

How Should We Think About Texas' First Same Sex Wedding?

Last week saw a front-page story of Texas' first gay marriage. I asked my friend Hope Harris to guest blog for me, responding to this event out of her decades of experience and perspective as a former gay activist before Jesus changed everything in her life.

For well over 25 years I lived openly as a lesbian, advocating for gay rights and Marriage Equality. Just over six years ago I trusted Christ, and since then I have wrestled in depth with resolving my faith and sexuality, gender roles and Marriage Equality. Because of my belief that God's Word is true, I have landed on the side of the Biblical view of these issues. I can't even begin to express what a transformation God has made in me, that He would bring me to the place where I embrace the Biblical definition of marriage as between one man and one woman.

Last week, on February 19, 2015, Suzanne Bryant and Sarah Goodfriend became the first same sex couple to legally wed in the state of Texas. Shortly after the ceremony, the Texas Supreme Court responded with a stay, making it clear that this same sex marriage license is illegal and is not legally binding. This was a one-time marriage license granted by a probate judge based on the fact that one of the women is battling ovarian cancer, because it is possible that Ms. Goodfriend may not live to see same sex marriage legal in the state of Texas.

How should we think about this?

Let's start with the premise by which this couple was granted a marriage license. It is based on Ms. Goodfriend's cancer

battle; there is limited information available as to what stage her cancer has progressed to. In its article “Women Wed in Texas”[\[1\]](#), the Dallas Morning News states,

“Goodfriend, policy director for state Rep. Celia Israel, said during a news conference that her last chemotherapy treatment was 4 1/2 months ago. But, she added: “All of us wonder if the cancer grows back along with the hair growing back.”

I am sorry that Ms. Goodfriend is suffering from ovarian cancer and my prayers are with her for full restoration of health. Furthermore, this not a personal attack on Ms. Goodfriend or her partner Ms. Bryant.

From my experience as an advocate for Marriage Equality, I see this as a public appeal to gain sympathy for same sex couples in Texas. After all, who would deny a “dying woman” and her faithful partner of 31 years the right to make medical and legal decisions? On the surface this sounds like a valid reason to side with the couple—after all, this is a one-time exception.

First, the couple themselves are well educated individuals. Ms. Bryant is an attorney who graduated from Duke Law School. She specializes in second parent adoptions for alternative families, meaning same sex couples. Ms. Goodfriend holds a Ph.D. in Economics from UNC.

It is a fact these women are long term partners and based on their level of education and positions, it would be hard to believe that they have not long ago obtained medical power of attorney and given each other the legal right to make medical decision should the other not have the fortitude to do so. Additionally I am sure they have had the foresight to make funeral arrangements as well.

Let’s look at another aspect of this situation that appeals to

our sense of equality and justice.

Bryant said Thursday that being legally married to Goodfriend, who has ovarian cancer, would ensure inheritance. . . .
“Financially, now we’re intertwined, and we will have community property that we will share.”

As mentioned above, the couple is well educated, and they have the ability—apart from marriage—to legally ensure that their joint property goes to the parties they intend it to, such as the remaining partner and their two adopted daughters. I see this as a ploy to gain the compassion and understanding of their fellow Texans for the larger agenda of granting all same sex couples the rights, responsibilities and portability now granted to heterosexual couples in the State of Texas.

What should our response be as Christ followers who want to uphold the Biblical definition of marriage?

It is crucial that we have each resolved that the Biblical definition is God’s best plan for humanity. I can assure you that the battle is just gaining momentum in Texas. As it does it will also bring many heated and harsh exchanges between people on both sides of the issue, in public forums, town meetings, churches and personal conversations. Anger will be most intense towards those who stand on the side of Biblical marriage.

Understand that those advocating for Marriage Equality often view Christians as unkind, uneducated and intolerant. Because of this, I believe it is all the more necessary for God’s people to become educated. Learn to effectively demonstrate a balance of love and truth. Become men and women who can exercise empathy and compassion without compromise to those with opposing views. Below are three common positions most often brought to the forefront of the Marriage Equality argument.

Social Constructs Argument: *Men and women are equal and able*

to effectively carry out the roles of the opposite gender in traditional marriages.

Understand that gay marriage dilutes the value of marriage by insisting that there is nothing intrinsically essential about the balance of male and female. It will further weaken the family bonds that God ordained.

Civil Rights Argument: *Gay rights and same sex marriage are civil rights issues parallel to the 1960s civil rights movement.*

Same sex marriage is not a civil right, by definition; civil rights are based on socio-economic changes rather than emotional wants and physical attractions.

I have always found this position personally offensive to men and women of color who fought tirelessly to gain equal footing to their counterparts here in the United States. From the perspective of one formerly immersed in the gay culture, I can attest that the majority of the LGBT community are well educated Caucasians who have not suffered the civil injustices people of color have.

Religious Argument: *It is necessary to redefine marriage and sexual identity as a cultural norm in order to justify living as one's "authentic self," according to one's primary attractions.*

God created sexuality as complete and perfect; however, as the result of sin entering the world, humanity now lives with sexual and relational brokenness. People are using the term "authentic self" to describe what is actually flesh, the part of us operating independently from God and His intentions for us.

The cultural tide is sweeping the church, not only accepting but affirming men and women who chose their primary identity as gay rather than as a redeemed child of God. Furthermore,

many so-called “gay Christians” are advocating redefining God’s design for marriage and sexuality as it is stated in the Bible. (So many people have become desensitized to this label or identity that it fails to disturb any more. How would we respond if a group started a “Christian swingers” or “KKK for Christ” movement?)

This position diminishes the integrity of the Bible as absolute Truth and God-inspired, with the ability to evaluate and direct our lives to become the people God calls us to be.

For those who embrace the Biblical definition of marriage being between one man and one woman, there are moral, ethical and theological implications—for Christians, churches, and pastors in Texas, the United States and beyond. We must not succumb to the cultural tidal wave challenging God’s definition of marriage. Be brave and courageous, friends. Stand firm in God’s Truth. Keep a level head and a calm spirit, and speak the truth in love.

1.

www.dallasnews.com/news/state/headlines/20150219-women-wed-in-texas-first-same-sex-marriage-but-union-contested.ece



Follow Hope’s blog, Hope’s Pathway, at hopespathway.wordpress.com/

This blog post originally appeared at

blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/how_should_we_think_about_texas_first_same_sex_wedding on February 24, 2015.

“What’s Your Take on ‘Fifty Shades of Grey’?”

What’s Your Take on *Fifty Shades of Grey*?

The bottom line for me is that this verbal porn (and now visual as well, with the release of the movie) doesn’t pass the “Philippians 4:8 test”: “[W]hatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is any praise—dwell on these things.”

But writer and speaker Dannah Gresh blogged about it so well, I’ll just send you to it: [“I’m Not Reading Fifty Shades of Grey.”](#)

There are some disheartening comments on her blog post, which are reasonably rebutted:

“You shouldn’t judge a book you haven’t read.” There’s enough information out there about this book series to make an informed judgment. Consider God’s command in the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They didn’t know evil personally and experientially, but God still commanded them to stay away from it. God wasn’t going to buy the argument, “How can we decide whether or not to partake if we’ve never tasted evil?”

“I don’t question my faith after reading these books.” Okay, but did they bring you closer to the Lord and to His call to purity? How did they impact your view of God’s standards for sexuality? If you enjoyed books that glorify what God calls sin, how do you not see the discrepancy for a Christ-follower?

“It’s just a fictional book, for crying out loud!” This is the

most disturbing of all, because it shows the writer doesn't understand the power of story. People's minds and hearts are not swayed by a list of facts and statistics nearly as much as they are by story, whether in a book or a film or video. The power of story is that it can slip past the "watchful dragons" of one's belief system and turn the heart, both for evil and for good. All we have to do is watch how the values of a TV audience change over time by watching certain TV shows. We need to be *more* careful about novels and movies, not less.

Sue Bohlin

Added February 13, 2015:

My pastor answered the question "Is It Okay for a Christian to Go See Fifty Shades of Grey" in this 7-minute episode of *Real Truth Real Quick*:

Posted July 8, 2012; Updated Feb. 13, 2015

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Pen > 'Puter

Sue Bohlin blogs about the value of writing by hand compared to only keyboarding.

We recently observed National Handwriting Day (in case you didn't know, yes it's a thing). Some people think handwriting is an irrelevant remnant of the pre-technological past, rendered obsolete by the keyboard; many elementary schools don't even teach cursive writing anymore. A friend wrote a note to a young relative inside a greeting card, and the boy handed it back saying, "I don't know how to read this kind of writing." Do you know what we call people who can't read

writing? Illiterate! How very sad!

But handwriting is neither obsolete nor irrelevant. Studies have shown that we learn better and remember more when we take notes by hand than when we type on a keyboard. When we write notes by hand, we process what we're hearing and reframe it, reflecting and paraphrasing in ways that lead to better understanding and remembering.

Brain researchers have discovered that we use more of our brain when writing by hand than by using a keyboard. That may have to do with the fact that we use more senses when writing by hand on paper; not only do we see what we're writing, but we hear the sounds that paper makes, we smell the fragrances of paper and ink, and it's a very kinesthetic, hands-on experience. That's probably why we retain more when we read from a newspaper or actual book rather than from a screen—more senses are involved so more gets “written” into our brain.

Researchers have also learned that we generate more ideas when writing by hand, making us more creative and better thinkers. Since writing by hand is slower than typing, it gives us the margin to engage our mind in ways that don't happen when we're zipping along typing 75 words per minute.

Barbara Getty and Inga Dubay, who have written a wonderful curriculum for [teaching Italic handwriting](#), discovered that children's grades improved as they learned to write in legible, beautiful forms.

And then there's the spiritual element of handwriting.

Over forty years of following Christ and being a student of His word, I have discovered that it makes a big difference when I keep a notebook or journal in which I write down what I see as I read the Bible and respond to it. I learn and retain more of what I'm reading and studying. But there's another blessing to be had: something special and sometimes wondrous happens in that holy place where my pen meets the paper. Maybe

it's because of the speed of writing as opposed to typing, but it seems that the Holy Spirit is able to lead me more clearly and specifically when I'm writing by hand. I'm able to "connect the dots" better. It seems that insights come more easily with a pen in my hand rather than my hands on a keyboard. This is true whether I'm journaling from my heart, processing life before the Lord, or recording the insights I receive from reading scripture.

I don't know who first said that "Thoughts untangle themselves over the lips and through the fingertips," but they are right. There is power in writing! Go grab a pen and a notebook and enjoy what happens next.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/pen__puter on January 27, 2015.

God and CSI, Take 2

At our house, conversations about ID usually aren't about "identification." It means "Intelligent Design."

My husband Ray's entire education is in science, including a Ph.D. in molecular biology. Early in his Christian walk, learning there was evidence against evolution lit a fire under him that has only grown in the 35 years since. Today, he is thrilled by advances in science that on an almost-monthly basis reveal more and more evidence that an intelligence is the only reasonable explanation for many aspects of the natural world.

But that doesn't sit well with people who don't want to be accountable to the God they know perfectly well is there, but

spend endless hours and countless books (and YouTube videos) denying it.

The anti-God attitude was well known to the apostle Paul, who said in Romans 1:19-20, “. . .that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

Eventually, it poisoned the very core of most science today. The early scientists like Galileo and Newton made important discoveries about the Creation because their starting point was a belief in an intelligent, orderly Creator who wove orderliness into His creation. They believed that the orderliness and principles of the natural world were knowable because our God is knowable. But then, Darwin's theory of evolution allowed people to embrace science without buying into the “God part” of it. Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*) said that “Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.” And today, it is now assumed that the very nature of science excludes anything supernatural. This has nothing to do with the evidence and everything to do with people's hearts.

When we “X” God out of our thinking, we feel free to redefine things any way we want, since we no longer feel beholden to His view of reality. I was thinking the other day that if Las Vegas decided it didn't like its crime statistics, all it needs to do is define crime away. Can you imagine if the city went to the CSI investigators and said, “You know all those dead bodies you deal with? From now on, you need to find a natural explanation for those deaths.”

And the CSI people would say, “But most of the deaths we investigate aren't naturally caused. They are caused by human beings.”

LV: Not any more. If all people die from natural causes, then we've done away with crime. And we are totally committed to doing away with crime in Las Vegas.

CSI: But we're committed to following the evidence no matter where it leads. If the evidence implies a killer, we can't say it's a natural death.

LV: Our commitment is eliminating crime. If you can't come up with natural causes for these deaths, we'll bring in CSIs who can.

CSI: So when we find someone face down on a desk, with a wound indicating something long and sharp was stabbed from the back of the neck into the victim's mouth. . .?

LV: Keep researching until you find a completely natural explanation. And stop using needlessly prejudicial words like "victim." There is no more crime in this city because we have declared it so. Your findings have to be consistent with the new city policy.

And that's what it's like to be a scientist these days. Don't believe me? Watch Ben Stein's movie *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* .

And go "Arrrrrgggggggghhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!"

This is a revised version of the [blog post](#) originally published on October 7, 2008

Want It To Go Well With You?



When our sons were young, one of their favorite Golden Books was *Tootle the Train*. It was the story of a baby train who was in school to learn to be a Flyer, but he kept jumping off the track to go play in the meadow. It took all the people in the town

working together to convince him that a train needs to “stay on the rails no matter what.”

For a short while in the book, Tootle buys into the lie that life can be found in the meadow, racing horses and making daisy chains among the buttercups. But if you’re a train and you go off the rails, you don’t have a good time playing in the meadow—you get stuck in the dirt! Ever heard the phrase “train wreck”? It’s what happens when a train doesn’t “stay on the rails no matter what.”

Trains weren’t made to run on grass, they were made to run on rails. Staying on the rails is the only way Tootle could be the train he was designed to be.

This book reminds me that God’s truth and precepts are like the rails on which a good life runs. God *wants* us to have good lives! Six times in the book of Deuteronomy, God tells us that the reason He wants us to obey His commands is *that it may go well with us*:

Deuteronomy 4:40 “So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, **that it may go well with you** and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time.”

Deuteronomy 5:16 “Honor your father and your mother, as the

LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be prolonged and **that it may go well with you** on the land which the LORD your God gives you.”

Deuteronomy 5:33 “You shall walk in all the way which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and **that it may be well with you**, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you will possess.”

Deuteronomy 6:3 “O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, **that it may be well with you** and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Deuteronomy 6:18 “You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, **that it may be well with you** and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore to give your fathers,”

Deuteronomy 12:28 “Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so **that it may be well with you** and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.”

Do you want it to “be well with you”? Of course you do! We all do!

There’s only one way, and that is to live our lives according to God’s plan and design and purpose for us. And there’s only way to do that: to read and study His word so we can learn His plan and design and purpose for us. There are no shortcuts.

Researchers have determined that when people read their Bibles at least four times a week, life change happens. That’s the tipping point.

Do you want it to go well with you this next year? How about opening your Bible—or Bible app—and reading God’s word at least four times a week?

Bible.org offers several Bible reading plans:
bible.org/Daily_Bible_Reading_Plans

Or you can jump on board at Join the Journey as we go “rim to rim,” Genesis to Revelation, this year: www.jointhejourney.com

Let’s go . . . so it will go well with you.

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blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/want_it_to_go_well_with_you
on December 30, 2014

Baylor the Lap Dog

This is Baylor, our Golden Retriever. He is a giant sucking funnel of attention and affection. He does not understand the concept of “enough.” And he worships—he ADORES—my husband Ray. His favorite position to do that is in Ray’s lap. But last week, the center of Baylor’s universe had hip replacement surgery. Needless to say, nobody, especially Baylor, is allowed in Ray’s lap.



And Baylor does not understand this.

All he knows is that his lord and master, his sun, moon, and

stars, went away for a couple of days and when he came back, he was walking gingerly, leaning on a strange silver contraption to help him walk, and not allowing Baylor in his lap. Not even next to him in his chair. Thus the sad, sad picture.

Watching this heart-wrencher unfold, I am reminded of a major spiritual truth: just as Baylor cannot possibly understand why he is not allowed in Ray's lap, much less the concept of hip replacement surgery, we cannot possibly see the whole picture of any trial or disappointment or suffering we experience.

All we can see, all we can feel, all we can figure out is that we are hurt or angry or both, and it sure doesn't feel fair. That's because all we have is our puny little limited perspective. There is always a much bigger picture we can't see, but God does. He not only sees every detail of the big picture of our situation, He also knows how our situation will play out into the future. He knows how He will redeem our pain and our confusion. He knows why it is essential to trust Him, because He loves us and He knows what He's doing.

As the great theologian Charles Spurgeon said, "God is too good to be unkind, He is too wise to be mistaken, and when you can't trace His hand, that's when you must learn to trust His heart."

When Ray and I look at Baylor, our hearts hurt for the pained misunderstanding on his sweet face. I can't help but wonder if our heavenly Father looks on us with an infinitely greater compassion when we find ourselves in Baylor's shoes—er, paws, overwhelmed by confusion and questions because of what we cannot see and cannot know.

We know that within a couple of weeks, Ray will be healed enough to welcome Baylor back into his chair and into his lap—but we can't communicate that to poor Baylor with his limited doggie mind. But God has communicated a magnificent promise to us, His children: that He is able to make all things work together for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).



That means we can trust Him. And, like Ray and Baylor, our heavenly Father will call us into His lap.

This
blog post originally appeared at [Baylor the Lap Dog](#) on
December 2, 2014.

The Euphemism of 'Death With Dignity'

There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is death. (Proverbs 14:12)



Brittany Maynard, a young woman with an incurable brain tumor, recently took her own life rather than suffer through a painful, difficult descent into natural death. She had moved from California to Oregon, which is a “right-to-die” state that allows terminally ill people to be assisted in ending their lives on their terms.

How should we think about this? It depends on your starting point.

If you leave God out of the picture, believing that man is autonomous with the right to make all our own choices independent of any outside source of moral truth, then avoiding needless pain and suffering makes sense. If you leave God out of the picture, then there is nothing particularly special about people as opposed to beloved pets, which we put down when their suffering becomes too great for us. If you leave God out of the picture, and you believe that life ends with your last breath on earth, then ending one’s life is really not much different from turning off a movie before its end because you’re tired and want to go to bed. If you leave God out of the picture, then it makes sense to do whatever you want.

But leaving God out of the picture doesn’t make Him go away.

It just means people are in denial about His existence. About His right to determine life and death because He is the creator of life.

If your starting point is God Himself, who creates people for His pleasure and for His glory (Rev. 4:11, Eph. 1:6), then we are accountable to the Author of Life, and ending one’s earthly life is not a choice we have the right to make. If your starting point is God Himself, who made us in His eternal

image to live forever, then ending one's earthly life is the doorway to the next life. Not believing in life after death doesn't make it go away. As one character says in the movie *City of Angels*, "Some things are true whether you believe in them or not."

As far as we can tell from what the media presented, Brittany Maynard left God out of the picture in deciding to end her suffering. If she died as she may have lived her life, separated from the God who is created her, then even on her worst days of tumor-induced pain on earth, that was as close to heaven as she was ever going to get. If she remained separated from God as she drank a sedative mixture that allowed her to fall asleep and then die, she made a horrible choice to enter eternity remaining separated from God forever. That means separated from all that is good, from all that is kind, from all life and light and love and joy. Because all these things are found only in God, and if we remain separated from Him, we cut ourselves off from their source. We are left with evil, cruelty, death and darkness and isolation and despair. An eternity of it. There is no dignity in this kind of unending death.

It's possible that she cast herself on God's mercy in her last minutes; I don't know what the state of her soul was as she drew her last breath. I truly hope so.

But the horrific earthly suffering she opted out of, would be nothing compared to the eternal suffering of being cut off from all that is good. I don't mean to make light of the indescribable suffering of those dying from terminal diseases. But it's essential to not leave God out of the picture, and to remember He does great things in people through suffering. Not just the one with the illness, but the family members and others around them.

Responding to this news about Ms. Maynard, one woman wrote of her husband, "a man who suffered well. It was agony... Watching

him suffer. Knowing there was nothing I could do to heal him and little I could do to lessen his suffering. All I could do was hold his hand during biopsies and chemo. During the pain and nausea. I marveled at his strength, his faith, his refusal to give up. I held his hand when the doctor told us there wasn't anything else they could do. When the morphine caused hallucinations and he forgot we were married. I held his hand and discovered that if you love someone... If you have faith, you can tap unknown reserves of strength, you can endure pain unimaginable. Neither one of us picked the other for the ability to suffer well. But because we truly loved, we were able to put the other person first. That's love. All the feel good stuff is just romance. It's nice. It feels good. But it's small comfort when illness and death come knocking on your door. *I'm so blessed for having had the opportunity to suffer alongside B_____.* He was an amazing man!"

I think that is what true "death with dignity" looks like: being faithful to the end, suffering well, trusting God when the storm rages on.

Speaking of suffering well . . .

Hero to many of us, Joni Eareckson Tada wrote an [open letter](#) to Brittany weeks before she died. Joni has lived longer, and suffered more, than the vast majority of quadriplegics. She knows something of suffering, dealing with a severe handicap plus cancer plus chronic pain. Joni's voice deserves to be heard above all others, I believe:

"If I could spend a few moments with Brittany before she swallows that prescription she has already filled, I would tell her how I have felt the love of Jesus strengthen and comfort me through my own cancer, chronic pain and quadriplegia. I would tell her that the saddest thing of all would be for her to wake up on the other side of her tombstone only to face a grim, joyless existence not only without life, but without God."

This is a deeply sobering, difficult discussion. Please don't leave God out of it.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/the_euphemism_of_death_with_dignity on November 4, 2014.

A Probe Mom Looks at Halloween from a Christian Perspective

Sue Bohlin takes a hard look at Halloween celebrations, applying a biblical worldview. As Christians, we cannot shield our children from this popular cultural event, but Sue provides some ideas on bringing a Christian perspective to this time of year.

A number of articles are available advising Christians to have nothing to do with Halloween. And I do agree that Christians have no business *celebrating* a holiday that glorifies something that delights the enemy of our souls. And potentially opens us up to demonic harassment, to boot!

But if we've got kids, especially kids in public school or who hang around other kids in the neighborhood, it's entirely possible that parents can feel pressured to do *something* about Halloween. After all, it's pretty hard to hide under a rock for the whole month of October. A number of houses on our street are more decorated for Halloween than for Christmas!

It seems that the costume manufacturers have really cranked up

production of all sorts of costumes to a degree we've never seen before. Gone are the days of burning a cork to blacken a face, put on some thrift-shop oversized clothes and dressing up as a hobo. (There's probably some politically-correct term for "hobo" these days anyway. . .)

Is there anything intrinsically wrong with dressing up in a costume and getting a bunch of candy from consenting adults? I don't think so; hey, the Bible tells us that God instructed the children of Israel to ask their neighbors for silver and gold their last night in Egypt in a VERY early version of "Trick or Treat" (Exodus 11:2). But we can cooperate with the forces of darkness, however unwittingly, by participating unwisely in Halloween festivities.

It is essential to exercise discernment in how we handle Halloween. If you can get away with ignoring it, wonderful! That would be the best solution. But you may find yourself in a place where you want to provide some way for your kids to have fun in a Halloween-immersed culture without compromising on our Christian values and beliefs. For instance, your child's school may invite all the students to dress up in a costume on October 31. I know a number of Christian schools that do this. May I make these suggestions:

Halloween Don'ts

God gave us some very strict guidelines for our own protection, commanding us to stay away from items and practices of witchcraft and divination in Deuteronomy 18. These "doorways to the occult" make us wide open to the influence of Satan and the demons. For more information on this, click [here](#).

So stay away from anything that glorifies:

- **The occult.** Witches, warlocks, sorcerers and sorcery, casting spells, mediums, magic, ouija boards, crystal balls,

tarot cards, and astrology are doors to the kingdom of darkness. Satan/Beelzebub masks and costumes have no place on a Christian or in a Christian family—not even “adorable”(??) little baby devil costumes complete with horns and pitchfork.

- **Darkness.** Satan and the demons are the rulers of darkness (Eph. 6:12). There’s a reason so many people are afraid of the dark; it is a fearful thing both physically and spiritually.

- **Death.** Satan has had the power of death over people (Heb. 2:14) ever since the Fall, and he uses it to control people through fear. Death is an enemy of God (1 Cor. 15:26), not something to flirt with. Vampires, ghosts, goblins and gargoyles (concepts rooted in the reality of demons) are all figures of death.

- **Fear.** Fear is both a feeling and a reality where Satan dwells. It is one of his most effective means of spiritual warfare against us. When we use Halloween events, decorations and costumes to cause and build fear in other people, we are cooperating with the sworn enemy of God and of God’s people. This would include anything spooky, such as cemeteries, haunted houses, and scary stories. You can now buy “The Scream” masks that are as disturbing as Edvard Munch’s original painting; their purpose is to make people afraid, even if they don’t know why.

Anything gruesome falls in this category as well; you can buy special effects like fake slash wounds, hanging eyeballs, and stakes through the forehead. Blood and gore are neither funny nor godly. Needless to say, slasher movies and horror films that deliberately terrorize and stir up fear are a tool in Satan’s hand. Scripture tells us that God does not give us a spirit of fear (2 Tim. 1:7), nor does He want us to be a slave again to fear (Rom. 8:15). That’s Satan’s arena.

Note: there are a number of churches that use the legitimate fear of an eternity in hell, separated from God, as a platform

for drawing people into a creative presentation of the gospel. Many young people have been saved as a result. This is a God-honoring use of fear, not glorifying fear for fear's sake.

- **Worldliness.** Costumes that glorify some of the world's heroes and heroines can shape our values in ungodly, unchristian ways. Little girls dressing like female pop stars, exposing their midriffs and looking as sexy as possible, is completely against biblical values. God calls girls and women to dress and act modestly, decently and with propriety (1 Tim. 2:9). Costumes of movie and TV characters that represent anti-biblical values are inappropriate for believers (and believers' children).

Halloween Do's

- If your church sponsors a Halloween alternative event such as a fall festival, that's a great idea to allow kids to have fun within pre-set boundaries. (Note: it's important to specify what kind of costumes are NOT welcome!)

- [Child Evangelism Fellowship](http://www.cefonline.com) (www.cefonline.com) has reported that Halloween has been the best time of year for children to trust Christ, simply because the spirit of fear that pervades our culture at this time makes them more open than usual to hearing a good news of the gospel. Halloween is a great time to sponsor Good News Clubs and invite kids in your neighborhood to hear stories that will comfort, rather than terrorize, them.

- [American Tract Society](http://www.crossway.org/group/ats) (www.crossway.org/group/ats) has some terrific kid-friendly tracts to include with the candy you give out. This year, ATS has introduced the most practical Halloween evangelism resource yet! The Halloween Rescue Kit includes candy, bags, stickers and tracts – everything you need to reach 31 kids this Halloween. They suggest (and I think it's a great idea!) that if you expect kids to actually read the tracts once they get home from Trick-or-Treating

(instead of tossing them out unread with the empty candy wrappers), that you tape them to popular candy bars that kids actually want. (Find out what kids in your area consider “cool” candy.) Or make your own tract kit by putting a tract plus quality candy inside sandwich bags. Either way, it forces kids to handle the tract in order to get to the candy. Sounds like following the Lord Jesus’ command to be “shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves” (Matt. 10:16) to me!

I know several families who have purchased tracts for the neighborhood ADULTS, and when their kids go trick-or-treating, when the adults give them candy the kids will hand them a tract (aimed at adults) and say, “Thank you for the candy. Here’s a treat for you!” How often do people open their doors and make themselves open to this kind of opportunity?

- [Let the Little Children Come](http://www.letthelittlechildrencome.com) (www.letthelittlechildrencome.com) has a wonderful “Is anything better than candy?” Box-tract. Give out more than just candy this Halloween! This attractive pumpkin shaped Box-Tract is designed to contain children’s favorite candies. More importantly, the pumpkin opens up to answer the question, “Is There Anything Better Than Candy?” Yes, there is something much, much better than candy. It’s being God’s friend!

- Look for teachable moments to relate the things of Halloween to spiritual truth. Talk to your kids about the way fear is glorified at Halloween, and teach them what Jesus said about it: “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful” (John 14:27), and “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Talk to your kids about [“God’s no-no list”](#) in Deuteronomy 18 and have them help you identify those things when they see them advertised or used as decorations. (You might keep a

running total of all the witches you'll see just to quantify this concept.) This is probably the best way to prevent your children from getting desensitized to things of the occult. Help them identify all the Halloween items that strike fear in them, and encourage them to take a stand against their power by saying out loud, "God has not given me a spirit of fear!" Show them this verse in their Bibles (2 Timothy 1:7) so they know they are using the sword of the Spirit against one of the wiles of the enemy.

This story making its rounds on the internet is a good pumpkin-carving object lesson:

A lady had recently been baptized. One of her co-workers asked her what it was like to be a Christian. She was caught off guard and didn't know how to answer, but when she looked up she saw a jack-o-lantern on the desk and answered, "It's like being a pumpkin."

The co-worker asked her to explain that one.

"Well, God picks you from the patch and brings you in and washes off all the dirt on the outside that you got from being around all the other pumpkins. Then he cuts off the top and takes all the yucky stuff out from inside. He removes all those seeds of doubt, hate, greed, etc. Then he carves you a new smiling face and puts his light inside of you to shine for all to see. It is our choice to either stay outside and rot on the vine or come inside and be something new and bright."

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries Mom

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Same Sex Marriage: A Facade of Normalcy

Sue Bohlin takes a look at the arguments for same sex marriage and finds them lacking from a Christian, biblical worldview perspective. She explains that those pushing for same sex marriage have redefined it into something it never was and was never intended to be.

What's Marriage For?

In any discussion on same sex marriage, we need to start at the beginning: What is marriage is for, anyway? Marriage begins a family. The family is the basic building block of society. It has always been this way from Adam and Eve down to today.

Man did not invent marriage; God did. He invented and ordained marriage as the foundation for all human society when He gave Eve to Adam and pronounced them man and wife. Marriage is one of those institutions that is found in every human culture. Across the globe and across the ages, marriage has always been defined the same way: one man and one woman in a committed relationship, providing a safe place to bear and raise children. I would suggest that since this pattern for marriage applies to all cultures and all times, this indicates that God is its inventor and creator. It's such an intrinsic part of the way we relate to each other that even those who have lost track of the story of the true God (the non-Judeo-Christian cultures) still practice marriage according to the pattern God designed: one man and one woman in a committed relationship, providing a safe place to bear and raise children.

God has woven "marriage into human nature so that it serves two primary purposes throughout all societies."[\[1\]](#) The first is the way men and women were created to complement each

other. Marriage balances the strengths and weaknesses of masculinity and femininity. Women help civilize men and channel their sexual energy in productive rather than destructive ways. Men protect and provide for women—and any children they produce together.

Marriage is built on a basic building block of humanity—that we exist as male and female. The strong benefit of marriage as God intended it is that males and females are designed with profound and wonderful differences, and these differences are coordinated in marriage so that each contributes what the other lacks.[\[2\]](#)

The second purpose of marriage is producing, protecting, and providing for children. Marriage ensures that children have the benefits of both mother and father. Each gender makes a unique and important contribution to children's development and emotional health, and marriage provides the best possible environment for children to thrive as they enjoy the benefits of masculinity and femininity.

Those who are pushing for same sex marriage don't see marriage this way. They seek to redefine it as a way to get society's stamp of approval on their sexual and emotional relationships, and a way to secure financial and other benefits. Both of these reasons are about the adults, not about children. Both reasons are driven by the philosophy of "How can I get what I want? How can I be happy?" It's a very self-centered movement.

Many homosexuals want the right to marry only because it confers society's ultimate stamp of approval on a sexual relationship—*not* because they want to participate in the institution of marriage.

Why Same Sex Relationships Are Wrong

Let's look at several reasons (though not an exhaustive list by any means) that same sex relationships are wrong.

First, homosexuality is an attempt to meet legitimate needs in illegitimate, ungodly ways. We all have God-given heart hungers to feel loved and known and validated—to feel that we matter. God intends for us to have those needs met first by our parents and then by our peers, but sometimes something goes wrong. People find themselves walking around with a gaping, aching hole in their souls, longing to make the connections that didn't happen when they were supposed to, earlier in their lives. From both the women and the men that I know who are dealing with unwanted homosexuality, I hear the same thing: "I just want to be held, I just want to be known, I just want to be special to someone." But turning to homosexual or lesbian relationships to get those needs met is not God's intention for us.

Second, same sex relationships are outside of (and fall far short of) God's created intention for sex. God made us male and female, designed to complement each other physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Two men or two women coming together can never live out God's intent for His creation. The biology of our gender shows us that same sex relationships don't work, but opposite sex relationships do. It is unwise to ignore the obvious about how the pieces fit, or don't fit, as the case may be.

Third, marriage is an earthbound illustration of the mystery of Christ and the church.^{3} There is a mystical unity of two very different, very *other* beings coming together as one. Only the profound differences of man and woman display this mystery. "If the man represents Christ and the woman represents the church, then a male to male partnering would be, in essence, a symbolic partnering of God with Himself apart from His people. Likewise, a lesbian relationship would become a symbolic partnering of God's people without Him. Either option is incomplete, unnatural, and abhorrent."^{4}

Fourth, same sex relationships are idolatrous. In Romans 1, Paul describes the downward spiral of people who worship the

creature instead of the Creator. When God says intimate relationships with people of the same sex are forbidden, and people insist on pursuing them anyway, they have elevated something else to the position of a god. It could be the other person, or sexual pleasure, or even just one's own feelings, but all these things become idols because they are more important than anything else, including God.

Homosexual and lesbian relationships are wrong because God designed us for something far better. The nature of the gospel is to bring transformation to every aspect of a believer's life, and many people have discovered the "something better." (See my article, "[Can Homosexuals Change?](#)")

The Differences Between Heterosexual and Homosexual Relationships

Sometimes you hear gays or lesbians say, "We're just like anybody else. We have two kids, a dog, a mortgage, and we worry about the economy. We just don't want anybody telling us who we can love." My friend Brady, who used to be part of that gay sub-culture, calls the homosexual lifestyle "a façade of normalcy." And it is *only* a façade.

Consider the huge variance in the stability of relationships. Despite a high divorce rate, 57% of heterosexual marriages last over twenty years.[{5}](#) The average length of homosexual relationships is two to three years.[{6}](#) Only 5% of them last 20 years.[{7}](#)

And consider the issue of promiscuity. In heterosexual marriages, over three-fourths of the men and 88% of the women remain faithful to their marriage vows.[{8}](#) Most sexually active gay men are promiscuous, engaging hundreds of sexual partners over a lifetime.[{9}](#)

The concept of a committed relationship is very different for

the two groups. Most heterosexual couples are faithful and stable. When homosexual men are in what they call a “committed” relationship, this usually includes three to five outside partners each year.[{10}](#) Rev. Troy Perry, founder of the Metropolitan Community Church, told the *Dallas Morning News*, “Monogamy is not a word the gay community uses. . . . We talk about fidelity. That means you live in a loving, caring, honest relationship with your partner. Because we can’t marry, we have people with widely varying opinions as to what that means. Some would say that committed couples could have multiple sexual partners as long as there’s no deception. Each couple has to decide.”[{11}](#)

In Holland, which legalized gay marriage in 2001, the average is eight outside partners.[{12}](#) One study of gay men who had been together for over five years could not find one single monogamous relationship.[{13}](#) Not one!

Women in lesbian relationships often stay together not because they want to, but because they’re stuck financially and emotionally. “I heard one speaker say at a Love Won Out conference, “We don’t have partners, we have prisoners.” Of course, that’s not universally true, but over the years of walking toward Jesus with women who were no longer in lesbian partnerships, I have heard over and over, “We didn’t know how to do life apart from each other.”

Heterosexuals live longer, happier lives. Sexually active homosexual men live a dangerous and destructive lifestyle. They are at huge risk for contracting AIDS, and run a much higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases than straight men. The gay community experiences three times more alcoholism and drug abuse,[{14}](#) and much more promiscuity and domestic violence than the straight world.[{15}](#) Gay men can expect to live twenty years less than their straight neighbors.[{16}](#)

And finally, a home with a mom and a dad is the best possible place for children. Homosexual parents put kids at risk. The

American College of Pediatrics discovered that children raised by gay parents tend to be more dissatisfied with their own gender, suffer a greater rate of molestation in the family, have homosexual experiences more often, and are encouraged to experiment in dangerous, destructive lifestyle choices.[{17}](#)

Please hear me: We're commenting on the extremely high-risk *behavior* that is part and parcel of a homosexual lifestyle. That's not the same thing as condemning the *people* who engage in it. A homosexual lifestyle *is* a façade of normalcy, but it can be changed.

Answering Arguments for Same Sex Marriage

Let's look at several arguments being offered for same sex marriage.

The first is that marriage will encourage faithfulness and stability in volatile homosexual relationships. But the nature of homosexual and lesbian relationships is broken to begin with. Two broken people will not create a whole, healthy relationship. The best description I've ever heard of same sex relationships is "one broken little boy looking for his daddy, connecting with another broken little boy, looking for *his* daddy." And the same is true of women. Neither a marriage license, nor the approval of society, can fix the nature of a relationship that is irretrievably broken at its core.

Another argument is that we need same sex marriage to insure hospital visitation. But it's the patient who decides. If he appoints his partner as a health-care proxy, even if he's in a coma that document will insure access to the hospital. We don't need marriage for that. It's a smokescreen.

A third argument is that we need same sex marriage to insure survivorship benefits. But that's what a will is for. You don't need marriage for that.

Some say that we need same sex marriage for Social Security benefits. This is an interesting argument, since Social Security benefits were created to address the financial inequity of father as breadwinner and mother as stay-at-home caregiver. Homosexual relationships are usually two-incomes. It's very rare to have one stay-at-home caregiver of the kids, since homosexual relationships do not and cannot produce children naturally. When they do, they are borrowing from God's plan for creating families.

Then there's the discrimination argument. There are really two issues that fall under this argument: *denied liberties* and *denied benefits*.

Concerning the issue of denying the liberty to marry, this argument doesn't hold water. Any person can marry whoever he or she pleases, with certain restrictions that are true for everyone. You can't marry a child, a close blood relative, a person who is already married, or a person of the same sex. These restrictions apply equally to everyone; there is no discrimination here. The problem is, some people don't like the restrictions.

True discrimination functions against an unchangeable identity, such as gender or color. Homosexuality is a lifestyle, a chosen behavior. Even sexual orientation is changeable. It's not easy, but it *is* possible.

The other issue of discrimination is denied benefits. But benefits are granted to families because society has an interest in providing a safe place for children to grow up and be nurtured. So the government provides child-oriented benefits such as inheritance rights and tax relief to ease the financial burden of children. Insurance policies and Social Security benefits provide for the money gap between wage-earner and caregiver. These benefits are inherent to *families*. The essence of marriage is about building families. Homosexual relationships cannot build families legitimately. They have to

borrow from heterosexual relationships or technology to create children.

Final Points to Consider

Joe Dallas draws on his wisdom and experience as a former homosexual to address the issue of same sex marriage in his book *When Homosexuality Hits Home*. He provides some excellent points to consider about this subject.[\[18\]](#)

We can recognize that people genuinely love each other, and we can respect their right to form a partnership, even if we disagree with the nature of their partnership. We can say a relationship is wrong without disrespecting or condemning the people in that relationship.

For example, look at the relationship between Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn. Tracy was a married man when he met and fell in love with her. For decades they had a deeply committed and affectionate relationship although they never married. Note two glaring and conflicting facts about their relationship: it was adulterous, and therefore wrong, and they truly loved each other. You can find a number of good things about their relationship, such as the way they respected each other and cared deeply for each other and seemed to be good for each other. When we say it was morally wrong, this does not deny the good things about their relationship. But to recognize the good things does not change the fact that it was morally wrong. The two are not mutually exclusive.

With gay or lesbian couples, we can acknowledge that there may, indeed, be deep love and commitment to each other. After all, humans have an amazing God-given capacity to love—even outside the bounds of His design and commands. But God cannot and does not sanction homosexual relationships, so we cannot either. We can respect those involved without capitulating to their demands.

Redefining marriage is especially unacceptable to Christians, since it is spelled out in both Testaments as a type of God's relationship with His people. In the Old Testament, God is portrayed as the husband of the nation of Israel, and in the New Testament, Jesus is the bridegroom of the Church. Marriage is far more than a social construct that provides for the creation of new families. It is a living parable that helps us to understand the dynamic, mysterious relationship between God and His people. How can we redefine something that has such a deep, spiritual meaning? Even if that were not part of the equation, we would still need to deal with the truth that marriage was created by God, and we do not have the right to tinker with His creation.

The problem with same sex marriage is that it doesn't work, it doesn't fit, and it is an attempt to make right something that is intrinsically, irretrievably wrong. God created us in His image as both male and female, and intends that His full image be expressed as men and women come together in designed complementarity. This is impossible in same sex marriage.

Notes

1. Glenn T. Stanton and Dr. Bill Maier, *Marriage on Trial* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 22.
2. Stanton and Maier, 24.
3. Ephesians 5:22-32.
4. Joe Dallas, *When Homosexuality Hits Home* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2004), 164-165.
5. Rose M. Kreider and Jason M. Fields, "Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 1996" *Current Population Reports*, P70-80, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, D.C. (February 2002): 5.
6. M. Saghir and E. Robins, *Male and Female Homosexuality* (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1973): 225; L. A. Peplau and H. Amaro, "Understanding Lesbian Relationships," in *Homosexuality Social, Psychological, and Biological Issues*, ed. J. Weinrich and W. Paul (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1982).

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9. A. P. Bell and M. S. Weinberg, *Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity Among Men and Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), pp. 308, 309; See also A. P. Bell, M. S. Weinberg, and S. K. Hammersmith, *Sexual Preference* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981).
10. David H. Demo, et al., editors, *Handbook of Family Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 73.
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12. Maria Xiridou, et al, "The Contribution of Steady and Casual Partnerships to the Incidence of HIV Infection among Homosexual Men in Amsterdam," *AIDS* 17 (2003): 1031.
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14. Peter Freiberg, "Study: Alcohol Use More Prevalent for Lesbians," *The Washington Blade*, January 12, 2001, p. 21. Karen Paige Erickson, Karen F. Trocki, "Sex, Alcohol and Sexually Transmitted Diseases: A National Survey," *Family Planning Perspectives* 26 (December 1994): 261.
15. Lettie L. Lockhart et al., "Letting out the Secret: Violence in Lesbian Relationships," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 9 (1994): 469-492. D. Island and P. Letellier, *Men Who Beat the Men Who Love Them: Battered Gay Men and Domestic Violence* (New York: Haworth Press, 1991): 14.
16. Robert S. Hogg et al., "Modeling the Impact of HIV Disease on Mortality in Gay and Bisexual Men," *International Journal of Epidemiology* 26 (1997): 657.
17. <http://www.acpeds.org/?CONTEXT=art&cat=22&art=50&BISKIT=2920801063>
18. Dallas, p. 162-165.

See Also:

- [Can Homosexuals Change?](#)
 - [Did Phil Get It Wrong? Is Homosexuality Sin?](#)
 - [Homosexual Myths](#)
 - [Homosexuality: Questions and Answers](#)
 - [Homosexual Theology](#)
 - [When Someone In Your Congregation Says "I'm Gay" \(Pastors' Brochure\)](#)
- [And also our answers to e-mails about homosexuality issues](#)

Can Homosexuals Change? – A Christian View of Homosexuality

Sue Bohlin looks at the real evidence showing people who have changed from homosexuality. From a Christian perspective, Sue presents some proven paths to recovery from homosexual thoughts and practice. When we let Christ begin to heal our underlying hurts and feelings of inadequacy, it is truly possible to experience a fundamental change.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

Is It Possible for Homosexuals to Change?

Mike^[1] was marching in a Gay Pride parade when God got a hold of him. He had been high for four days and his “buzz” suddenly

evaporated as he heard a voice in his head say, "You don't have to live like this." He knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that it was God offering him a way out. He put down his Gay Pride sign, left the parade, sat down in a nearby stairwell, and repented of his rebellion. He gave his heart to Jesus Christ and starting walking out of homosexuality that day. Today, several years later, he is married with a child, and living a very different kind of life. Not just on the outside; his heart was changed from the inside out.

Paul was on a self-destructive path of drug and alcohol abuse and homosexual activity. When he told his mother he was gay, she threw him out of the house, and the only place he could find belonging, safety, and identity was the gay community. As he spent more and more time "escaping" the pain in his life through sex and alcohol, he began to realize how bad his life was. He wanted to die but God had something else in mind.

Paul was invited to a Bible study where he met a man who had left the gay lifestyle and was living a changed life. For the first time he honestly called out and said, "God, please help me."

One of his friends became a Christian. He asked her about homosexuality and was angered by her initial response. She said, "I now believe it is a sin—but God wouldn't call it a sin if there weren't something better." Paul eventually realized that he was a sinner who needed God's love and grace, and in 1992 he trusted Christ as his Savior. Two months later, he was led to an organization that helps people deal with unwanted homosexuality through an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. He left his homosexual identity behind and embraced his true identity as a child of God, committed to holiness and purity. Paul is now director of that ministry and is helping others walk out of homosexuality. He's not perfect, he's still growing . . . just like me and every other Christian I know. But the "something better" God had in mind for him is an intimacy with Christ that is breathtaking.

Randy brings glory to God every day of his life by living out the abiding truth that change is possible.

Stories of Women

Carol grew up in a religious home with parents whose standards were too strict to allow her to please them. But she was smart, and a good student, and her teachers gave her the affirmation and encouragement her heart longed for. She developed very strong bonds with her teachers, some of which became profound emotional dependencies.

In graduate school, she was hit by the unexpected pain of loneliness and emptiness. Carol got into an intense relationship with a married woman, facing completely new temptations. She was totally unprepared to resist the strength of same-gender attraction, and quickly found herself emotionally and physically involved in a relationship she couldn't believe was happening. Now she was not only emotionally needy, she was shackled by deep shame, woundedness, and guilt.

A friend told her about a ministry to those dealing with same-sex attraction, and it was like finding a door to another world. Through the support she found there, Carol was challenged to identify the lies of Satan which she had believed her whole life and replace them with the truth of Scripture. God is renewing her mind, meeting her deep heart-needs, and bringing her to a place of freedom and hope.

Diane's story is different. She spent eighteen years in a committed lesbian relationship with another woman she believed to be her soul-mate. They went through a commitment ceremony in a gay church, and raised a daughter together. She enjoyed a position of leadership as a bright and articulate spokesperson for a gay church.

Through all those years, Diane's mother was steadfast in three

things. She loved Diane unconditionally. She never backed down about her belief that her daughter's lifestyle was sinful because God says it's wrong. And third, she prayed faithfully for her daughter.

Diane and her partner sought the Lord about everything except their sexuality. At one point, they were praying together for wisdom and truth about a situation that had nothing to do with their relationship. God answered their prayer in an unexpected way; He showed them the truth about the sinful nature of their relationship. It was a terribly painful and unwelcome discovery to learn that they had been deceived. Together, they decided out of obedience to God to separate and break off their relationship. It's still painful, even as Diane experiences God's healing touch in the deepest parts of her wounded soul. He's changing Diane and Carol from the inside out.

Three Claims for Change

Some people deal with same-sex attraction by pretending it's not there. Denial is unfortunately the time-honored "Christian" response. But this is not the way God wants us to deal with problems; Psalm 51:6 says, "Surely you desire truth in my inmost parts." Acknowledging one has a homosexual orientation is like seeing the red light on your car's dashboard; it means something is wrong somewhere. A homosexual orientation isn't the actual problem; it's the symptom of a deeper issue—legitimate, God-given needs for relationship and intimacy that have been channeled in unhealthy and sinful directions.

But it is not a simple matter, and it would be disrespectful to imply that there is an easy solution to the complex issue of homosexuality. Among those who claim that change is possible, there are three main schools of thought on how to get there.

The first is the deliverance ministries. They say that homosexuality is caused by a demon, and if we can just cast out the demon, the problem is gone. Sounds like an easy fix, but it ends up causing even more problems because homosexuality isn't caused by a demon. The person who was "delivered" may experience a temporary emotional high, but the same temptations and thought patterns that plagued him before are going to return because the root issue wasn't dealt with. Only now, he's burdened by the false guilt of thinking he did something wrong or that he's not good enough for God to "fix" him.

A second and more effective treatment for homosexuality is reparative therapy. There is a lot of wisdom to be found here because many therapists believe that homosexuality has its roots in hurtful relationship patterns, especially with family members, and many homosexual men and women report exactly that. But reparative therapy is often just behavior modification, and it deals only with the flesh, that part of us independent of God. Reparative therapy can make people feel better, but it can't bring true inner healing.

The third, and I believe best, way to bring about real and lasting change is a redemptive approach. Ministries that disciple men and women in intimate relationship with Jesus Christ are able to lead them into inner healing because God transforms His people. It's excruciatingly difficult to leave homosexuality without support. Fortunately, even for people who do not live in an area where there is a ministry tailored for those dealing with unwanted homosexuality, there are online support forums that can be almost as powerful as face-to-face groups. I especially recommend Living Hope Ministries' online support groups at www.livehope.org. There are also some wonderful books available, particularly *Coming Out of Homosexuality* by Bob Davies, and *Someone I Love is Gay* by Anita Worthen and Bob Davies. Another excellent book is *You Don't Have to Be Gay* by Jeff Konrad for men and *Restoring*

Sexual Identity by Anne Paulk for women. My all-time favorite author on this topic is [Joe Dallas](#); anything he writes is exceptionally good. But discipleship is hard work, and there is no simple and easy fix.

The Path to True Change

The most effective route to real, lasting change for those caught in same-gender attraction is a redemptive approach. This means discipleship, being taught and encouraged and held accountable to develop intimacy with Christ. Interestingly, it doesn't seem to matter what the particular stronghold is in a person's life—whether it be homosexuality, gluttony, drug dependency, compulsive gambling or shopping, alcoholism, sexual addiction, or any other stronghold—the most effective solution is the same: intimacy with Christ.

True discipleship is hard work. And God even gives us the energy for discipleship! But it takes tremendous self-discipline to choose to operate in the Spirit instead of in our own flesh, to depend on God's strength instead of our own. The real battle is in the mind.

The steps to overcoming homosexuality also apply to overcoming any stronghold.

First, the person has to stop the sinful behavior. It's best to ask for God's help. This is no different from the requirement for any drug or alcohol abuse treatment. You can't work on a problem when you're still totally controlled by it.

The second step is to work on learning what the Bible says about who you are in Christ. Just as people learning to identify counterfeit money examine real currency so they can spot the fakes, the struggler needs to fill their mind with God's Word so they can enter into their true identity as a beloved, valuable child of God.

The third step is working on the thought life, since this is

where the battle is. It's important to identify Satan's lies playing as tapes in one's head, and stop the tape player! Then, deliberately replace the lies with the truth. Instead of "I'm never going to change," repeat the truthful promise that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). Instead of obsessing over the aching and longing for the unhealthy and sinful behavior or relationship, fill your mind with praise and worship and Scripture.

Next, face the fact that it feels lousy! When we stop trying to meet our needs in our own ways, we start experiencing the emotional pain that our strongholds had covered up. When it feels really really bad, we are at that very point where God can make the biggest difference. Ask, *What is my true need?* What is it my heart is truly longing for? Go to Jesus and let Him meet your deepest heart-needs. Let Him direct you to get your divinely-designed needs for relationship with other people met in godly ways.

This is where powerful healing happens.

Ex-Ex-gays

For the last several years, people who had left homosexuality have slowly but surely gained a hearing in telling their stories. Word is getting out: change is possible!

And there are also the voices of the frustrated and disillusioned souls who tried to leave homosexuality, who tried to change, and gave up. There's even a name for it: "Ex ex-gays." Their stories are full of tremendous pain, and some have even lost their faith over it. What happened?

Well, I think the same thing that happened to people who tried AA but couldn't stop drinking, or those who tried Weigh Down Workshop but couldn't lose weight. I have a friend who was in Weigh Down Workshop, and it didn't do a thing for her. The problem is, she never made the commitment to "die to self," to

use an old spiritual term^[2]. She never got to the point of saying, “Jesus, I choose You over food. I choose a holy relationship with You over an unhealthy relationship with my appetite. And I will do whatever it takes to allow You to change my heart.”

Many people who tried to change their homosexuality could win contests for praying and reading their Bibles. They really did try very very hard. But the prayers are often misdirected: “God, change me. Take away my desires. Let me start liking people of the opposite sex.” Unfortunately, as well-intentioned as this prayer is, it’s a lot like trying to get rid of dandelions in your back yard by mowing them. They keep coming back because you’re not dealing with their roots. The basic cause of a homosexual orientation isn’t genetics or choice; it’s a wrong response to being hurt. It’s about protecting oneself and trying to get legitimate needs met in ways God never intended. True change can only happen with the hard work of submitting to God, allowing Him to expose the deep hurts and needs of one’s heart, which means facing horrible pain, and inviting Him to bring healing to those wounded places. That’s why intimacy with Christ is the answer. A wise friend observed that homosexuality is the fruit of sinful ways of dealing with pain—sinful because they cut us off from the One who can heal and meet our needs, sinful because they place us at the center of our universe and we don’t belong there. Jesus does.

I hope you can see that real change is hard and it costs a great deal because it requires strong motivation, hard work, and perseverance. But hundreds of former homosexuals have found a large degree of change, attaining abstinence from homosexual behaviors, lessening of homosexual temptations, strengthening their sense of masculine or feminine identity, and correcting distorted styles of relating with members of the same and opposite gender. Some former homosexuals marry and some don’t, but marriage is not the measuring stick;

spiritual growth and obedience are.

The bottom line is, change is possible.

Notes

1. All names in this article are changed.
2. This term is not actually biblical, but the concept is. See Romans 6.

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See Also: [See also "Probe Answers Our E-Mail: Homosexuality"](#)