What I'd Love to Say to Bruce Jenner

In Bruce Jenner's recent TV interview with Diane Sawyer, the world-famous former athlete disclosed that "For all intents and purposes, I am a woman." He's being widely praised as a courageous hero for normalizing the T in LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender).

I have a few thoughts I would love to share with him over a cup of coffee:

Bruce, you said you've known since you were young that you felt a mismatch between your insides and your outsides: "My brain is much more female than it is male . . . that's what my soul is." I have no doubt this was confusing for you, as a boy so clearly athletically gifted.

May I share a different interpretation of your experience?

Most people think there is a single gender spectrum or continuum that runs from masculinity to femininity. Since God's Word says that in the beginning, He created humankind male and female (Genesis 1:27), I think there is one spectrum for masculinity and a separate spectrum for femininity, and God chooses what kind of masculine or feminine each baby starts out as. On one end of the masculinity spectrum are the rough-and-tumble, athletic boys who tend to emotional insensitivity—the ones often called "All-American boys." On the other end, equally masculine albeit a different kind of masculinity, are the creative, artistic, musical, emotionally sensitive boys. Boys and men can be anywhere along that spectrum. And with emotional and especially spiritual growth, they can start taking up more bandwidth. The athletic ones can learn to listen well and show empathy to others; the sensitive ones can learn to be more comfortable with their bodies and

feel more like they actually belong to the world of males.

Some, like you, are given the rare gift of possessing almost the whole spectrum at once (like Jesus, I think—a "man's man" who drew other men to Himself, and the ultimate in creative, artistic and sensitive, since He was the Creator of the universe, of sunsets, and of women!). You were crazy-gifted physically, becoming arguably the world's best athlete in the 1976 Olympics. And at the same time, you said that you believed God gave you "the soul of a female."

I don't think your creative, sensitive soul is that of a female, but of a sensitive, gifted kind of male. This was understood better in earlier days. During the Civil War, General Joshua Chamberlain showed uncommon courage and leadership during the battle of Gettysburg, complemented by deep compassion and respect for others. He would walk the battlefield, seeking out and caring for the casualties. He sat down with the wounded General Sickles to try and cheer him up, who whispered, "General, you have the soul of the lion and the heart of the woman." Chamberlain, clearly honored by this praise, returned the blessing to the one who gave it.

Bruce, I don't think God gave you the soul of a female. I think He gave you a body and soul very much like His Son. I think it would be fair to say you have the soul of the lion and the heart of the woman, and that does not detract one whit from your masculinity.

One Christian to another, I want to encourage you to develop an eternal perspective rather than only thinking about the here-and-now earthly life. In your interview, you said, "I couldn't take the walls constantly closing in on me. If I die. . . I'd be so mad at myself that I didn't explore that side of me." But the end of your earthly life is only the last step before entering the glory of eternity. We need to always put more weight on the unseen and eternal rather than the seen and temporal. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 says, "For momentary, light

affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Your unhappiness with your gender identity qualifies as "momentary, light affliction" according to the standard God uses. You will spend the rest of your (eternal) life in your new body, a resurrection body similar to the Lord Jesus'. God chose for you to be male, just as His Son was male, and is still male. So will you be, for all eternity. That should help put your earthly life into perspective.

Bruce, I say this really, really gently: your sense that you are male on the outside and female on the inside is an error of thinking and feeling, not an error based in reality. Dr. Paul McHugh is the psychiatrist who shut down the sex-change surgery program at Johns Hopkins University because they discovered that patients were actually no better off after surgery. According to Dr. McHugh, those who identify as transgender, like you, are like the 78-pound anorexic girl who looks in the mirror and sees a morbidly obese cow. It's your *thinking* that needs to be adjusted, not your body. You look in the mirror with your male eyes in a male body, a body that has fathered six children, and you say, "I am really a female." But Bruce, you're not. God chose to create you as a male. He made you to be a man.

Like the story of the Emperor's New Clothes, brother, you are fooling yourself. You can't change your gender, you can only amputate perfectly healthy, functioning organs and tissue. If you move forward with surgery and continued hormone treatments, everyone will always know that you are Bruce Jenner The Once-Uber Male Athlete, trying to look like a woman.

I recently learned from a computer animator that due to the different bone structures of males and females, men can never walk like women because your hips don't move like ours do—male

hips and pelvis were not created for pregnancy and childbirth. It's yet another evidence that true sex change is not biologically possible.

Please, Bruce, before going any further down this path, talk to those who have gone down the path you are on, and who deeply regret it. People like Walt Heyer of sexchangeregret.com. People like the very tall female-looking man who told me through tears, in a very long conversation, that he would give anything to go back to the day before his surgery because he now feels like a fraud.

Bruce, our Bible says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Since God chose to give you the gift of maleness, and He calls you to be a good steward of every gift He places in your hand (1 Corinthians 4:2), please reconsider how you can reject His gift of masculinity to the glory of God.

You can have "the soul of the lion and the heart of the woman"—and be the man God made you to be.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/what-id-love-to-say-to-bruce-jenner/ on May 5, 2015.

Giving Thanks for EVERYTHING?

Early in my walk with Christ, I learned the life-changing, perspective-changing discipline of giving thanks for everything. EVERYTHING.

Initially, I stumbled over Ephesians 5:20, "always giving thanks for everything," thinking that surely that must not be

an accurate translation, or there was a footnote or asterisk or *something* that would mitigate the implication of the absolutes of "always" and "everything." I even bought a Greek-English interlinear New Testament so I could check out the original language.

Yep, that's what it says.

But it's awfully hard to embrace this command without an understanding of why God would tell us to give thanks always, much less why this command, like all the others, was given "so it may go well with" us.

It starts with the reassuring truth that *a good and loving God is in control* of everything that touches our lives. His sovereignty cloaks and protects us like spiritual bubble wrap; whatever makes it through the layers of His protective love and purpose has been given express permission to touch us. It means God has a plan that includes the good and the painful things that enter our lives. It means that He is able to make all things work together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

Apparently, God thinks that giving thanks is important, since He directs us to do it several times.

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything with prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Phil 4:6-7

I love that God wants us to bring everything to Him instead of being anxious. I love that God knows the value and importance of thanksgiving to help us stay balanced, so He tells us to weave thanksgiving into all of our communication with Him (the first, general word "prayer") and all our supplication (asking for what we need), as we make our requests known to Him (telling Him what we're asking).

“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; *in everything give thanks*, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” 1 Thess 5:16-18

For all the books, CDs and pulpit messages out there on finding God’s will for our lives, there’s nothing like starting with the passages that spell it out plainly! God’s will for us is to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in everything. Pretty much covers everything, all the time! Giving thanks isn’t just a good idea: it’s God’s will for our lives.

“Understand what the Lord’s will is. . . *always giving thanks for all things* in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father” Eph 5:17-20

This is the passage that first challenged me to bring my thinking into alignment with God’s word, a passage that spells out His will: not just giving thanks IN all things, but giving thanks FOR all things. And of course we can’t do it with our fleshly, fallen feelings and we can’t do it in our own strength, which is why this command is followed by the directive, “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.” We can do things in Jesus’ name and in Jesus’ strength that we cannot do on our own. But when we step forward in obedience despite our feelings, He meets us there with His more-than-sufficient grace and enabling!

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and *be thankful*.” Col 3:15

I love this verse. Letting the peace of Christ rule in our hearts means letting it be an umpire, calling out “Safe!” or “Out!” For years I have counseled friends, “Let God’s peace be your umpire. Follow the peace, and go wherever it leads you.” Choosing to be thankful (note that it doesn’t say *feel* thankful, just *be* thankful. Give thanks regardless of your feelings!) is like getting a fluoride treatment at the

dentist: it lays a protective layer over the peace, the way the fluoride is a protective layer over your teeth. I love that although Paul's directive is to the whole church at Corinth, it can and should be implemented on an individual basis as well. So when we give thanks in our faith communities, we help seal the peace in the body of Christ, and our thankful hearts also help keep our own personal peace quotients high. Talk about a win-win situation!

But why is it so important to give thanks? I had a lightbulb moment when reading Romans 1 and saw the incredibly important role of giving thanks in protecting ourselves from spiraling down into a really bad place:

"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-His eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

"For although they knew God, they never glorified Him as God ***nor gave thanks to Him***, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

"Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles." (Rom 1:18-23, emphasis mine)

Giving glory and thanks to God is a *spiritual retaining wall* that keeps us from descending to the next level, where our thinking becomes futile and our foolish hearts become darkened. And after this point, a downward spiral into depravity is inevitable.

So giving thanks as an ongoing self-discipline is a protection for us! But far more than that—it helps keep us in a healthy relationship to God. The warning from Romans 1 is that people who knew God but refused to give thanks to Him were refusing to embrace His sovereignty. There is an ugly spirit of rebellion in rejecting God's right to be God!

When we give thanks for everything that God allows into our lives, we are saying, "I acknowledge that You are God and I am not, and You know what You're doing. Even if I don't like this thing You have allowed to touch me, I trust You to make it turn out okay in the end." I think that kind of trust is pleasing to the Lord. And my own experience is that getting (and staying) in the habit of giving thanks for everything keeps our hearts tender toward Him.

For an example of this, three years ago I blogged about this in "Giving Thanks in a Hard Place." And my story of learning to give thanks for a lifelong disability is here. Where can you start giving thanks for what God has allowed to touch YOUR life?

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/giving-thanks-for-everything/ on April 21, 2015.

What is the "Authentic Self"?

The concept of the "authentic self" is a wonderful-sounding, important element of politically-correct thinking. Especially if one's "authentic self" includes a deviation from standard sexuality. Many people are proud of themselves for being progressive in encouraging others to admit and embrace inclinations and desires that a few decades ago were considered shameful.

Oprah was a major proponent of the idea. On her television show and her magazine, she encouraged her faithful followers to be open and real about their true thoughts and feelings, desires and dreams, passions and embarrassments. She was (and continues to be) especially insistent on the importance of coming out as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender) if someone had even the faintest leanings in that direction.

In today's culture, coming out and admitting you're gay is applauded as "being authentic." Claiming you are a man trapped in a woman's body, or vice versa, is "being authentic." But refusing to accept such labels means you're inauthentic.

I remember when Oprah interviewed Ted Haggard, disgraced former pastor and head of the National Association of Evangelicals. He said he was a heterosexual man with temptations toward homosexuality (that he regretted giving into), which is consistent with a biblical worldview. Oprah would have none of it. She pronounced him gay and declared with authority, "That is who you are!" It was clear she wanted him to embrace what she considered his "authentic self" and stop denying himself.

It made me think . . . what if a new movement rose up attempting to normalize obesity, calling it "a different kind of beautiful"? And what if obese people came on her show and said, "Oprah, girlfriend, you've had a lifelong inclination to overeat and not exercise. Face it! You are a fat girl! That is who you are! Stop lying about it and embrace it as who you truly are!" She wouldn't like it because she knows some weaknesses are worthy of struggling against. She wouldn't like it because she doesn't want her temptations and her inclinations to define her.

Because temptations and inclinations can be wrong.

When politician John Edwards had an adulterous relationship with Rielle Hunter while his wife battled cancer, Oprah booked

her on the show. It was quite intriguing to me to see how Oprah refused to approve of Ms. Hunter's choices.

Oprah: When this is all said and done and we look back on this time of you, Rielle Hunter, the mistress and all of that, what is it you want people to really understand about what has happened here?



Rielle: All of their feelings that they're feeling and hatred that's directed toward me has to do with their fears or their anger and disappointment and sadness about their mother cheating on their father or their father or their husband or their spouse. It has to do with them, and it doesn't have to do with me, because they don't know me.

Oprah: Why can't it just be that they think that it's wrong?

Oprah did not appreciate a woman sleeping with another woman's husband. That's wrong. But if a married woman comes to the conclusion that she's a lesbian, then sleeping with another woman is embracing her "authentic self."

This is not the first time we've seen this in human history. The book of Judges tells the unhappy story, over and over, of the nation of Israel stumbling into one disaster after another that required rescue because "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

When we do what is right in our own eyes, it never goes well with us. That's because we are fallen, broken people who live in a fallen, broken world, and we desperately need divine help and re-direction. We can't trust our hearts to tell us who we really are, who is our "authentic self," because God declares that the human heart "is deceitful above all things, and

desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)

The problem with what the world calls our "authentic self" is that it is the sum of our broken thoughts, feelings, desires, insecurities, and dreams. The "authentic self" that the world urges us to embrace is what the Bible calls the flesh, the part of us that operates independently from God and needs to be crucified, not glamorized (Galatians 5:24). In fact, Jesus had a completely opposite call for us: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Mark 8:34).

When we DO deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus, the Holy Spirit transforms us so we look more and more like Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18). Thinking biblically, the true and authentic self is the one that will last into eternity. A hundred years from today, every Christ-follower will be free from flesh, free from the old rotten self, reveling in the freedom and joy that comes from being completely holy and righteous and true to our re-created self that looks and acts and thinks like Jesus but with the "flavor" of our redeemed individual personalities and temperaments.

Jeanette Howard, author of *Out of Egypt*, explaining her journey out of lesbianism, recently wrote, "I am tired of people claiming that they need to be 'true to themselves.' No they don't. They, like all believers, need to die to themselves and be true to God. That is authentic discipleship."

More and more Christians are throwing in the towel in their fight against unholy sexual and relational temptations, claiming to follow their "authentic self." Even worse, a growing number of churches are doing something similar by embracing same-sex marriage. I have a question for them. If God really created them to be gay and blesses that identity today, what will happen a hundred years from today? Will there be homosexuality in heaven? There will be no sex in heaven

because the only marriage will be between the Church and the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. If one's identity is wrapped up in same-sex attractions, as it is by those claiming to be "gay Christians," who will they be when all sexual and relational brokenness is a thing of the past, a mere memory of earthly life?

I suggest that a believer's true and real and lasting "authentic self" is all wrapped up in not who we say we are, but who God says we are: His beloved child, redeemed and purified and made holy as He is holy. Chosen, accepted, and included, a citizen of heaven and a member of God's household. Belonging to Jesus because He bought us with His very lifeblood. Sealed with the Spirit, made brand new from the inside out.

Now *that's* an "authentic self" I can get excited about!

This blog post originally appeared on April 7, 2015, at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/what_is_the_authentic_self

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"Culture in Conflict" Conference MP3s



Conference Recordings

Kerby Anderson:

Being Christian in a Post-Christian Society
Truth Decay
Basic Christian Evidences

Dr. Ray Bohlin:

The Privileged Planet and Intelligent Design
Evidence for the Existence of God
The Reliability of the Bible

Sue Bohlin:

Thinking Clearly About Sexual Confusion
Helping Teens Understand Homosexuality
Raising Gender-Secure Children

Ray and Sue:

Guys are From Mars, Girls Are From Venus

When Life Hands You Bananas . . .

My friend Jonathan Baker handed a banana and a knife to every student in his Bible classes at Puebla Christian School in Puebla, Mexico. He told them to cut up their bananas any way they wanted. Junior high boys pretty much decimated theirs while other students cut their bananas into large pieces.

Then Jonathan passed out cellophane tape and told them to put the bananas back together again. It was, of course, a mess. The students who had made neat cuts with their knives were able to reassemble their bananas, but even with tape it was clear they were in parts. The mashed bananas, needless to say, were hopeless. Even with tape.

Jonathan made the observation that our choices have consequences, and we can't ever go back to the way it was before we made our choices. No amount of tape can possibly make a banana whole again. We can certainly make a mess of our lives when we make bad choices and have to live with the consequences.

We cannot fix our bananas.

We cannot undo the damage we inflict on our bananas.

It's sad.

But then he went into the next room and brought out ice cream, chocolate syrup, nuts, whipped cream, cherries, bowls and spoons. With a smile, Jonathan said, "You can't do anything with cut up, mashed up bananas, but God can! He can make a banana split! He can take broken pieces of our lives, unfixable messes and painful consequences of bad choices, and make something sweet from them. He'll make something unimaginably more wonderful of our broken pieces—IF we'll let

Him."

I love that story. And I love how it hit the students' hearts with hope.

But there is another layer to my enjoyment of this story. Jonathan shared it with me in Puebla, where my husband and I are here for a week to teach some of Probe Ministries' Mind Games material at the school. We also spoke at a weekend conference where I shared "How to Handle the Things You Hate But Can't Change," my story of living with polio my whole life. (I was six months old when I contracted it, just a few months before the vaccine was developed.)

I learned that here in Mexico, as in many countries around the world, Americans are often dismissed as lightweights because surely we don't know anything about suffering. But when my audience could see me limp painfully and slowly to the podium, leaning on my cane, I had instant credibility. I could see it on their faces: *I guess she really does know something about suffering.*

The power of my message, that a good and loving God is in control so we can trust Him, has nothing to do with me and everything to do with God's grace. But first, my audience had to be open to receiving what I had to say. And once again, I saw how polio is God's good gift to me, to open the doors of people's hearts to hear what I have to say, so that it blesses them and honors God.

The banana of my broken body is being used for a spiritual banana split. And that is a sweet, sweet blessing. With a cherry on top!

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/when_life_hands_you_bananas
on March 10, 2015.

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 "Arrrrgggggggghhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!"

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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