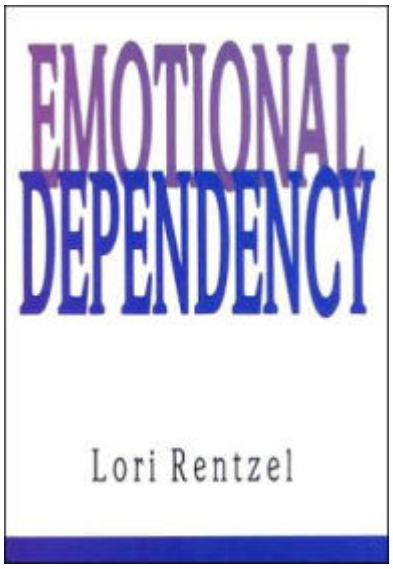
“Are ‘Twinflame’ Relationships Real, From God, or Demonic?”

Does the term “twinflame” come from God? Does it come from a “divine” source? Would this be considered demonic due to its telepathic tendencies and reincarnation belief? I have a family member who thinks they have found their “twinflame” and believes that he has a “higher” connection with this person then his wife. I have been brought up in a Christian home, and feel that this goes against everything that I have been taught. Did Jesus himself preach about reincarnation? What can I say to this person to let them know that “twinflames” do not exist?

I had never heard of the word “twinflame” till we got your question, but as I researched it, I had to chuckle with rueful recognition of the relational dynamics. Websites addressing this supposed “twinflame” phenomenon of one soul in two bodies describe the breathtaking rapture of an immediate and intense connection with another person that often overshadows actual real-life relationships (such as a spouse, as in your family member’s case). What’s really happening is that a person becomes infatuated with their *perception* of someone else, imbuing the object of their intense affections with a kind of “magic” fueled by their imagination and fantasy; in their mind, the other person is more beautiful, smarter, more eloquent, more sensitive and more of an amazing match than the all-too-real known quantity of the flesh-and-blood people they do life with. As Focus on the Family’s Dr. James Dobson said early in the days of the internet when we were discussing the ugly downside of online relationships, of course the fantasy wonderfulness (my words, not his) of the other person is going to overshadow the spouse who leaves socks or towels on the floor!



Someone has put a New Age spin on an old, old temptation of *relational idolatry*. Putting another person or the relationship up on a pedestal as the most important thing in life is idolatry, and it is sin. Lori Rentzel nailed this concept in her excellent essay "Emotional Dependency." (You can find the essay online here. It is also available published as a little booklet by InterVarsity Press.)

Interestingly, as I read about "twinflame" to a friend who spent decades as a lesbian activist, her comment was, "Oh, there's the beginning of a lesbian relationship!" The intensity of relational idolatry is a counterfeit to true intimacy no matter the gender of the people involved. (Consider my blog post The Dark Underside of Female Friendships.)

You asked about supposed "telepathic tendencies and reincarnation belief." There can certainly be a demonic component to this kind of relationship because there are layers of deception going on, including belief in previous lives. Probe has several articles and answers to email about reincarnation you might find helpful (and no, Jesus didn't preach about reincarnation because it's not real):

The Mystery of Reincarnation – A Christian Perspective
Does the Bible Talk About Reincarnation?"
"Was Reincarnation Ever in the Bible?"
"You Should Research Reincarnation and the Lost Words of Jesus"
Reincarnation: The Christmas Counterfeit

Having read the entire Bible multiple times and studying it for decades, I assure you that Twinflames is not a biblical concept. No, it doesn't come from God.

What can you say to your family member to let them know that “twinflames” don’t exist? How about something like, “I am very concerned that you are buying into a deceptive lie about this other relationship that threatens to wreck your marriage and your spiritual life. I’ve done some research; please consider that the concept of ‘twinflames’ is a made-up idea to justify illegitimate attractions to another person. I can give you more information if you want it.”

I send this with a prayer that God will open the eyes of your family member before he drives his marriage off a cliff.

Blessing you,
Sue Bohlin

Posted March 2017

Addendum 2/20/2021:

Having received scores of comments on this topic since publishing this page 4 years ago (and not being willing to allow that amount of falsehood and confusion on our website by posting them), I am more convinced than ever that the idea of Twin Flames is one of the most clever, heartbreaking, demonic deceptions ever invented. The degree of anguish that people have shared over this powerfully evil deceit demonstrates why the Lord Jesus said that Satan comes to “steal, kill, and destroy” (John 10:10). This is yet another one of his nasty methods of hurting people and holding them hostage through a lie.

Lots of people have written that the Twin Flames phenomenon is in the Bible, but it’s not in the text. For example, identifying Jesus and Mary Magdalene, and David and Jonathan, as Twin Flames. Claiming that Adam and Eve are the original Twin Flames. That the Song of Solomon is all about a Twin Flame relationship. There are lots of relationships in the Bible, including intense ones, but no Twin Flames. It’s not there.

© 2017 Probe Ministries

“This Too Shall Pass”

I wrote this blog post on May 7, 2012, not quite five years ago. I had no idea that by this point, I would hardly be walking, using a scooter 95% of the time and unable to move without a walker for the rest. Pain and serious weakness are my daily companions. As I noticed the counts on my most popular blog posts and discovered this one among the top, I am grateful that the wisdom God gave me five years ago is even more true today. And I am grateful that I can even minister to myself . .

Sometimes it’s the simplest things that help us navigate life. The old, old adage “this too shall pass” is one of them.

No matter what trial, grief, trouble or challenge we face, there is comfort in reminding ourselves that it’s temporary. Some are very short-lived—the time crunch of a deadline, the pain of recovering from surgery, waiting for results of a test or an application. We can remind ourselves, “By this time next week (or month), this will be behind me. This too shall pass.”

Some are very long-term—a permanent disability like my polio or my dear friend Lael Arrington’s painful rheumatoid arthritis. The death of a loved one, or a marriage, or a cherished dream. The realization that God is choosing to give us grace for, not deliverance from, our thorn in the flesh. Even so, when we remember that our time on this earth is short compared to our life on the new earth, we can remind ourselves, “A hundred years from today, this trial will be just a memory. I can either be glad for how I handled it, or regret the short-sighted choices I made. Because this too

shall pass."

It's helpful to remember that even the good times, the fun times, the stress-free (or low-stress) times will also pass, because life is like that. When we remember everything is temporary, it helps us hold onto sweet moments and days with a looser grasp while reminding ourselves to be grateful for the blessings we're enjoying because "this too shall pass." If we are mindful of the transience of the good days, we won't be devastated when they dissipate.

"This too shall pass" is one way we can live in light of eternity, keeping our earthly life in perspective. When the hard times come, whether moments or years, we can comfort ourselves with the truth that "our momentary, light suffering is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison because we are not looking at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen. For what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

When the good times come, we can give thanks for the way they point like signposts to heaven's unending joy.

Which will NEVER pass away!

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/this_too_shall_pass on May 8, 2012.

The Voice in My Head

I love my husband's recent Christmas gift to me: a hearing aid. (Actually, he appreciates it about as much as I do, since

I’m not daily asking, “Excuse me?” and “What?”) A number of years ago I had been diagnosed with a 25% hearing loss in one ear, but it had grown to 45%. That’s a lot of missed words in conversations, sermons, and TV shows.

Mine is a little device that sits in my ear canal, pretty much invisible. Because it’s so small, the battery is teeny tiny and needs to be replaced every five days or so. I know it’s time to swap it out when a little metallic voice suddenly says “Battery” in my ear. That means I have maybe two minutes before a final, second “Battery”—then a small click that means my wonderful restored hearing is gone and I’m back to the world’s sounds being muffled till I put a new battery in.

I am grateful for that little voice because it tells me something very important about something I need to do, and fast.

And every time, I am reminded of Isaiah 30:21—“And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” My immediate prayer is, “Lord, please teach me to hear you as clearly as I hear that little voice in my ear!”

Hearing God’s voice is a realistic part of being in relationship with him. In the Old Testament, Jeremiah 33:3 records God’s invitation: “Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.” In the New Testament, Jesus promises, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27).

So how do we hear God’s voice?

1. **Choose to listen.** It starts with being intentional. We need to believe that God speaks to His children, and act on that belief by putting ourselves in “listening mode.” That’s not about sitting down with a demanding spirit that says, “OK, Lord, you have five minutes to talk to me or I’m outta here.” In my experience, the God of the universe does not respond to

self-centered demands like that. It’s more like turning on a baby monitor and leaving it in the “always on” position. And keeping one ear “open” for any sounds coming from the monitor.

The primary way God speaks to us is through his word. Sometimes as we read the scriptures, a verse seems to leap off the page, right into our hearts, and burn with a personal application. Even as a new believer in college, I knew that when I read Isaiah 55:2, the context was God speaking to his people Israel: “Why do you spend your money on that which is not bread, and your wages on that which does not satisfy?” But in 1973, struggling with a holy discontent about my college degree plan, God spoke to me through this verse, giving me the freedom to stop college at the end of my junior year. And sure enough, in the 43 years since, I have never once regretted not earning a degree in elementary education because being a classroom teacher was never God’s plan for my life. Teaching, yes, but not in a school classroom.

But God also speaks to us in our spirit. My friend Bob was a pastor. One morning he felt impressed to drive to a nearby lake to meet with God. He sat there on a picnic bench waiting to hear from God (and, frankly, expecting some direction on what to preach the following Sunday). After 45 minutes of just quietness, hearing nothing, he sensed God say to him, “OK, Bob, you can go to your office now.”

Eyebrows raised, he said, “I thought maybe you were going to give me some instruction on what you want me to preach this Sunday . . .? What’s the point of sitting here for almost an hour, Lord?”

In his spirit, Bob heard, “I just wanted to spend some time with you.”

It takes time and practice to learn to hear God like Bob does (and he learned over time and by practicing). But that’s what friends do. They talk with each other.

2. **Expect God to speak.** Who knows how many things in life we miss simply because we weren't expecting them, so they blow right by? When we live with an attitude of expectancy, it's a lot easier to hear that "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12) when God does speak to us.

I learned this while at a conference a number of years ago. So many of the conference attendees lived with this attitude of expectancy that it was common mealtime conversation to share what people had heard and experienced from the Lord that day. I wanted that for myself! I went from one session to the next "with my ears on" (in old CB-radio lingo), hopeful to hear from God.

I was in one breakout session about fifteen minutes when I suddenly became aware of a strong impression—a pressure on my heart—that I was supposed to call my husband. Right then. It came out of the blue, connecting to nothing I was hearing in the breakout, so I left the session and walked to my dorm room to get to a phone (oh, how things have changed with the invention of the cell phone!) When my husband answered, I learned that he was very sick and was feeling even worse because there was no way to contact me and he was feeling not just miserable, but *alone* and miserable. He was quite surprised to learn that God had told me to call him. There wasn't anything I could do from the other side of the country, but it was comforting to both of us that God intervened so that we could talk to each other.

3. **Predecide to focus on God's voice** despite what other voices you're hearing. It takes time and experience to learn to recognize his voice, but I can promise you this: it will never contradict his word, and his peace will be attached. We hear the "voice" or sounds of what matters to us. I once read a story about a native American who accompanied a city dweller to New York City. As they walked down the sidewalk, the native suddenly stopped in the midst of all that concrete and said, "I hear a cricket!" His city dwelling friend scoffed: "Are you

kidding? How can you hear such a small sound with all this racket?" At that, the native pointed to the soil surrounding a small tree growing out of a concrete planter in the sidewalk; sure enough, there was a cricket rubbing its legs together. His friend shook his head, amazed. The native said, "It's not so amazing. We hear what's important to us. Watch this." He reached into his pocket, pulled out a handful of coins, and threw them on the sidewalk. Instantly, scores of people around them stopped, swiveling their heads at the sound of money hitting the ground. "See? What's important is money to them, and nature to me. We hear what's important to us."

We need to filter out the sounds and voices of the world, which would call us away from intimacy with God, and "keep the first thing, the first thing." When God speaks, we want to be found listening.

Because when he speaks, it's something far more important than "Battery."

This
blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/the_voice_in_my_head on
February 7, 2017.

"Is It True That Adam Was 90 Feet Tall?"

My question may sound funny at first. So I was witnessing to a Muslim that I know and we got into a discussion on the book of Genesis, more specifically on Adam and the garden of Eden. So the Muslim man I was discussing with claims that Adam was 90

feet tall in the Koran!? He said that this is a known historical fact of science. This seems just crazy talk, so my question may seem crazy but is there any historical/scientific proof for such a claim? Sounds more like a fairy tale and scientifically impossible. Just wanted to know your thoughts.

Good for you for witnessing to our Muslim friend! No, it's NOT a known historical fact of science. Just ask him for the evidence of this claim. (And remember that the Koran is a man-made book with no divine inspiration. We shouldn't be surprised that it would have statements like this in it.)

Here's a page that references the claim: answering-christianity.com/adam_90_feet_tall.htm And here's a page that responds to the claims: www.answering-islam.org/Responses/Osama/90feet-adam.htm Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

Posted January 26, 2017
© 2017 Probe Ministries

"How Do We Respond to the Charge That We're on the Wrong Side of History?"

When I present my view on the LGBT issue, the Biblical view, people say I'm on "the wrong side of history." What say you? I know this is an empty PC mantra but how should I answer?

When we're smack dab in the middle of history-making, from a biblical perspective it's waaaaay too early to declare what is "the wrong side of history." We have already received revelation about how things will go toward the end of the world in the book of Revelation and other biblical books, so we can have an idea of where we're headed. And it's not pretty.

When Prohibition was enacted in the United States, there might have been people declaring that those objecting to it were on "the wrong side of history." Except that they weren't, because things change.

I can tell you personally, as one who has been involved in homosexual ministry (to those with unwanted same-sex attractions) for 18 years, God's "thou shalt nots" of all sex outside of marriage are given out of love for us and a complete knowledge of how He designed us for male-female complementarity. Those insisting that the LGBT agenda (see the book *After the Ball*, which spells it out) is right and we hopelessly outdated dinosaurs are wrong, will still run into the fact that God made us male and female to reflect the beauty and glory of unity in diversity. Even if it's un-PC.

Frankly, I think we will have to get used to being misunderstood and judged. And we can take comfort in the fact that Jesus knows a whole lot about that.

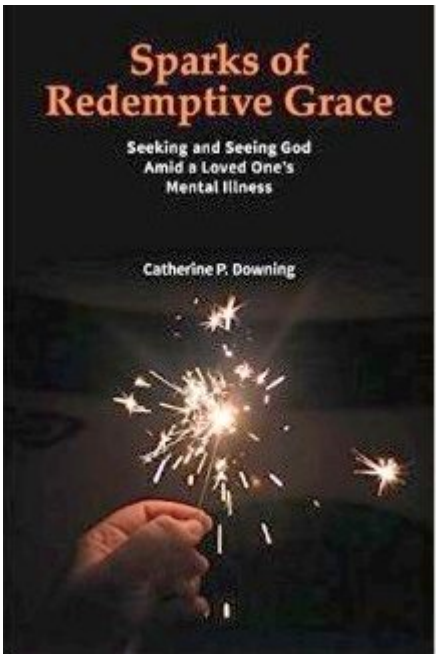
Thanks for writing,

Sue Bohlin

Posted Jan. 26, 2017
© 2017 Probe Ministries

Mental Illness and the Family

The January 2017 shooting at the Ft. Lauderdale airport is still being investigated, but what surfaced immediately in seeking a motive for Esteban Santiago's deadly action was his family's observations that he appeared to be fighting a mental health challenge. When he returned from military service in Iraq, he reported hearing voices and his family reported that "his mind was not right."



Totally apart from the issues Mr. Santiago is dealing with, both psychologically and legally, my heart goes out to his family. The family members of a person struggling with mental health issues carry a heavy load, often in isolation and silence, because of the stigma of shame often associated with mental illness.

I am more sensitive to this after recently reading a different kind of book. *Sparks of Redemptive Grace – Seeking and Seeing God Amid a Loved One's Mental Illness* is a short but powerful book written by the mother of a young man in a battle with bi-polar disorder.

Catherine P. Downing offers grace-drenched perspective that can and should change the way we think about this struggle. I learned a lot from her. For example, she writes,

It is a heartbreaking truth that I had to learn to say, "Douglas has bipolar disorder," instead of, "Douglas is bipolar." A minor wording difference. A monumental identity distinction. To have a disease, rather than to be one, is a defining stance of dignity.

But it's not just the family members dealing with mental illness who need to be educated on how to think and respond and love well. We the *church family* also need to be better equipped to love "the least of these" with the compassion of Jesus. That is going to mean loving the family members staggering under the weight of their loved ones' illness as well. We are often quick to arrange meals for new mommies or families where someone has had surgery, but what about the families trudging through the exhausting day-in-day-out invisible battle when it's the brain or the mind that is diseased?

One of the ways we can love families dealing with mental illness is by adjusting our unrealistic expectations. Mental illness isn't something people "get over" quickly . . . and sometimes not even on this side of eternity.

And then there is the ongoing grieving for the should-have-beens of lost dreams and hopes, and even the loss of the "normal" kind of life most of us assume we will live. The first sentence of the introduction reads, "My husband, Nelson, once said that if we ever write a book the title should be, *It Wasn't Supposed to Be Like This*." Those living with this kind of unrelenting grief need friends who will support them, never give up praying for them, being "Jesus with skin on" for them. (Check out this really excellent list of how to pray for families impacted by mental illness: sparksofredemptivegrace.com/31days31ways2pray4familie

s/)

I was blessed to read this short list of suggestions for how the church can support the families of those dealing with mental illness in the Bible.org article "Mental Health and the Church":

> 1. Make your church a safe place for those who suffer. To do that, a church body needs to be transparent about brokenness and acknowledge that all of us struggle with weak areas in our lives.
>
> 2. Equip your church with the tools it needs to serve those with mental illnesses and their families. Develop or identify your congregation's theology of suffering. Train clergy and staff. Offer support groups. Create alliances with local mental health professionals.
>
> 3. Treat hurting people like people. Be a friend. Include them in gatherings. Invite them when groups are going to lunch. As needed, refer them on to professional help, but don't pass them on. At the same time, set healthy boundaries in your relationships. Don't expect them to be able to do that.
>
> 4. Address the stigma of mental illness by talking about it openly. Include general prayers for the mentally ill in congregational praying. Highlight and financially support local ministries who serve the homeless, the incarcerated and indigent mentally ill populations.
>
> 5. Treat those with mental illnesses and their families as you would any who have chronic pain in their lives or are lifelong caregivers. Pray for and with them. Give them space to talk about what is going on in their lives. Attend to practical needs such as transportation to medical appointments, assist, when appropriate, with extraordinary expenses.

I have committed to make hearing new news about the Ft. Lauderdale shootings a reminder to pray for the family members of the troubled shooter. At the same time, I want to be "Jesus with skin on" for those in my world who need comfort for the same kind of pain in their family.

Also check out the website for this helpful little book, www.sparksofredemptivegrace.com

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/mental-illness-and-the-family/ on January 10, 2017.

Leaning Hard

I wondered when it would happen, when the pain and weakness from post-polio, exacerbated by hip arthritis, would set me up for a fall. And now I know. The other day I took a tumble.

I forgot to have my husband put my walker in the back of my mini-van. At some point this year I discovered that leaning on a cane for stability wasn't enough, and I need a walker for literally every step. But this level of loss and disability is still new to me; sometimes I forget that my "new normal" demands things like taking a walker with me. When I got to my destination, all I had was my cane, and I thought, "It's okay, I'll have the cane in my right hand and I can lean on the car with my left to make my way to the back of the van to get my scooter."

But it was a drizzly day, and when I leaned hard on the bumper my hand slipped, and I went down HARD. Fortunately, it was also a cold day and my padded coat helped cushion my shoulder

and hip as I hit the ground. I instantly had a new appreciation for that old commercial, “I’ve fallen and I can’t get up!” Yep. That was me.

My cell phone was in my pocket, praise God, and I was able to call for help. It took two aides to lift me to a vertical position and then get my scooter out of the van, shaken and feeling very fragile but basically okay.

The doctor I was there to see also came out, and when she spoke I knew it was the Lord’s voice through her: “Sue, you’re trying to do too much on your own.” Yep. That was me too.

I’ve thought a lot about how things have changed for me in the past couple of years as I’ve lost so much of my mobility and ability to do even the simplest things around the house. And since there is often a strong correlation between the physical world and spiritual reality, each one teaching us something about the other, I’ve become especially aware of my dependence on my walker and my scooter.

So it deeply blessed me when a friend dealing with stage-four renal cancer was featured in a video where she quoted from J.I. Packer in Joni Eareckson Tada’s book *A Lifetime of Wisdom*:

> *“God uses chronic pain and weakness, along with other afflictions, as his chisel for sculpting our lives. Felt weakness deepens dependence on Christ for strength each day. The weaker we feel, the harder we lean. And the harder we lean, the stronger we grow spiritually, even while our bodies waste away. To live with your ‘thorn’ uncomplainingly – that is, sweet, patient, and free in heart to love and help others, even though every day you feel weak – is true*

> *sanctification. It is true healing for the spirit. It is a supreme victory of grace."*

The weaker we feel, the harder we lean. And the harder we lean, the stronger we grow spiritually, even while our bodies waste away. Whoa.

"Leaning hard" is the opposite of our American, self-sufficient, can-do independence. But it's the secret to spiritual vitality and power because "leaning hard" means we access Christ's strength instead of our own puny efforts.

"Leaning hard" is my new way of understanding "abiding." And abiding is where stability comes from, just as I am far more stable when I'm "leaning hard" on my walker when I have to walk and on my scooter when I get to ride.

The memory of leaning hard on my slippery car bumper, only to discover it was not a reliable place to support myself so I landed hard on the ground, was also a powerful lesson in the futility of leaning hard on myself or anything other than Jesus Christ Himself. I now have a kinesthetic memory of that spiritual truth!

It stinks to fall, of course, but I sure do love the insight that came from it.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/leaning_hard on December 27, 2016.

Flying the W Flag



I’m not a baseball fan. I’m not even a sports fan. But I *am* originally from the northern suburbs of Chicago, which makes me a de facto Cubs fan. And in case you (like me) aren’t really a sports fan either, you might not know about the drama unfolding in the 2016 World Series.

The Cubs haven’t made it to the World Series since 1945. That’s before I was born! (Long time, friends. Long time.) They finished among the worst teams in their league year after year, becoming something of a joke in the sports world.

So it was A BIG DEAL that the Cubs won the pennant and made it to the World Series this year.

When that happened, there was great rejoicing in the land. The packed-out Wrigley Field, the Cubbies’ home ball park, broke out in the “Go Cubs Go” song, and it was a transcendent experience for those who were there.



But what grabbed me by the throat was seeing all the Cubs' "W" flags. One of the losing-est teams in all of sports, with some of the most incredibly loyal fans in all of sports, finally got to really celebrate the W in Win. They didn't even need to go all the way to win the World Series for people to go nuts with joy.

It wasn't the Cubs' Win, though, that gave me goosebumps. The blue W on the white field reminded me that we are assured of the ultimate Win for the ultimate cosmic battle that lies ahead. The Bible provides a look into the future when good vs. evil, and Satan vs. Jesus Christ, will battle it out, and *good will win*.

But the Cubs' W flag represents nothing more than hope that they just might win the World Series for the first time since 1908. There is no certainty. On the other hand, the cosmic battle between good and evil has already been determined, the book has been written, and we know the ending. In the end, ***GOD WINS***. It's a done deal. And we who are in Christ win with Him.

There was never any better reason to fly a W flag!

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

November 2, 2016.

Updated on the morning of November 4: The Cubs won the World Series! Must be a great time to be in Chicagoland! My family is very VERY excited. My White Sox fan husband, who grew up on the South Side of Chicago, not so much. Oh well.

"Would You Answer Some Questions About Hate and LGBT?"

I am a high school student writing a paper for English over some hatred issues across America and I was wondering if you would answer some questions about marriage equality, gender issues, etc.

Why do you, personally, dislike homosexual behavior?

For the same reason I dislike heterosexual behavior (like using pornography or unmarried or extramarital sex) that is outside of God's plan and purpose for our bodies and souls: it is harmful to the person(s) engaging in it. Sex is so powerful, like electricity, that it needs to be contained within the safe confines of marriage between a man and a woman who have committed to each other for life. Outside of that containment, the power of sex is more like lightning, which does damage instead of being channeled into serving us.

But homosexual behavior is not just about sex. There is also a lot of emotional dependency in same-sex relationships, especially between girls and women, when their friendship has

overflowed the banks of what is healthy. Emotionally dependent relationships are intense (which becomes exhausting), chaotic (which drains people further), controlling and manipulative (which is hurtful to the people and to the relationship). I dislike this behavior because it is harmful to the people engaging in it as well. I love people and hate to see them get hurt. That's why I dislike the behavior that contributes (eventually) to heartache.

If anyone of your family members became homosexual, how would you react?

That already happened, when one of my relatives was seduced into lesbian relationships and started seeing herself as part of the LGBT community. I continued to love her, encourage her, delight in her . . . even though we don't talk about her relationships or her involvement in LGBT.

I have two grown sons, though, which is the closer kind of family I think you may be thinking of. If either one of them announced they were gay, I would weep that he had been deceived by our spiritual enemy into thinking falsehoods about himself, and I would pray every day for his eyes to be open to the truth, even as I continued to love him like I do now.

Why do you think God doesn't love homosexual people and their behaviors?

I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God dearly and tenderly loves those who struggle with same-sex attraction, those who have embraced a gay identity, and even those who have fully immersed themselves in the LGBT world. I'm thinking of one young man in particular who went on a two-week bender, prostituting himself for gay sex so he could buy drugs and keep himself high. I know that his decisions grieved God's

heart deeply (especially when he became HIV+ during that 2 weeks), but He never left the man or stopped loving him, and was there waiting patiently for him to come to his senses . . . which he did. And now their relationship is stronger than ever.

If God loved people, ALL people, enough to send His only Son into the world to be nailed to a cross, taking our place and paying the penalty for our sin and then raising Him from the dead, then I think He continues to love all of us in our messy, sinful rebellion. But He never endorses or accepts our sinful behavior, though He fully accepts US. Acceptance and approval of choices and behaviors are not the same.

You may have noticed I went from talking about homosexuals to US . . . because we are all in the same predicament: messy, sinful, rebellious people who desperately need God. There is no us/them differentiation—we are all alike in our need for God, and we are all alike in the fact that He loves us more than we can imagine.

Do you believe in abortion, and why?

I think it is a heinous thing to murder a baby, whether he or she lives inside the mother or outside the mother. Abortion is taking the life of an innocent child, and it's wrong to murder.

And do you consider Probe Ministries a hate group?

Absolutely not! We were tagged a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center because we don't agree with the LGBT agenda. We align ourselves with the Bible's standards that all sex outside of marriage violates God's commands for human sexuality. Unfortunately, these days mere disagreement is

called hate. I have repeatedly invited people to identify the hate-filled words on our website so I can change them, but no one has ever identified any. I believe that is because you won't find words of hate on our website, or our podcasts, or any of our recorded messages. (And I do know what hate sounds like. Westboro Baptist Church makes me sick.)

I'm the primary writer and speaker about homosexuality and gender issues for Probe. It might be helpful for you to know that for 18 years I have also served with Living Hope Ministries, which is a Christian organization that helps people deal with unwanted homosexuality, and the family members of those who have chosen to embrace a gay identity. I have known and grown to love more people than I can count, people who are my heroes as they fight their feelings and instead, pursue intimacy with Jesus Christ. I have watched so many people's hearts change over time, and I have walked with a lot of women as they process the reasons for their attractions and experience a shift in their beliefs and attitudes (and sometimes attractions as well, though not always). They are so very dear to me, and I love being their cheerleader and encourager.

That's the opposite of hate. That's what love looks like, and that's what is the foundation of everything I write and say on this issue.

It might also be helpful for you to know that I have run everything I write and say through the filter of trusted friends who were once part of the LGBT community, asking them to identify anything that is unintentionally hurtful or rude or even untrue so I can change it before it becomes public.

I'm glad you asked, and I am thankful for the opportunity to provide you with some answers.

Have a good day.

Warmly,
Mrs. Bohlin

Posted Oct. 2016
© 2016 Probe Ministries

When a Church Tells a Member, "It's Not OK to be Gay"

Watermark Community Church in Dallas (where my husband and I are members) was recently dragged into the media when a former member published a letter to the church on the one-year anniversary of his membership being revoked. After several years of fighting his unwanted same-sex attractions, the young man got weary of the battle and embraced a gay identity—and a boyfriend. The church pleaded with him to repent (turn 180 degrees) and submit to the Bible's commands to sexual purity, but he would not. So the church sent him a letter which the young man made public.

Within hours, a firestorm erupted on social media, TV media, and print media.

Predictably, the church's counter-cultural beliefs and stance were misrepresented out of people's inability (or refusal) to understand biblical values and truths. It would be easy to come away with a very skewed perception of this situation, which is why it's important to use discernment in reading or hearing anything about this controversial subject.

Recall the wisdom of Proverbs 18:17: "The first to plead his

case seems right, until another comes and examines him." It's important to remember there's another side of every story, and to hold judgment until one's discernment kicks in.

It started when the former member's Facebook post was picked up by the *Dallas Morning News*. His title was "Watermark Church Dismissed Me for Being Gay," and the paper chose the title "Watermark Asks Homosexual Member to Leave Church." It sure sounds like the church kicked him out, doesn't it? But that's not what happened. The church responded, "Watermark makes a distinction between attending our church [*Sue's note: which the former member was welcome to do*] and being a formal member of our church. We don't remove someone's formal status as a member for struggling with sin—whether that sin is pride, materialism or sexual sin. Every member of Watermark needs God's grace to stand firm in the midst of temptation and His forgiveness for the times we fall short."

Jacqueline Floyd, a *Dallas Morning News* columnist, wrote a scathing column criticizing Watermark.

Ms. Floyd:
"A lot of people are upset that an institution that professes love for all its members would exile someone because of his sexual orientation."

And they should be! But that's not what happened. Pastor Todd Wagner's response:

> "Following the example of Jesus, Watermark loves and welcomes people of all backgrounds, economic statuses, ethnicities and sexual struggles. Also following his example, we encourage people to turn away from sin and to follow Jesus. We have *many members* and *several staff* who struggle with same-sex attraction or for whom same-sex sexual activity is a part of their past. We count it a privilege to labor with them in their desire to resist temptation, and we rejoice with them as they experience

> forgiveness and new life in Christ. Their stories are powerful and serve as beautiful testimonies to the transforming power of Jesus Christ." [Emphasis his]

Ms. Floyd:
"He tried for years to conform to church requirements that he alter his essential nature, 'repent' his sexual orientation, undergo a form of 'conversion therapy' that research as well as mainstream psychology and counselors have denounced as harmful and pointless."

This makes sense if you believe the culture's sexual mythology that says being gay is one's "essential nature," as if a gay identity were the most important thing about an individual. (Consider how unbalanced it would be if we switched out the standard for how well someone can sing, declaring that one's "essential nature" was one's ability to carry a tune—or not. How awfully narrow and unnecessarily limiting that would be, as if every other aspect of one's giftings and temperament, interests and abilities paled in comparison to their singing voice!)

The church does not require that anyone "alter their essential nature," but it does align itself with scripture, acknowledging that we are all born sinful and broken, with a tendency to rebel and disobey against God:

> "There is no one righteous, not even one;
> there is no one who understands;
> there is no one who seeks God.
> All have turned away,
> they have together become worthless;
> there is no one who does good,
> not even one." (Romans 3:10b-12)

Our true "essential nature" is that we are both infinitely precious and valuable because we are made in God's image, but also fallen and sinful. That "essential nature" can't be

altered by ourselves, but it can be transformed by God. That is the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I don't know if anyone at Watermark mistakenly urged this brother to repent of his sexual orientation as if he had chosen to be same-sex attracted, but we certainly do exhort everyone to renounce and repent of all sexual sin (which means anything outside of marriage between one man and one woman). Concerning "conversion therapy," Watermark doesn't have that. What we do have is a call to discipleship, asking people to be "all in" with Jesus, obeying His word and pursuing intimacy with Christ. That intimacy usually produces heart change, which means transformation from the inside out, where therapy is an attempt to bring about change from the outside in.

Ms. Floyd:
"Trying to 'change' someone's sexual orientation is about as useful as trying turn a turtle into a duck. When this witch-doctor alchemy predictably failed to work, the church blamed him—and revoked his membership. Not in person. They mailed him a letter."

Lots of people believe that sexual orientation is fixed and unchangeable. That's because if a lie is repeated loud enough and long enough, people will accept it as truth. Change is possible, and feelings (because that's what we're talking about here) are fluid. We see change happening in the first-century church; 1 Corinthians 6:11 says to former homosexuals, "And such were some of you." I have seen change happen before my own eyes, for 18 years of involvement at Living Hope Ministries. And if that's not enough, google "Lisa Diamond Sexual Fluidity" for some intriguing academic research that cites that change happens.

But then it sure sounds cold to mail someone a letter revoking his membership. And it would be—if it had happened like that. The letter was just the final formal communication, the period at the end of a series of anguished, face-to-face

conversations.

See why it's so important to remember that "The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him"?

The letter from our own former member needs to be read with discernment as well:
"I spent years battling against my own homosexuality. When I wasn't able to change, you turned your back on me."

I'm sure there were some people mistakenly thinking and hoping that his same-sex attractions were a matter of choice that could be changed on demand. "Everstraights," especially men, have a hard time imagining what it's like to be drawn to the same sex, and can easily burden those who are, with unrealistic expectations.

Battling one's homosexuality is incredibly difficult, and I can appreciate that many, many people pray hundreds of times, "God, I beg You, take this away!" That prayer is like mine growing up: "God, *please!* Heal me!" It's like the apostle Paul's prayer, recorded in 2 Corinthians 7b-9:

> "I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

Paul pleaded with God to remove his thorn in the flesh, but God had something better. I pleaded with God to remove my thorn in the flesh, but He had something better. My same-sex attracted brother, our former member, pleaded with God to remove his thorn in the flesh, and He had something better for him as well, but my brother decided to embrace his flesh instead. He wrote,

"I am who God made me to be. I cannot change my sexual

orientation, and nor would I want to. I now have internal peace and happiness unlike ever before."

No, God did not make anyone same-sex attracted. Based on the thousands of men who have come through Living Hope, I would say God probably made him to be sensitive, artistic, creative, relational, and gifted. But not gay.

It's not surprising that he now senses "internal peace and happiness unlike ever before." He quit battling his flesh, the part of us that lives independently from God. The relief that comes from giving into temptation can feel like peace and happiness, for a while. It can feel like freedom. But it comes at a cost. There is no true intimacy with Jesus when we are indulging our flesh. There can be a faux intimacy, the echoes of having walked with Him in obedience and abiding trust. But true intimacy can only happen in the light:

> "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." (1 John 1:5-7)

So I pray for my brother, and I pray for all of us to develop discernment as we process the war of worldviews about sexual ethics. It won't be easy.

[Note: If you want a blessing and strong but grace-filled instruction about church discipline, please watch Todd Wagner's response to this issue from the Watermark platform, "Why Good Leaders Have Always Written Letters to the Church They Love": http://www.watermark.org/plano/message/4320]

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

_its_not_ok_to_be_gay
on October 18, 2016.