are precious, valued, and loved.

I have read a number of stories of people who were bullied when they were growing up. I can't imagine how difficult it is to live through the painful isolation and rejection, of feeling that no one cares and nothing can fix the problem (apart from the bullies disappearing). I can't imagine how painful it is to see teachers, bus drivers, and other adults say nothing and do nothing to come to the defense of kids being picked on—for being different, for being new, for being "other than," for no reason at all other than the arbitrary attack of someone who felt small, and who bullied someone else to feel "bigger than."

To understand the problem of gay teen suicides, it's helpful understand the issues for gay teens (please see my article "Helping Teens Understand Homosexuality.") We also need to understand more about bullying and what to do about it. The very wise and experienced Dr. Allan L. Beane offers "Tips for Parents, Assertiveness Skills for Students Who Are Bullied" and "Assertiveness Strategies for Siblings and Other Students

(Bystanders)" on his web site.{2}

Parents, pastors, youth workers and students need to encourage one another to stand up against any bullying of any student. There is strength in numbers, especially when it comes to dealing with a bully, although it only takes one voice to say, "Stop it." Experienced teachers say a no-tolerance policy toward bullying is essential to taking power away from bullies. The key is the community—the school, the church, the neighborhood, the youth group: when the community says nothing, bullying explodes. When the community refuses to allow bullies to exploit others' weaknesses, it is quenched.

At the same time, however, as we encourage teens to reach out to their marginalized peers by standing with them against their bullies, we don't want to be naïve. Although community pressure on bullies to stop often works, Scripture makes it clear that living like Jesus and standing up for the outcast will not be easy. Just as the Pharisees were upset by the way Jesus interfered with their social hierarchy, so too things will get sticky for those who upset those at the top of the social ladder. High school bullies are often at the top of the social food—chain. We need to prepare our students for the teasing and bullying they very likely will face for defending the marginalized, reminding and encouraging them that being persecuted for doing the right thing is to be expected, and is part of what makes the hope we have in a world and a kingdom beyond this one so sweet.

Gay teen suicides happen when students feel alone and isolated, when they feel "other than" and feel judged for that other-ness. Many of those who find themselves attracted to other boys or other girls are already uncomfortable with their desires; most of them try to pray or wish them away, but that's not how those feelings are changed into the God—given, normal attractions for the opposite sex.

We can do something to prevent more gay teen suicides. The

most influential people in gay teens' lives are their peers, whose affirmation or shaming holds extreme power. But teens need to be instructed in how to fulfill the second greatest commandment, in loving their neighbor. We can teach them that all young people need to be loved, to be accepted as people made in God's image, to be valued. They all need the "three A's": attention, affirmation, and affection. If sexually confused or gender-insecure teens, who are often marginalized by the other students, experienced Christians reaching out to them in friendship, simply communicating the grace of acceptance and value, that could make a big difference. It can be choices as simple as inviting someone to sit with them at lunch, or telling others to "lay off" if they make insulting and negative comments about one of those marginalized students. They can even say affirming things to the bullies like, "Hey. You're better than that, dude. Leave him alone."

Jim Wallis recently wrote something stellar in a blog post on "Christians and Bullying":

> My mother used to give us kids two instructions:
>
> 1. If there is a kid on the playground that nobody else is playing with—you play with them.
>
> 2. If there is a bully picking on other kids—you be the one to stand up to him or her.{3}

Being "Jesus with skin on." That's how teen suicides, regardless of sexual identity, can be prevented. May God use His people to love these hurting young women and men whom He loves dearly.

Notes

1. Thomas, Randy, "Step Up, Speak Out Against Bullying: The Tragic Case of Tyler Clementi," Exodus International Blog, posted Oct. 1, 2010, accessed Nov. 11, 2010: blog.exodusinternational.org/2010/10/01/step-up-speak-out-

against-bullying-the-tragic-case-of-tyler-clementi.

2. Beane, Dr. Allan, Bully Free Program, "Tips for Parents" and other posts: www.bullyfree.com/free-resources/tips-for-parents accessed Nov. 11, 2010.

3. Wallis,Jim, "Christians and Bullying: Standing with Gays and Lesbians," God's Politics blog: blog.sojo.net/2010/10/21/christians-and-bullying-standing-with-gays-and-lesbians, accessed Nov. 11, 2010.

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Your Board of Directors

At a conference several years ago I was given a thought-provoking challenge, to identify the people on the board of directors of my life: whose voices do I listen to? Whose counsel do I follow? Whose values do I respond to?

The speaker pointed out that some people ought to be kicked off our board—like parents, if their voices of shame and criticism still control and restrict us. So should voices of much of the media, especially TV. And we can replace them with wiser, more godly voices who can offer us direction and perspective. There was a discussion of categories of potential board members. They don't have to be alive, and we don't have to personally know them, either.

The Lord Jesus, of course, needs to be the #1 board member. If we're married, our spouse should be on our board. The Apostle Paul is a good board member. Peter and James are good too, as is Solomon. So are some of the church fathers and Christian writers like C.S. Lewis. Or a pastor, and not necessarily our

own. (I have a friend in a distant city who has adopted my pastor as hers, and listens to every audio recording my church puts online.) Mentors are great board members, and so are wise and trusted friends.

A few weeks ago, John Townsend, one of the co-authors of the Boundaries series, was at my church. I love what he writes and listen to him on the radio show "New Life Live" whenever possible. I had a chance to talk to him briefly, so I told him about my board of directors. "John," I said, "Several years ago I installed you as a permanent member of my board. Other people have come and gone, but you're always there. I really appreciate your wisdom and godly perspective, and you have equipped me to respond to various life challenges. Just wanted you to know how you've blessed me even though we've never met."

(To my delighted surprise, he lit up and asked if he could hug me!)

Who's on your board? Who can you kick off to the glory of God? (Hint: magazines that make you unhappy with how God made you as you compare yourself to the celebrities and models inside, certain internet sites, particular TV shows. . .)

Who can you put on your board? Let's hear it.

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/your_board_of_directors
in July 2009.

Watching Transformation Happen

Last week I was privileged to attend the annual Exodus Conference along with a thousand people coming out of homosexuality, as well as some family members and people like myself who minister to them. Nothing has built my faith in the power and the loving heart of our life-changing God like my decade-long involvement in this kind of ministry.

I got to experience the power of answered prayer as I stood in worship with a divorced couple whom I have known online for several years but met at the conference. The husband had gone AWOL for the past year, choosing to pursue his feelings instead of his identity as a beloved child of His Father. He told me "something" kept drawing him back into the light: with a smile, I told him that Jesus has His hook in his heart because he belongs to Jesus! And there he was, reconnecting with his God and his wife in worship and the beauty of repentance.

I got to hear the testimony of a beloved young woman, deeply wounded, whom I have watched soften and become so much like her Jesus over the past several years. As we were singing the words "Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow," she suddenly and violently experienced the memory of being a sexually abused five-year-old, sitting in the tub with blood everywhere. In the pain of that moment, the Father met her there with the same words He had spoken to Sy Rogers, that evening's speaker, about his sexual abuse: "Daddy sees, and Daddy's sorry." As His compassionate love washed over her, healing came.

And I got to see actual physical transformation in a dear lady with whom I have been walking out her repentance from lesbianism. As she has dared to believe that God really means

everything in His word, especially about His love for her and how He sees her as a precious, beautiful, beloved daughter, change has come. She has gone to great lengths to drink in her Abba's love in intimate ways (and has taught me what that can look like in the process). Halfway through the week, she caught a glimpse of herself in a plate glass window and was amazed to realize that her posture had changed: she was walking more upright and confidently, assured that she was "a real person" (her words). At the end of the week, she said she believed the change in her was permanent and lasting. She finally feels solid, not hollow. That's the power of God's healing love.

And that's why it is such a joyful privilege for me to serve people whose thorn in the flesh is unwanted same-sex attractions. As their SSA drives them to Jesus, transformation happens.

And it is beautiful.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/watching-transformation-happen/ on July 21, 2009.

Mothering Little Men from Mars

One of the greatest privileges of my life—right after saying "yes" to Jesus and "I do" to my husband—has been mothering my two sons, now 20 and 22.

Several years ago, my husband Ray and I started researching gender differences and discovered the truths in John Gray's

mega-bestseller, *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus*. It didn't take long for us to realize that we didn't have gender-free *children*; we had little men from Mars! And then I started realizing why I sometimes unnecessarily frustrated my kids and why we didn't connect all the time—because I'm from Venus and they're from Mars, and there is a HUGE gender gap between masculine and feminine! John Gray didn't discover it; God created it, with great delight and a big smile on His face.

For example, boys, being male, are wired to be **self-reliant**. They act like they get extra brownie points for doing something on their own. One of my son Curt's first whole sentences was, "***I*** do it!" For boys, accepting help is perceived as weakness. For us relationally-oriented ladies, offering and accepting help is a way to make a heart-connection with another person. So when I would say, "Let Mommy help you," they would be offended and I never knew why. If I could do it over again, I would tell them, "Let's see if you can do it on your own. If it doesn't work, I'll be glad to help."

One of the most powerful lessons I've learned about mothering boys is that the male mind is linear, life is handled only one piece at a time. This impacts both their thinking and activity.

Males tend to think on one thing at a time. I now know that when my husband or sons are reading, it's not safe to start a conversation until I get their attention and they're looking at me. I used to frustrate the dickens out of my sons on soccer game days when they were dressed in their soccer uniforms, their soccer bags were packed, they had their game face on, and there were 15 minutes left before we had to leave. And I, being the ever-efficient one, would try to get them to use that time wisely to clean up the living room or fold laundry. They never, ever, cooperated willingly! And now I know why. I'd love to go back and change that part of mothering.

This linear approach also has a major impact on their activity. They are created to **do one thing at a time** before moving on to the next event. If I wanted their attention while they were watching TV, I would have to physically stand in front of the screen to break their attention and have them look at me. I, on the other hand, am a natural multi-tasker, because if mothers couldn't do more than one thing at a time, humanity wouldn't last more than one generation. So I would have conversations with my boys or direct homework while doing the dishes or cooking or a multitude of other things. I finally realized that because my kids can't multi-task, they never believed that I was actually paying attention to them if my hands were busy.

Knowing this, I have learned that when they start to tell me something, I put down whatever I'm doing, turn my body to face them squarely, and give them my full physical attention. It's been wonderful to see the difference; they now *feel* I am truly listening. I've shared this insight with several of my friends, who report that it's made a major difference with the boys in their homes as well. Their girls never gave it a thought, because girls intuitively know you can wash dishes and talk at the same time!

Where girls are more verbal, boys are usually **more physical**. I have a friend who wanted her boys to always move quietly and slowly like girls, and had a "no rough-housing" rule in the house. This is the fast track to killing a boy's heart, because boys were made to wrestle and tumble and be loud. This isn't a design defect. It's the way God was pleased to make them. While it's not good to break lamps, of course, boys need to be able to MOVE while their moms smile and let them be who they were made to be.

Another thing I'd go back and change is trying to pry conversations out of my sons. I didn't understand that females naturally generate three times as many words as males, and we talk to build community and knit hearts together. Boys and **men**

talk for one reason: to convey facts and information. If they don't have anything to convey, they don't talk. A wise counselor finally explained to me that if I waited for my sons to initiate conversations on their timetable, I would get what my heart longed for. I also learned that one of my son's love languages is physical touch, and if I would go in at the beginning or the end of the day and silently rub his back, he would often start talking. It's amazing what meaningful conversations can happen at bedtime when the kids are trying to forestall sleep!

John Gray says, and it's my experience as well, that a **man's primary need is to be *respected***. It starts when they're very small boys. When a boy's mother shows him respect, especially when it's backed by a father's respect, that fills boys' "respect buckets." Because they are made in the image of God, that alone makes them infinitely valuable and precious and worthy of great respect and dignity. I showed them respect by giving them significant choices, and honoring those choices. It started with choosing their clothes and making various school-related choices, and grew into choices like room colors and what sports they would pursue. I showed them respect by listening to them and not interrupting, by not being sarcastic, and by not saying shaming and condemning things. My son has commented that it's important to remember that kids are "little MEN from Mars," and not talk down to them as inferior beings simply because they are not adults. He is glad we didn't do it, but it really bothers him when he sees grown-ups do it to kids.

One last thing I've learned lately is the importance of supporting and cherishing our children's gender to help them grow into healthy adults. Little **boys need to know that being a boy is a good thing**, and of course the same holds true for girls. After sharing this with a group of mothers of preschoolers, one friend took her little boy for a walk down to the lake. Along the way she said, "Parker, let's look for

frogs and toads. Mommy is so glad God made you a little boy so you could like yucky things like frogs and toads." When they got back to the house, his grandmother asked, "So how was your walk?" and Parker said, "Mommy's glad that I'm a boy because I like yucky things like frogs and toads."

When my first son was born, my mother told me that mothers and sons, and fathers and daughters, have a very special relationship. She was so very right, and I thank the Lord for His good, *so* very good, gift of my sons.

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The Mother Heart of God

Two days ago we observed Mother's Day in the US. I think Mother's Day matters to God because mothers matter to God. And I think mothers matter to God beyond their necessity for bringing new life into the world, but because women reflect an aspect of God's heart in ways men cannot.

Every aspect of our femininity, it seems to me, comes from God originally. He made females in His image with the feminine attributes and strengths that come straight from the Father heart of God.

The essence of our femininity is expressed in two main ways: responding and nurturing.

One of the most wonderful promises in God's word says, "Call to Me, and I will answer." He says this multiple times, and multiple ways! God is a responsive God. And it honors and glorifies Him when WE respond—to Him, and to others.

Nurture shares the same root word as nurse. I am fascinated by one of the Old Testament names for God, El Shaddai. El means "strong one," and Shaddai is a form of the word for the breast. El Shaddai means "The strong breasted one. "

El Shaddai is the mother heart . . . of God the Father. It's from the Father we receive a mother's heart.

I acknowledge that Mother's Day is painful for some women, especially those who long to be mothers and aren't. But the heart of a mother isn't about having given birth. It's an attitude of the heart, a desire and willingness to nurture others.

El Shaddai longs to nurture and nurse us, if we'll let Him, and He longs to draw us into an intimate embrace with Him.

I have seen Him bring healing to the hearts of many people as they pressed hard into His breast to receive nurture and comfort. . . and identity. His love is powerful enough to transform a heart that is so riddled with holes that it's like a spaghetti strainer, and when His love functions like Super Glue to plug up the holes, people's hearts are transformed into vessels that can hold His love—as well as people's—instead of draining out. As they receive nursing and nurturing from The Strong Breasted One, He loves and provides for them. I've watched it happen multiple times.

I am so grateful for the responsive, nurturing "Mother heart of God"!

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/the_mother_heart_of_god

Listen to Sue's message on this topic given at a Dallas-area church

Ellen and Her “Wife”

Yesterday’s (November 10, 2009) Oprah featured Ellen DeGeneres and her “wife,” actress Portia di Rossi. I watched the show with the perspective of one who, for a decade, has helped women come out of the bondage of lesbian relationships. Let me share with you the meaning of what I saw and heard.

Oprah is enthusiastically pro-gay, so I was not surprised that she oohed and aahed over her guests’ romance and wedding, which we saw in video and gorgeous photography. And I wasn’t surprised that Ellen and Portia said they were glad to be “married” because it gave validity and legitimacy to their relationship. That perspective is part of an agenda about normalizing homosexuality, not the one-flesh union of male and female God intends marriage to be.

In her excitement to embrace the unreality these two women have formed, Oprah could not see the threads of commonality that tie most lesbian relationships together:

Hearts looking for their home. Both Ellen and Portia spoke of how they had found their home in each other: a place of rest, of sensing that the search was over. Many women who long for same-sex relationships speak of the sense of a gaping hole in their hearts, looking for someone to make them complete. They are looking for continual reassurance and safety, the security of being loved forever. God’s plan for baby girls is that they find this nurturing and reassurance in their mother’s love and attention, with a strong connection with Mom that grounds them as human beings. All the lesbian women I know have sustained a life-altering “mother wound.” Either their mothers weren’t there for them, or something was broken in receiving their mothers’ love. They are longing for the unconditional and all-

consuming mother love they never felt when they were babies, and they try to find it in the hearts of other women (or girls: growing numbers of teens are struggling as well).

Connection. Both of Oprah's guests reported an immediate, electric connection to each other, even though it took some time for them to become a couple. (Interestingly, neither of them revealed during the interview that they were both in relationships with other women at the time, and they both dumped their respective relationships and moved in together. Abruptly leaving one girlfriend to hook up with a new one is typical.) In our online discussions of women dealing with their unwanted homosexuality, the word *connection* probably shows up more often than any other. *Connection* defines life for them. God created women to be relational, so it's not surprising that connection would be so important, but there is an element of desperation to the connection that characterizes lesbian relationships.

Intensity. Intensity is a substitute for intimacy. Lesbian relationships are marked by intensity; one counselor calls it "emotional crack cocaine." Intensity plus connection feels so overwhelming, so powerful, so intoxicating, that it is like a life-controlling drug. But God never intended for us to have that kind of human relationship, because it is idolatrous. People can never fill a heart-hole that God designed to be filled by Himself. So the cycle of lesbian relationships is: *infatuation* (reveling in the intensity of connection), *disappointment* (realizing the relationship does not satisfy, because idols never do), *breakup* (since God never intended same-sex coupling, it can't work), and *heartache.* . . leading to looking for someone new to be infatuated with.

Lesbian relationship usually last only 3-4 years. (There are long-term relationships, but that's usually because the women don't know how to live without each other. It's not the same as a stable heterosexual marriage relationship.) And when the breakup comes, it's horrifically painful. I pray for Rosie

O’Donnell and Kelli Carpenter, who have separated with 5 kids between them, to turn to the Lord for comfort and truth and peace.

And I pray for Ellen and Portia, when their ride is over as well. I pray for grace, and peace, for them to know Jesus. . . and for their eyes to be opened to why we use quotation marks for the word “wife.”

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/ellen_and_her_wife

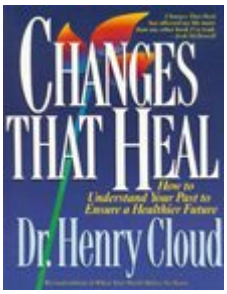
How Change Happens

On my recent trip to Australia (2010), one of the topics I was asked to address at a conference featuring a redemptive view of homosexuality was “Is Change Possible?” This is a controversial question because there are some loud, insistent voices in the culture who say, “Unless you never again have a homosexual thought or feeling, you haven’t changed. And since no one admits to that, any claim of change is an illusion.”

No one would apply that strict a standard to any other issue! Former alcoholics living sober and free from the chaos of their drinking for decades still would like a cold beer on a hot day, but that doesn’t mean they haven’t changed!

Is change possible? Change is part of life! But transformation is also part of what it means to be a Christ-follower. Understanding how change happens, on the other hand, is another matter. So I have been thinking about the process for a long time as I prepared for my message.

One of my favorite explanations comes from Dr. Henry Cloud in his book *Changes That Heal*. He gives a delightful application to one of Jesus' parables in Luke 13.



> "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'
>
> "'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.' (vv. 6-9)
>
> Grace and truth in this parable are symbolized by the actions of "digging around" and "fertilizing." Using the trowel of God's truth, we must dig out the weeds and encumbrances of falsehood, sin and hurt that keep the soil of our souls cluttered. In addition, we must add the fertilizer of love and relationship to "enrich the soil."

As a Bible teacher, a lay counselor, and one involved in helping those deal with unwanted homosexuality, I have seen the truth of Dr. Cloud's suggestion over and over again. As we study God's word with an open heart and pursue knowledge of God and intimacy with Him in a personal relationship ("the trowel of God's truth"), change comes when we identify the lies we have believed about life, about ourselves, about other people, and about God, and replace them with the truth. Change comes when we repent of how our coping mechanisms have become sin because they keep us from trusting God. Change comes when we forgive those who hurt us so we are no longer in bondage to those who left wounds on our souls. Change comes when we live in community, engaging with the Body of Christ who can be "Jesus with skin on" to us. Change comes when people love us

and accept us as we are so we can be courageous to deal with our "stuff" and cooperate with God in the changing, healing process.

Dr. Cloud continues,

> But the Bible tells us that in order for grace and truth to produce fruit, we need a third key element: time.
>
> Look again at verses 8 and 9. "'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, Fine! If not, then cut it down.'" The gardener, who certainly symbolizes our Lord, the "author and perfecter" of our faith, realized that his work and the fertilizer need time to take effect. In short, *it takes time to grow*. And time alone will not do it. *Time must be joined by grace and truth.* When we respond responsibly to these three elements, we will not only heal, but also bear fruit.

We live in a microwave culture that has trained us to have unrealistic expectations about time. We want instant everything, and we hate waiting. I received an email from a young man in his early 20s who hated his same-sex attractions and wondered how long it would take to get rid of them. I explained to him that it's not like a bad case of acne, it's far more complex than that, and that it's our experience that for people his age, three to five years of actively "digging around" in the soil of their hearts and minds produces lasting change. He thought that was too long. I wondered, "What will your life look like in three to five years if you keep going down the path you're on? Bless your heart!"

Change is normative. Change is expected. Change is hard work, but we have the assistance of our divine Gardener to make it happen.

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/how-change-happens/

on Sept. 14, 2010

The 3rd Grade Transgender Bus Driver

It’s back to school time, which usually means parents buy school supplies and start waking kids up earlier in the morning. But one elementary school just sent out a letter informing the parents that the school is welcoming a new family with a transgendered “3rd grade girl.”

The letter urges the parents and students to welcome and accept her and treat her the same as any other girl. Not so subtly, the letter also informed parents that the school district does not tolerate discrimination in respect to gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability or religion.

YIKES!!!

My heart absolutely breaks to learn of this. I’m sure the school administrators (and possibly, it’s just one person) are patting themselves on the back for being so progressive and politically correct. I can’t imagine that they are aware of the pressure this puts on this poor confused little boy, as well as an entire school, to engage in this social experiment.

If a third grader decided brushing his teeth is a stupid waste of time and he wasn’t going to do it anymore, responsible parents would never give in to the little tyrant who is completely unable to see the long-term consequences of foolish choices.

If a third grader decided that school itself is a stupid waste

of time and he wasn't going anymore, responsible parents wouldn't give in to that misguided tantrum, either.

But when a third grader is so consumed by confusion about being a boy, when his whole life is permeated with the hopeless despair of believing *It's not okay to be me,* and when his parents capitulate to his fantasy, something bigger than mere confusion is going on. This kid is driving the bus of not only his life, but his parents' as well. And just as we would never let third-graders drive a literal bus, it's equally nuts and scary to let them sit at the controls of anyone's life.

When my friend Ricky was four, he decided he wanted to be a horse. His mother wisely did not build a stable in their back yard and feed him hay just because her little boy wanted to be something other than who he was. She said, "No, you're not a horse, you're a human boy." And in time, he grew to accept who he was.

It's politically correct to affirm whatever feelings children have, such as "I'm a boy but I feel like a girl," as valid. When school administrators try to get a whole school to indulge the fantasy, it's only a matter of time before things blow up in their faces, because their rhetoric isn't powerful enough to disable kids' baloney detectors. At least some kids'. Telling children to accept a boy as a girl and expecting them to swallow it without thinking is sheer hubris, I think.

". . . male and female He created them." Gen. 1:27

Children know that we live in a binary world: boys and girls, male and female. And it is not good, or loving, to indulge the fantasy that one can change the reality God created. Or that He made a mistake in choosing a baby's gender.

I pray for this confused little boy, that his parents will get him the help for his gender identity disorder now while there's still lots of hope for help. And I pray for the

Christians in that school to be lovingly bold in proclaiming that it's not in this student's best interest, or the best interests of the rest of the students, to take make-believe to a scary new level.

And I pray that the Lord will gently pick up this precious, confused little boy from his bus driver's seat and place him in His lap.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/the-3rd-grade-transgender-bus-driver/ on August 18, 2009.