“My Son Came Out As Gay”

My son has told me he is a homosexual, which I believe is not true. He went to a Gay Pride parade this past weekend. I’m asking for your prayers because I don’t know how to deal with it. I’ve put up barriers between us, which I shouldn’t because he’s my son. I ask God to help me with this but I don’t know where to even begin or how to talk to Him.

I am so glad you wrote! For the past 8 or so years, I have been working with a ministry (Living Hope Ministries in Arlington TX) that helps people deal with unwanted homosexuality and the family members of those who identify as gay. I do send this with a prayer that you will allow this trauma to drive you closer to God and closer to your son, who desperately needs your respect, your attention, your affection, and your affirmation. He needs to know his dad loves him and wants to be a part of his life. Putting up barriers is the exact opposite of what will help your son. Invite him places. . . invest in what is important to him. . . ask him about himself. . . spend time just being WITH him so he gets the all-important message “my dad cares about me. I’m important to him.”

There is a free, anonymous, confidential, online support group for strugglers and family members like yourself at www.livehope.org. In the “Family and Friends” support group, the executive director of Living Hope and I collaborated on a welcoming post called “So Your Loved One Just Came Out to You.” I hope you find it helpful.

Sue Bohlin

Welcome to the Family and Friends forum. We are so glad you’re here. . . and we’re so sorry you have to be here at all. The Lord has been gracious in bringing you to this place of

acceptance, warmth, understanding and prayer support. You are now a part of “The Fellowship of the Broken.” That’s why we’re all here.

So now you know your loved one experiences same sex attraction (SSA). It’s usually a horrible shock. You may feel like Alice, having just arrived at the bottom of the White Rabbit’s chute. . . but this isn’t Wonderland, is it? You’d prefer to be anywhere but this new reality that’s been forced on you.

Most people, arriving in this place, have two questions: How can I fix my loved one? And, how do I get my old life back, before the disclosure?

Second question first: “How do I get my old life back?” Well, welcome to your “new normal.” We are so sorry—but you can’t go back to the place of not knowing. Praise God, though: He lavishes grace on us in times of transition, even (and perhaps especially) this adjustment to your new, post-disclosure world. We pray for you to experience “acceptance grace,” that you may receive His empowering to live in this new and unwelcome reality.

Back to the first question: “How can I fix my loved one?” (Or a variation of this question: “Where can I send my loved one to be fixed?”) You can’t. Only God can. And He usually works on a timetable and with a methodology that is different from ours. Your loved one is not a broken car that you send to the shop, and he or she will resent being viewed as a problem or a project.

The best thing you can do is entrust your loved one into God’s hands and leave them there. What you CAN do is wear out your knees in intercessory prayer. The most effective prayers are scripture prayers. May we suggest reading through Paul’s epistles and writing down his prayers for his beloved friends, which you then adjust on behalf of your loved one? For example, we have learned that grasping how much God loves us

is a huge part of emotional healing, because God's love is the healing agent no matter what plagues us. Consider praying Ephesians 3:17-19 (NLT) on behalf of your loved one:

> And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in his/her heart as s/he trusts in him. May his/her roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love. And may s/he have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is. May s/he experience the love of Christ, though it is so great s/he will never fully understand it. Then s/he will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

That's #1. But in our ministry, we have learned over the years that when family members come for support and assistance, the greatest need they have is to work on their own "stuff." Every one of us has garbage and scars from living in a fallen world. Every one of us grew up with imperfect parents in an imperfect family. Every one of us has been the recipient of countless "fiery darts" of the Enemy in spiritual warfare. And we all tend to hide our baggage and our scars, all the dark and hurting places of our souls. One wise counselor calls this "Christian denial," and defines it as "denying God access to those places He wants to heal for His glory, and our benefit."

God has brought you to this place in your life where you are ripe for God to do some wonderful, amazing work in your heart. Your loved one's homosexuality is the method He used to invite you to this place, but it's not the issue He wants to deal with in you. He wants your heart; He wants your vulnerability; He wants YOU.

So what do you do next?

Give God permission to work. Open your heart to Him: "Lord, what do you want to do in ME? What do you want me to know about my own heart, my own stuff, that I have been avoiding?"

It will be tempting to keep your focus on your loved one—it's much less threatening!—but you need to keep your focus on Jesus. Expect Him to show you things you've been in denial about, but also expect that He will lavish His grace on you to see what He wants to show you. He will never expose the dark and hurting places of your heart to you but that He's not holding those places in His own loving and safe hands.

Spend daily time in the Word, expecting God to meet you there and speak to You through His Word. You may find the Psalms especially meaningful because they are so comforting.

It will be helpful for you to journal this "adventure with God." Many people have reported that it is far more satisfying and helpful to use an actual book (or at least paper) journal instead of a computer. The multi-sensory experience of handling paper—seeing it, hearing it rustle, feeling it in your hands, smelling its fragrance—makes a stronger impression on your brain. Write what's happening and how you feel about what's happening. Write what God is showing you in your time with Him, both in His Word and in prayer. Many people find that they are better able to process what God is doing internally through journaling than any other method, because wrapping words around thoughts and feelings helps us to sort through our jumbled confusion.

Remember and practice Psalm 46:10—"Be still and know that I am God." God wants to soothe and comfort you, but you have to be quiet and still for Him to do that. You may find that listening to praise music may be helpful at times, but there is a time to turn off the music and the TV and the mp3 player and just be still before your God. Let Him love you in those moments.

We tell the SSA (same-sex attracted) strugglers who come to our ministry that the way God will bring healing and change to them is through intimacy with Christ. Many of them learn to also enjoy intimacy with their heavenly Father. That's the

goal of all discipleship, which is what God invites you to as well. We're really a discipleship ministry, and whether people are here as overcomers, as strugglers, as family members of strugglers, or those with a passion for those in the struggle, God has the same goal for all of us: spiritual maturity. Abiding in Him is the way to grow more like Jesus, no matter which door into this place of growth and healing you came through—even a rabbit hole.

We are glad you're here, and we pray that you will allow God to do such a deep work in you that at some point, you will be able to look back at this time and say, "It was horrible, it was incredibly painful. . . and it was the best thing that ever happened to me."

With prayer for rich blessings in your journey,

Sue Bohlin (Living Hope Board Member)

From Ricky Chelette, Executive Director of Living Hope Ministries:

I AMEN to all that my wise sister has shared. I see so many parents, particularly of teens and young adults, that look at this struggle like a bad case of acne. They often think, "Well, this is a phase and after a bit of counseling, some more Bible study and rededication to Jesus, maybe even a conference or two, my kid is going to be fine." I wish it were that easy but you have to remember that we are dealing with relational brokenness. This is not making a bad decision to stay out past curfew, this is thinking the wrong things about who you are and believing those wrong things as truth.

As a result, God has to do some major work in the heart and life of those who struggle. You are not God. Therefore YOU can't do anything but love and encourage your son/daughter to seek wise counsel, Godly advice, and more of Jesus. I really

wish this didn't sound as "churchy" of an answer as it does, but the fact remains that we are broken and once broken, we forever carry the scars of that brokenness in our lives. Yes, Jesus does bring healing, that is His promise to us on Calvary, but the process of sanctification and total relational healing will likely not happen until He comes again to redeem and reclaim His creation at the end of time.

St. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria in 297 wrote, "That which Jesus has not assumed (or taken upon himself), He cannot heal."

He assumes our sins as WE are willing to confess our sins and bring them to Him. We can not confess sins for others, only for ourselves. Your son/daughter has to get to that place and what it might take to get them there is only God's knowledge. You cannot create contrition. That is the work of God's Spirit.

Also please understand that the problem your child has is not homosexuality (though that is what we label it), it is sin. Sin is sin and it always deceives, kills and destroys. It does that in your life, my life and it does it in your child's life as well. They have to grasp the sin problem and the ONLY one who can convict us of sin is the Holy Spirit (notice mom, that I've said that twice! <smile>). Therefore, pray that God would use His Holy Spirit to convict and convince the heart and mind of your son/daughter so that they might see the error of their way and return to living for the Lord.

Despite what I sometimes hear from evangelical Christians, homosexuality does NOT keep a person from heaven any more than cheating, stealing, or telling "white lies." All those things are sin and all are bad and separate us from God, but they are also all covered by the blood of Christ on the cross. Granted, as humans, we tend to categorize sin and make some much worse than others. God doesn't do that. He says that what keeps us out of the Kingdom of heaven is not trusting in Him with our

whole heart as our Savior and Lord. A person who thinks he/she is gay can be a Christian. They won't be a happy Christian, or truly intimately related to Christ, but they can be a Christian. I believe that God, in His incredible mercy and grace, will continue to reach out to them, woo them to Himself and draw them until that day when He calls them home. So never ever, ever give up! God will hear your prayers for He fights for the souls of those who have "wandered from the way" (Matt. 18:12-13). God loves them more than you do—so wow, that's a lot!!

Keep in mind too that your task is not to "save your kid," but to show Jesus to them in everything you do. That is such a hard order for everyone and especially if your child has a partner. Do you allow the partner to come to your house, participate in your family activities, hang out with the rest of the family? Of course this is a very personal choice and one that you need to make with lots of prayer and discussion with your spouse. That being said, the question remains: How do you show Jesus to your child and their partner? Is kicking them out of family gatherings the way to do that? Personally, I don't think so, but maybe others here will feel differently. Remember, however, that your child loves this person and rejecting the partner will be akin to rejecting the child even though that is NOT what you are trying to communicate. I DO think it is perfectly reasonable to ask them NOT to show public displays of affection, not to sleep in the same room/bed, etc. Those are things that you would ask your child to do if they were in a heterosexual relationship and you were trying to uphold Biblical standards in your home. If there are small children around, you might have to think about the implications of that as well and if/how you want to talk to the children about it. I use to think that it was not good to expose them to such things, but with the popularity of homosexuality in our culture and media (need I say, "Brokeback Mountain" or "Will and Grace"), I think it might be best for them to hear the TRUTH from you rather than an interpretation

of truth they would get in the streets.

We all know that this journey can be overwhelming, confusing and at times, even debilitating. Do not allow the devil to steal from you the hope that is in Christ Jesus. Do not be worn down by the familiarity and insistence of your child that this is "normal" so that you redefine Truth. Come here and post your frustrations, concerns, joys and victories. We have seen many make it out, hundreds of thousands in fact, and we have seen God do amazing things in the lives of the struggler as well as their family members. If you will allow it, this can be the greatest thing that has happened in your family. I am convinced that God wants to use it for good if you will let Him.

© 2007 Probe Ministries

"Your Position Against Women Pastors Is Outdated"

Question for Sue Bohlin regarding women pastors:

It seems like your reasoning centers on one verse: 1 Tim. 2:12. [But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.] My question about that verse would be: Is it a timeless teaching? Wouldn't you agree that there are some culturally relevant areas of the Bible? Is the particular application of the principles of this passage timeless or are they culturally relative? When I study the Bible, to determine whether the teaching is timeless or culturally relative, I ask, was the teaching taught uniformly throughout the Bible. If it is a timeless teaching, then there won't be any variations on it. If it is culturally relative

issue, sometimes it might be there and sometimes not. For example, throughout the Bible you hear differing views on drinking wine, but there is a consistent message about getting drunk. The view that states that women cannot be in leadership in a church context is drawn mainly from 1 Timothy 2:9-13. Due to the pagan religions in Ephesus in Paul's day this prohibition was necessary to distinguish Christianity from other religions. However, that cultural context is no longer applicable to the church today.

If you think that 1 Tim. 2:12 is timeless, then what do you do with the fact that women wrote parts of the Bible? Luke 2:38 (Anna); Luke 1:42-45 (Elizabeth); Luke 46-55 (Mary); Exodus 15:20-21 (Miriam); Judges 5 (Deborah—was leader of Israel). What do you do with the fact that woman are prophets? Ex.15:20-21 (Miriam); 2Kg 22:14 (Huldah), Isa 8:3 (Isaiah's wife); Luke 2:38 (Anna); 1 Cor. 11:5 (others). Another thing to consider is that many women are described as having authoritative roles, over men and women in the Bible. Deborah (Judges 5), Anna (Luke 2:38), Isaiah's wife (Isa. 8:3), Aquilla and Pricilla (Acts 18:26) and others to name a few.

Women were not only recorded as being prophets but also judges and apostles (Rom. 16:7). The cultural restriction of women in leadership roles is not a timeless principle. This restriction denies women who are called into leadership from fulfilling their unique role in God's kingdom. Also, women not being allowed in leadership denies the church from the benefit of half of its leaders, pastors, visionaries, prophets and so on. Men and women are different but together in leadership they can complement one another by bringing out different characteristics of God's character. Not all women, just as not all men, are called into leadership roles in the church. Each person should follow their personal calling. However, women can be free to follow God's call into roles of leadership if God chooses to gift, equip and call them into that role. How can all this be ignored? I am a conservative Christian, but I

use my mind to study issues like this to learn the truth. Can you explain how all these references can be ignored?

I completely agree that we must seek to separate timeless principles from cultural, time-bound issues. That is an essential part of reading and interpreting the Bible accurately.

I believe the pivotal verse of 1 Tim. 2:12 is but one link in a chain that teaches male headship and leadership because of the way God reveals Himself through the teaching that men are to assume the mantle of leadership for the church and the family: the husband as the head of the wife; male elders in church leadership; Jesus choosing twelve men as the foundation of his church (even though He was constantly flying in the face of the anti-female culture of His time, elevating and honoring women in a way no one had seen before). I am particularly struck by Eph. 3:14-15, which can (and I think should) be translated "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every *fatherhood* in heaven and on earth derives its name." I am struck by how, as a woman, I am unable to represent the Fatherhood of God, which is why male leadership (who can manifest the Fatherhood of God) is so crucial. (There are other aspects of God that I and all other women are able to represent particularly well, such as His beauty, compassion, nurturing, comfort, relational sensitivities—but not His Fatherhood.)

> *Then what do you do with the fact that women wrote parts of the Bible?*

I would respectfully disagree that women wrote these parts. Luke and Moses wrote the verses you cited, quoting these women. Which is awesome, considering the cultural value of women at the time. It shows that God speaks and blesses through women, and the Holy Spirit made sure godly women were

credited with being the conduits of praise and blessing that they were. But they didn't write those passages.

> *What do you do with the fact that woman are prophets?*

I thank the Lord for using believing women in this way. A prophet is a servant, the mouthpiece of God. A conduit. This is a separate issue from being a pastor or elder or serving in leadership over men.

> *Another thing to consider is that many women are described as having authoritative roles, over men and women in the Bible. Deborah (Judges 5), Anna (Luke 2:38), Isaiah's wife (Isa. 8:3), Aquilla and Pricilla (Acts 18:26) and others to name a few.*

Deborah: Indeed, she did serve as a judge. But note how she led—not as a man would. She called herself "a mother in Israel." Her role was more one of advisor and counselor, the way a mother would counsel her children, and making judicial decisions. She used her "authority" in indirect ways to influence, as opposed to the direct kind of leadership as the male judges did. When the need for military leadership arose, she called on Barak to lead the men into war with the Canaanites.

Anna: All scripture says about this godly woman is that "she never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. She came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." There is nothing here to indicate an authoritative role. She served in the temple and testified about God. This does not constitute authority.

Isaiah's wife: she is described as "the prophetess," which I

understand from Bible scholars may well refer to her role as the prophet's wife. But even if she were a full-fledged prophet in her own right, she had no authority. She would have been a mouthpiece for God. The authority was in the words that would have come through her, not in the woman herself.

Priscilla, along with her husband Aquila, "took Apollos aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." This doesn't mean she was in leadership; it means she sat and explained things, in tandem with her husband, peer-to-peer. Not as a church leader.

> *Women were not only recorded as being prophets but also judges and apostles (Rom. 16:7).*

I'm sorry, but we cannot know that Junias was a woman. The argument that Junias was a female apostle is shaped by modern feminist thought rather than by robust Biblical scholarship.

> *Also, women not being allowed in leadership denies the church from the benefit of half of its leaders, pastors, visionaries, prophets and so on.*

Women are not denied a place of leadership in the church. We are restricted from CERTAIN positions of leadership. Some of the most gifted leaders, teachers, pastors (it helps to use the term "shepherds," which means the same thing) and visionaries in the church are women, and when we use our gifts to lead and serve and teach women and children (which is over half the church), I think God is making a statement about the value of women and children. When we use our gifts and strengths to influence in indirect ways—note the importance of character and maturity in requirements for elders' and deacons' wives or deaconesses, 1 Tim. 3:11—we see the complementarity of male and female gifts and strengths

combined to glorify God and serve the Kingdom.

For what it's worth, when my husband served as an elder in our church and it was time to find new elders and deacons, they wisely went to the nominated men's wives first to ask in private, "Your husband is being considered for this role in our church. Please be honest: is there any reason he should be disqualified?" A wife's "yes" was a deal-breaker. That's a powerful position! Not a direct position of authority, but an indirect position of influence. Also, some of the best ideas, and valuable warnings, and concerns borne of sensitivity and awareness of the needs of people, come from women. Wise men in leadership listen to wise, godly women. When men dismiss the contributions and gifts of women, everyone misses out. But that doesn't mean women should be in all positions of authority and leadership.

> *However, women can be free to follow God's call into roles of leadership if God chooses to gift, equip and call them into that role.*

God will not call women into a role that is outside His stated limitations for us. I think it's extremely important that these new ways of attempting to throw off millennia-old understandings of the scriptures only came after feminist philosophy invaded the church.

You write to me because you are aware of my position (which is shared by my colleagues) at Probe Ministries where I have a platform and a voice through our website and radio ministry. I am grateful for this example of how women can use our gifts and callings to serve the Kingdom without transgressing God's order of male leadership. None of the women at Probe are in positions of authority over men, but we are still able to make a difference through our stewardship of influence. And as a woman (and one with an intense personality and pastor-teacher

gifts), please let me assure you that this position of influence without authority is not in the least bit demeaning or disrespectful to me.

Thank you for writing.

Sue Bohlin

© 2007 Probe Ministries

See Also *Probe Answers Our E-Mail:*

- Should Women Be Pastors?
- I Have Some Questions About Women in the Church
- So Are All Women Pastors Deceived and Going to Hell?

"Can Christians Practice Buddhism?"

Dear Mr. Zukeran,

As I was searching the net for local Buddhist temples I came across Probe's website and came to your explanation of the differences between Jesus and Gautama. It was very eye opening, and I've never heard it explained that way before. I was raised in a Christian home but am also interested in Buddhism. Do you think there is a way for Christians to also practice Buddhism? Or is that not possible?

Generally speaking, Christianity and Buddhism are built on two different worldviews. So at their foundations they teach contradictory positions. Northern Buddhism usually adheres to

a pantheistic worldview while Southern Buddhism and schools like Zen Buddhism teach atheism. Buddhism may have some teachings that agree with Christianity such as some of the ethical teachings, but at the basic level the two have contradictory teachings.

For example, what happens after death? Most Buddhist schools teach reincarnation while the Bible teaches "It is appointed for each person to die once, and then comes the judgment" (Hebrews 9:7). Jesus taught His disciples to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength." Buddha taught to relinquish all desires. The Bible teaches that life is found in a relationship with God through Christ. Buddha taught life is about the emptying of the self. Buddhism teaches that man is basically good and the answer to mans problem is enlightenment. The Bible teaches that man is sinful and the answer to his problem is not within him but in a perfect savior who died for his sins, Jesus Christ. So at the foundational issues, the two systems are contradictory.

Can a Christian study about Buddhism? Sure, but as in all things, one must be discerning and measure all teachings with God's word, the Bible.

Thanks for your question.

Patrick Zukeran

"Can You Rebut the Google Video 'Zeitgeist'?"

Please have someone watch the Google video "Zeitgeist" (http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5547481422995115331)

and provide an answer to this. If you have any energy to do this, you will be activating it from a deeper source. Please. Someone tell me why I should believe—or you for that matter!

I just finished watching the movie as you requested of someone at Probe Ministries.

I took several pages of notes but eventually stopped because the information and misstatements flowed much too rapidly. I stopped about 2/3 of the way through. But I watched till the bitter end.

Let's start with the attack on Christianity. A quick Google search of Horus, the Egyptian Sun god whom Jesus and almost all other "savior" types are supposedly modeled after, is misrepresented in the film. He was the Falcon god and only later became known as the Sun god. [http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/horus.htm] Nothing is said about being born on Dec 25th or having twelve disciples, or being born of a virgin, or dying and being raised three days later.

Sirius has never been known as the supposed star of Bethlehem, another astrological reference touted in the film. They also mention that somehow the Southern Cross constellation played a role in identifying the time of Jesus' birth. That's impossible since the Southern Cross is only visible in the Southern Hemisphere. Israel is simply not far enough south to ever have The Southern Cross visible. I have seen it once, from the Equator off the Galapagos Islands.

They summarily dismiss the testimony of Roman historians Tacitus and Pliny the Younger who only speak of the Christ, not Jesus. They also show a quick list (where is that from?) of numerous 1st century historians who say nothing about him. Well, of course! Christianity was barely on anybody's radar screen in that first century. Nero just found them a convenient scapegoat for the burning of Rome precisely because

there were so few and hardly anybody knew much about them. Josephus is a reliable historian in just about everything he writes about 1st century Judaism. The forgery spoken of is known, but it is a forgery of added phrases in a reliable entry about Jesus. What was added was Josephus' claims that this Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah. Other entries about Jesus say nothing about that. Also the film ignored the entries in the Jewish Talmud about Jesus from their perspective. Even critical historians today DO NOT dispute that there was a real man Jesus of Nazareth who his followers claimed was the Messiah.

The 9/11 conspiracy talk is also out of line. For online versions of a *Popular Mechanics* article debunking many of the conspiracy myths of 9/11 see:

Debunking 9/11 Myths: About the Airplanes

Debunking the Myths About the 9/11 Attack on the Pentagon

Debunking the 9/11 Myths: Special Report – The World Trade Center

These *Popular Mechanics* editors consulted scientists, engineers, and other experts. They are neutral. Their list of experts is impressive. You'll find evidence against conspiracy contentions about the collapse of the towers, what hit the Pentagon, and why fighters did not shoot them down.

You can also check this out: www.minutemanreview.com/9-11-myths-debunked/.

I have no doubt there is a conspiracy, but it's a satanic conspiracy that is millennia old. These types of films—"Loose Change" is another older 9/11 conspiracy film—prey on fear and paranoia. There is much more that could be said about all their claims but I just don't have the time right now.

Friend, the Gospels are reliable: Jesus is the incarnate God

who died for our sins and rose on the third day. Astrology is forbidden in the Bible, it's not founded on it. If you have a copy, read Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christ*.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.
Probe Ministries

© 2007 Probe Ministries, updated 12/20/2018

"How Do I Help My Friend Get Unstuck From a Failed Relationship?"

I have a friend who has been saved for about 8 years. She is a 30 year old single parent with an 8 year old daughter. She broke up with the baby's father about 6 years ago. The problem bothering her is that she is still in love with him. She realizes this is not a man she can marry due to his lifestyle and the fact that he is living with another woman. This is the only man she has been sexually involved with. Moving on with her life has been a constant struggle. Her confession to me is, "I feel stuck." What do you recommend?

I suggest you encourage her to reframe her thinking about her daughters daddy. In our culture, we tend to elevate our feelings to the position of idols, and we feel like it would somehow be dishonest not to follow them. But feelings are just feelings, and they are not equally valid or wise. If shes still "in love with" a man she hasnt had a relationship with for six years, who had made it abundantly clear he doesnt care

for her, then its because she is still feeding the fantasy and the feelings with her thoughts. No wonder she feels stuck! She is stuck because she keeps feeding the feelings.

The problem is that we cant change our feelings by attacking them directly. Feelings are like the caboose on a train; they follow the engines. The engines are our beliefs/thoughts and our behavior. Redirect the engine, and the caboose will follow in a different direction.

I would suggest you help her write out on a sheet of paper two columns: the lies and stuck thoughts she believes, and the truths that would counter the lies. Such as:

Lies and Stuck Thoughts	**Truths**
I want my daughters daddy to come back	Hes not coming back. That chapter is over.
I have feelings for him	So what, theyre just feelings. I have to deal with reality.
I am stuck	God will help me get unstuck as I follow Him
I need him	Hes not available; I must get my needs met from God, through my support network of friends and family
I love him because I had sex with him	I must confess my sin of sexual immorality and renounce the emotional ties I have to him because of our one-flesh union

I would also suggest that you instruct her to imagine taking a giant roll of Saran wrap to her bundle of feelings and wrapping them up like leftovers that go in the fridge. Then put them on a mental shelf, and purposely engage in some activity that will help her replace her thoughts and feelings with something else. The biblical pattern for lasting change is to replace and displace the old with the new, but first we have to plan on what the new will be—such as a new hobby, new relationships, new habits that dont remind us of the old thing were trying to renounce. She may need some help with coming up with ideas for new things to add into her life.

Its also possible that shell say no, no, no to all that you suggest, giving excuses why none of those will work. Sometimes people dont really want to change, they just want to complain about their terrible emotional state and suck sympathy and compassion from those they complain to. If you discern that thats the route shes taking, then I would suggest that you tell her, You dont really want to be unstuck. So Im not going to talk about this situation with you. Then always change the subject if it comes up.

Bless you for being a friend! I hope you find this helpful.

Cordially,

Sue Bohlin

© 2007 Probe Ministries

“How Do I Overcome My Hurts

and Disappointments From My Church?”

I have been a Christian for over 14 years. I love God very much, but I have become truly discontent with church. I have suffered from many hurts and many disappointments. I know this may sound childish but I have been badly hurt by people who say that they are trying to be more like Jesus.

When my husband and I lost our 4th child at 11 weeks, I was accused of having an abortion. I was told to “stay in my calling.” When I asked for the youth leader position I knew my call, my children (I have six) knew my call, but my pastor refused to acknowledge it. Over the next several years, more than a dozen different people took that position, and I cried each time the position went to someone else. I was told that I was not faithful enough.

I always was ready and willing to help where needed but was pushed aside. I am very outspoken and speak when God says to, which produces a lot of friction. I have been lied about, talked about and pushed aside. I have cried over so many lost hopes and dreams.

I left that church, but am still suffering from the things that I endured. I feel like I don’t fit in anywhere I go. I live in a small town and feel that no matter where I go my “reputation” precedes me. How can I overcome this? Or should I just wait and not go back to church? I can’t move from this area.

I have been told I will do great things for God. That I am called. But I can’t do it here. I am always under someone’s microscope. Is there hope for me?

I am so very sorry to hear your story! My husband and I know personally how the wounds from one’s church weigh heavily on

the heart. You have my complete sympathy. I hurt for you, and I am asking the Lord to bring comfort and peace to you.

You ask, “How can I overcome this? Or should I just wait and not go back to church?” Not going back to church is not an option if you want to walk in obedience, since God’s word tells us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25). The only way to overcome this pain is to forgive those who hurt and disappointed you. I suggest you make a list: ask the Lord to show you every person you are still hurting over, every person you are still holding a grudge about. Write down his or her name, along with everything they said or did to hurt you—or that you took as hurtful. (Sometimes, our perception is different from what people intended, but we can’t know that unless we do a reality check with them. For your purposes, though, if you are still hurting, you are still harboring unforgiveness, and you need to deal with things as you perceived them.)

Before the Lord, remember that Jesus was tortured and crucified for every single one of those sins and hurts. He paid for them all. In His strength, release each of those offenses to the Cross, and let go of them. Forgiveness means choosing to let go of our desire to make the other person hurt or pay for what they did, and the reason we can do that is because Jesus both hurt and paid for what our offenders did.

Sometimes, people hesitate to release the offenses because they so deeply want the other person to *understand* how much they hurt us. We have no control over making another person understand; but we can know that Jesus understands. He was there, receiving into Himself, everything that happened to us. (Remember what He told Saul on the road to Damascus? Every time he persecuted Christians, Jesus said he was persecuting HIM.) Not being understood, not receiving compassion from One with a full knowledge of what happened and how much it hurt, is not an obstacle to us forgiving because Jesus does understand, and His heart is filled with compassion.

I do hope you will get before the Lord and forgive those who hurt you. Otherwise, you will be stuck in pain and the temptation to wallow in self-pity.

One other thing that I wanted to mention, which I wonder might not be a major cause of your difficulties: you said, “I am very outspoken and speak when God says to, which produces a lot of friction.”

Uh-oh.

I understand the importance of obeying God. However, people who see themselves as outspoken can be blunt to the point of being needlessly insensitive and abrasive. I’m not saying this is true of you, since I don’t know you—but I am just making an observation based on years of watching people. Since you say your outspokenness produces a lot of friction, do you think it’s possible that you have set yourself up? Is it possible that you have been prevented from serving where you feel called because the friction you cause disqualifies you as a leader? Consider what the Word commands us about what we say and how we say it:

> *Speaking the truth in love. . . (Eph. 4:15)*
>
> *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. (Eph. 4:29)*
>
> *There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. (Prov. 12:18)*
>
> *She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. (Prov 31:26)*

Let me just ask you: as the mother of six children (bless your heart!!), how prone are you to give a lot of responsibility to a child who causes friction among his or her siblings? Why

would it be any different for those in church leadership?

I am praying as I type that God will soften your heart and enable you to receive this letter, since I know it must be painful to hear that you might be responsible for some of the pain and disappointment you are experiencing. (Again: I do not know this is true since I don't know you.) I do pray that you will have grace to hear my words as coming from a sister who longs to encourage and bless, not to inflict more pain. Please invite the Lord to give you His perspective on my answer and ask Him for help to lay down any defensiveness and sort out what is true.

The Lord bless you and keep you today, _____.

Cordially,

Sue Bohlin

© 2007 Probe Ministries

"How Can I Make It to Heaven If My Boyfriend and I Play House?"

Do you think you will go to heaven if you and your boyfriend stay together like married people? I mean everything, from having sex to going to church? Being faithful to one another? All I'm trying to do is see how can I make it to heaven.

I see married people everyday, getting a divorce. The Bible says "until death do us part." Does a piece of paper matter when you love someone? Pastors, teachers, preachers, etc.

marry people everyday and half of the time they're doing wrong, trying to tell us right from wrong.

I am SO glad you wrote!!

There are really two issues in your question: first, how can I go to heaven, and secondly, will "playing house" with my boyfriend when we're not married keep me out?

So let me address them both.

The heaven issue has nothing to do with being "good enough." It has everything to do with Jesus Christ. See, the problem is that all of us are born separated from God. We are sinners and He is a holy God. (God is not responsible for our separation from Him; that's the result of the first man, Adam, choosing to rebel against God. Ever since, all of Adam's children were born as enemies of God.)

But God creates us for Himself and He hates our separation from Him as much as He hates our sin. So He provided a way to solve the separation problem. He sent His Son, Jesus, to earth to live as 100% God and 100% man. After living a perfect, sinless life, Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified to pay the penalty for our sin. He is God-the-Son, but He was willingly separated from God-the-Father to take all of our sins on Himself. He died because of our sin, and then three days later God raised Him from the dead because the debt of our sin was paid in full. And He is alive today—unlike the founder of any world religion.

This is where you come in. You need to decide if you will pay the penalty for your own sin by being separated from God forever—here on earth and then forever in hell when you die. . . or if you will trust in Jesus because He loved you so much He paid for your sin. If you put your trust in Jesus instead of in yourself, your separation from God will be over and you will continue your friendship with God forever in heaven.

When Jesus was here on earth, He asked His followers, “Who do you say that I am?” He’s asking you the same question today. (If you want more information, I invite you to read my story of how I became a Christ-follower here.)

Your second question is about marriage. There is a big problem: every day, as you have noticed, people say “do the right thing,” and then they turn around and do wrong. I think this breaks God’s heart. But I also think God understands that we are broken and weak people who desperately need Him to live right, but we desperately don’t want to surrender our wills to follow Him. We are often like rebellious, disobedient children, spoiled brats who constantly throw temper tantrums because we want our own way and don’t want to obey.

None of this detracts from the fact that God’s rules for marriage and family are the ones that will keep our marriages and families intact. And one of God’s rules is that we enter into marriage, which is where that “piece of paper” becomes important. It’s the ceremony before witnesses of making promises and becoming a new family unit that transforms two single people into a married couple. If you talk to those who lived together before they got married, most of the time they will tell you that, even though it surprised them, things were just *different* after the wedding. It really does make a difference. (See also our article “Is a Marriage Ceremony Necessary?”)

I’m glad you wrote. Feel free to ask any further questions.

Sue Bohlin

© 2007 Probe Ministries

“Does the Bible Say Man Will Live Forever on the Earth?”

Does the Bible Say Man Will Live Forever on the Earth?

Im afraid you heard wrong. The earth will not last forever. (Have you been visited by Jehovah’s Witnesses lately?) From www.crossroad.to/heaven/contents/earth_destroyed.htm:

> ***The earth will pass away.*** *Revelation 21:1-4, 1 John 2:15-17*
> ***The earth will be burned up.*** *2 Peter 3:10-13*
> ***God will shake and remove the heavens and the earth.*** *Hebrews 12:26-29*
> ***The earth will be shaken, broken up, and split apart.*** *Isaiah 24:17-23*
> ***The earth will perish like a worn out garment.*** *Psalms 102:25-28, Hebrews 1:10-12 (quoting Psalm 102).*

The people God destroyed were evil. This is the same reason a cancer doctor uses surgery, radiation and chemotherapy to kill cancer cells: they are harmful and destructive. See:

> *Genesis 6:5 (the world before the Flood)*
> *Genesis 18 (Sodom and Gomorrah)*
> *Deuteronomy 5:13; 17:12, 17; 19:19; 22:21-14; 24:7 (God calls for capital punishment to “purge the evil” in His nation of Israel)*

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

“Should a Single Christian Woman Use In Vitro Fertilization?”

We have an unmarried, believing woman in our church who is considering in vitro fertilization. I believe this is against God’s intent for marriage and the family according to Genesis 2:21-25, and also Paul’s teaching about marriage in Ephesians 5:18ff. Your input with other Scriptures and your ideas would be much appreciated. Perhaps you can suggest a good book or pamphlet on this subject that we could give this woman who seems intent on her mission.

I am in full agreement with your reasoning.

In your discussion of Genesis 2 may I suggest including that the notion of the two becoming one flesh certainly includes the production of children that are a clear expression of this principle. From two people has come one person or one (new) flesh. While the children of single parents are to be honored and supported in our culture once they are conceived, it is certainly not a part of God’s initial plan. To deliberately plan on being a single parent from the beginning implies selfish motives. The child is a commodity, something to meet a need or provide something for the parent. The story of Hannah and Samuel in 1 Samuel 1 indicates that Hannah saw parenting as a gift and Samuel himself as a gift from God, not a right.

If this unmarried woman is going to seek parenthood via in vitro she will also need a sperm donor. That directly violates the one-flesh principle above since the sperm donor will not be her husband. This also creates a necessary “relationship”

with this man as the father of her child. This is inherently unwise and creates the very real possibility of future disputes and tensions with no clear guidelines for resolution. She would be at the mercy of the court and that particular judge as to what relationship this man will have with her and her child. Even when the donation is anonymous, it won't necessarily remain anonymous throughout the life of the child. Children have been granted access to the identity of anonymous sperm donors who fathered them. Some men simply won't care. But what if he does? What if he desires to know something about the mother of his child as well as the child himself/herself?

A booklet I can recommend is from the BioBasic series from Kregel Publications titled *Basic Questions on Sexuality and Reproductive Technology*. While this circumstance is not directly addressed, questions 5, 6, 7 and 13 do relate some of the principles I have discussed above. This booklet can be obtained from the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity at www.cbhd.org.

I pray this helps.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.
President

© 2007 Probe Ministries

"Is Cremation Wrong?"

Is it wrong to cremate the body at death? Most of my family members were cremated.

The practice of cremation is connected with pagan burial practices. Pantheists such as Buddhists and Hindus believe the body is bad and that the true self (sometimes referred to as the soul) is trapped in the body. Therefore, cremation symbolizes the deliverance from the prison house of the body and dissolving of the individual personhood. There are a few occurrences of cremation in the Bible but the reason is that the body was desecrated (1 Sam. 31:12). Under normal circumstances, Jews and Christians buried the body. For Christians the body is buried because the body is good and created and given by God (1 Cor. 6:19). We also await the resurrection of the body, which will occur when Christ returns and our bodies will be resurrected in their new glorified state (1 Thess 4:16-18).

Having said that, cremation is not the unpardonable sin. God will recreate the body no matter what state it may be in; that is no problem for Him. Burial is the Christian practice for the reasons I stated and as a general rule we want to honor God in our death and burial and not associate with pagan practices. However, there are times where cremation may be necessary or preferred and I am sure God grants grace in those circumstances.

I hope this helps.

Pat Zukeran

© 2007 Probe Ministries