The Keys to Emotional Healing – Part 2

In part 1, I talked about grieving as a necessary part of emotional healing. The other part is forgiving, separating ourselves emotionally and spiritually from the offense so that we can continue to be healthy toward the offender. As I said last time, forgiving is like pulling out the soul-splinter that is causing pain and the emotional "pus" that accumulates from unresolved pain and anger. (Grieving discharges this emotional pus.) Forgiving releases the person who hurt us into the Lord's care, for *Him* to deal with.

We see this modeled by the Lord Jesus during the crucifixion process, when He repeated over and over, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). With each fresh offense, He released the offender into His Father's hands, refusing to succumb to the sin of unforgiveness.

Let's say you do something to hurt me. It's like tossing a potato at me. I catch the potato and discover it's a *hot* potato. I could continue to clutch the potato to my chest, screaming in pain and yelling at how much it hurts and how awful you are to do this to me, going on and on, "IT HURTS! IT HURTS! OHHH THIS IS HORRIBLE, TERRIBLE, AWFUL PAIN! HOW DARE YOU DO THIS TO MEEEEE!"

Or I could let go and let it drop to the floor.

There is relief in release, to be sure, but the problem with merely letting go is that we can pick it back up again. Biblical forgiveness means "sending away," with the Old Testament image of a scapegoat to help us understand. Once a year, the priest would place his hands on the head of a goat, symbolically transferring the sins of the entire nation to the goat, send it away into the wilderness, then release it. (Lev.

16:7-10)

We do need to let go of the offense and the offender, but the real power in forgiveness is *sending it away* to Jesus for Him to deal with.

If someone tosses a metaphorical hot potato at us, instead of simply letting it drop to the floor where we could pick it up again, we need to imagine Jesus standing there with His hands outstretched, inviting us to give our "hot potato" to Him. He has asbestos hands!

Forgiveness means we acknowledge the offense against us, and then transfer the offender over to God in our hearts. But for forgiveness to be real and true, we need to face the impact of the other person's sin or hurt against us and *grieve* it before we can truly let go of it and send it away to Jesus. Otherwise, it's like going to the emergency room with a broken bone and telling the doctor, "I want you to fix my bone from the other side of the room without touching me."

In the real world, if I continued to clutch a hot potato to myself, it would cool down and no longer cause pain. But in the emotional realm, if we continue to clutch an offense to our hearts, it hardens into something like cement, and a wall is built between the offender and us. And between us and God. And between us and everyone else. Unforgiveness is spiritually and emotionally dangerous. One of my family members hung on to every offense of her entire life, real or perceived, and never let go. With every year she became more and more bitter, cold and hard-quite unlovely and unlovable, apart from the power of God. She died with a heart so diminished and shriveled that her death was nothing but a relief for the rest of us.

When we forgive the ones who hurt us, we send their offense to Jesus, who already paid the penalty for their sins and woundings against us. The best exercise I've ever encountered to help people forgive is called "the Jesus Jail," which you

can find here courtesy of my friend Chuck Lynch, author of the book *I Should Forgive, But*. . .

Grieving and forgiving: the two powerful components of emotional healing. May you experience the grace of God in tearing down emotional strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4) to walk in the freedom of healing.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/the_keys_to_emotional_healing_-_part_2_ on April 24, 2012.

Redeeming The Hunger Games: From a Christian Worldview Perspective

Although not explicitly anti-Christian, The Hunger Games presents a very disturbing future world where children are forced to fight one another to the death. Sue Bohlin presents solid, biblically based concepts on how we are to consider movies in general and redeeming questions we should ask of this movie if one chooses to see it. Viewing movies with the intent of understanding the worldview behind the movie can help us present our Christian worldview in a way that communicates with the people around us.

Should Christians read (or see) *The Hunger Games*? Some people make strong arguments for avoiding any contact with the books or movie. No one will lie on their deathbed and say, "Oh, how I regret missing *Hunger Games*." But this is the latest "big

thing” to hit our culture; is there a way for Christ-followers to redeem it and not simply consume it as entertainment?

This separatist (and unrealistic) position confirms an unhealthy false dichotomy between “things of the world” and “things of the spirit realm.” We need to see the world as one reality where Christ rules over all and has something to say about everything. It would be better to ask, “How does the Bible relate to *Hunger Games*?” It would be better to compare biblical truths and biblical values to any body of work people are reading or viewing or listening to, the way that we can better judge the crookedness of a stick by laying it next to a straightedge.

Developing our critical thinking skills protects us from absorbing and internalizing ungodly ideas, creating yet more “cultural captives” who are more conformed to the surrounding cultures than the Word and character of God.

“It’s just a story. . .”

Many people dismiss concern over blockbuster novels and movies by saying, “Come on, it’s just a story, it’s *fiction!*” But we need to be *more* careful about how we process ideas and images that come through story, since most people’s defenses are down with this genre, and they just absorb the story without thinking or analyzing. That’s a major contributing factor to cultural captivity in the church—people have been absorbing the ideas and values of the culture through music, TV, movies, books, and even just personal conversation, without comparing them to what God says.

When people take in and digest *Hunger Games* as mere entertainment, their unthinking discernment puts them in the same category as the Capitol spectators who have no concept of the atrocity of human beings being sacrificed for their

diversion. But if you are deeply troubled by its depiction of the broken reality of life in a fallen world, if you are able to think about the implications of the story, then you are interacting with the books and movie with wisdom.

I think the best way to build wisdom and develop critical thinking is by asking questions that help us evaluate what we read or see.

For example, something is terribly wrong in the world that author Suzanne Collins paints in *Hunger Games*. Our souls rebel against the evil, the sense of "not right-ness" in it. We need to ask ourselves (and others), *What is the "terribly wrong"? And where did that sense of right and wrong come from?* I suggest that the visceral reaction comes from the imprint of God, the *imago Dei,* on our souls. The rightness of the image of God on our souls contrasts painfully with the crookedness of the dystopian world of *Hunger Games.*

The presence of evil and sin in the books is not bad in and of itself; as in the Bible, they are never glorified or promoted. The result is that most readers/viewers react along moral lines: murder and betrayal are bad, sacrifice and loyalty are good. This is a legitimate and edifying use of literature and film.

Questions to Ask

My colleague Todd Kappelman, an accomplished literature and film critic, suggests several thoughtful questions to ask about films and books:

- *How important is life to the director/writers etc.? Are the tough issues dealt with or avoided?*

- *Is there a discernible philosophical position in the film? If so, what is it, and can a case be made for your interpretation?*

> *• Is the subject matter of the film portrayed truthfully? Here the goal is to determine if the subject matter is being dealt with in a way that is in agreement with or contrary to the experiences of daily reality.*
>
> *• Is there a discernible hostility toward particular values and beliefs? Does the film seek to be offensive for the sake of sensationalism alone?*
>
> *• Is the film technically well made, written, produced and acted?{1}*

Christian thinker Leland Ryken proposes three more questions that the Christian ask when interpreting a work of art:

> *• Does the interpretation of reality in this work conform or fail to conform to Christian doctrine or ethics? (The answer may be mixed for a given work.)*
>
> *• If some of the ideas and values are Christian, are they inclusively or exclusively Christian? That is, do these ideas encompass Christianity and other religions or philosophic viewpoints, or do they exclude Christianity from other viewpoints?*
>
> *• If some of the ideas and values in a work are Christian, are they a relatively complete version of the Christian view, or are they a relatively rudimentary version of Christian belief on a given topic?{2}*

Our good friend Dan Panetti from Prestonwood Christian Academy has assembled a deeply insightful white paper for parents to use in talking about *Hunger Games* with their children, to help them build a biblical worldview analysis of something students are intent on reading or seeing anyway. (And it's not just older students, either. One of my friends' eight-year-old son insisted on going to see the movie. His mother told me, "He was attracted by the movie trailers and he knew people reading

the book. He was enticed by the action, but kids killing kids did bother him [but not that much].")

I am grateful for Dan's generosity in allowing us to share his questions in this article, and to make his entire PDF document available for you on our website here. Below are three of the nine major themes he highlights for discussion. I invite you to read through his paper to sharpen your own critical thinking skills!

And that's how we redeem *The Hunger Games.*

The Hunger Games Trilogy Parent Book Discussion

by Dan Panetti, Prestonwood Christian Academy – Plano, Texas

Substitutionary Atonement

The most important theme of this book, in my opinion, is the concept of substitutionary atonement (or penal substitution).

God made him who had no sin to be sin [or be a sin offering] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. – 2 Corinthians 5:21

Katniss voluntarily takes the place of her sister Primrose as the "tribute" from District 12–essentially Katniss took the place of Primrose replacing her sister's life with her own. Compare this story to the story of the sacrifice of Jesus in our place. While Katniss is willing to give her own life to protect her younger sister, Jesus was willing to give His life as a ransom for ours…while we were yet sinners–still IN rebellion against His Father! While Prim was young, "innocent" and weak and Katniss was far more skilled and able to defend herself; it was Jesus who was perfect and sinless dying for us!

Violence

The primary complaint aired about *The Hunger Games* (both the books and the movie) related primarily to the violence; and, yes, the books and movie do have a violent theme and depictions. The first question is whether the violence is appropriate or simply gruesome for effect. Both Collins (the author) and those responsible for the movie do a remarkable job of actually restraining the emphasis on the violence. This does not mean that the books and movie are appropriate for all ages—quite to the contrary. But in discussing this concept with your own children you can point out the fact that there are times in human history when people have had to stand up and fight for what they believe in. Engraved into the wall of the Korean War Veterans Memorial is the statement, "Freedom is not free." Katniss lives under an oppressive government and is forced to fight not only to protect herself and those she loves, but in the second and third book she fights for an ideal of something that is greater than just herself. Later we will discuss the ideals of the Founding Fathers of our nation and their decision to throw off an oppressive government agreeing to pledge their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor. Unlike previous generations, this generation is not as familiar with the cost of freedom born by those who give their lives in service to our nation. *The Hunger Games* reminds us that there are some things that are worth fighting for—and even dying for – meaning there will be a certain level of violence along the way.

> *Freedom is a fragile thing and is never more than one generation away from extinction. It is not ours by inheritance; it must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation, for it comes only once to a people. Those who have known freedom, and then lost it, have never known it again. ~ Ronald Reagan*

Ethical Dilemmas

One of the most fascinating aspects of *The Hunger Games* is the

presentation of numerous ethical dilemmas – questions where you could ask yourself, “What would I do if I were in that situation?”

Examples of ethical dilemmas for conversation purposes:

Is lying wrong? Is lying always wrong? Would you be willing to lie to protect the life of another person? Would you be willing to lie to save your own life?

Obviously Katniss finds herself faced with these fascinating ethical dilemmas and she has choices to make. Whether she is inside the arena fighting for her life or leading a rebellion against President Snow and the oppressive government, Katniss is often faced with the choice of either having to lie or someone (including herself) having to pay the ultimate price of their lives!

Is killing wrong? Is killing another person always wrong? Would you be able to kill another person to save the life of someone you loved? Would you be able to take the life of another person to save your own life?

Again Katniss finds herself faced with these difficult situations. At the end of *The Hunger Games*, Katniss and Peeta decide that they would rather die than kill one another—and although Katniss hopes that those in control would rather have two victors than none, the reality is that both Katniss and Peeta take the poisonous berries with the intent of killing themselves.

Katniss struggles with this dilemma when she makes an alliance with Rue and when she remembers that Thresh let her live when he could have killed her. Why is it so difficult for Katniss to take the life of another while others in the arena appear to be so cavalier and nonchalant about it?

If you want to discuss more about ethical dilemmas, I suggest you read *The Hiding Place* by Corrie tem Boom. Corrie and her

family were Dutch Christians who helped hide numerous Jews during WWII. Eventually Corrie and her family were arrested and sent away to concentration camps – her father and sister both died in a concentration camp.

As Christians we should look to God's Word for guidance in making decisions about life. Psalm 119:105 reminds us that God's Word "is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path." Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." Wise counsel is also strongly encouraged in Scripture. Proverbs 15:22 says, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed."

Notes

1. www.ministeriosprobe.org/MGManual/Movies/Movies2.htm
2. www.ministeriosprobe.org/MGManual/Movies/Movies3.htm

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See Also:

The Hunger Games: A hunger, a game or a calculated viewing option for Christians?

The Keys to Emotional Healing

– Part 1

After seeing God bring about major transformation of emotional healing in a number of broken people, I asked Him what was happening when He healed people's hearts. I wanted to understand the process. His answer was simple and profound, but never easy: "grieving and forgiving."

Both of these emotional disciplines are necessary to move from the place of sustaining a wound to the soul, to the place where that wound no longer controls and diminishes us—because it has been transformed into a healed scar.

Grieving means moving pain and anger from the inside to the outside. Tears are God's lubricant for that process, and what a gift of grace tears are. They are a physical manifestation of emotional pain, and when we weep—whether silent tears rolling down our cheeks or huge wracking sobs that exhaust us—the pain leaves our soul as it leaves the body.

One of my friends was so deeply wounded as a child by various kinds of abuse that in order to survive, her personality splintered into several "alters." (Multiple personality disorder is now called DID, Dissociative Identity Disorder.) One day in therapy, as she cried while talking about the pain inside, she reached for the box of tissues to blot the tears. Abruptly, she "switched" to another alter who said to the therapist, "Don't let her use the Kleenex. We need to feel the tears rolling down her cheeks. That's what healing feels like." When she told me this, it resonated deeply with me as true, and I started paying attention to how the feeling of tears on my face nourishes my soul, regardless of the reason for them. (Specks of dust under my contacts notwithstanding!)

In many cases, grieving also requires getting angry. Anger as a response to a violation of our dignity as people made in God's image, to shaming or disrespect, to neglect or abuse, is

a healthy reaction. It says, “You treated me as worthless when I have great value as God’s beloved child. You dishonored me AND you dishonored God.” We can express anger in constructive and destructive ways, and of course it’s always better to choose a constructive expression! We see the Lord Jesus constructively channeling His anger as He fashioned a whip before cleansing the temple (John 2:15). Some people have punched pillows, or hammered nails into pieces of wood, or torn down something slated for demolition. Others have screamed out their anger and grief in a safe place. Punching bags are a helpful place to discharge anger. And one of the most powerful ways to release anger is to create a list of all the ways someone has hurt us, and the impact of their choices and actions on us, and then talk to that person in an empty chair. We say—or yell or scream—the things we would want to say if we could duct-tape the person into the chair so they couldn’t leave, if they *had* to listen to us. And we go down the list, one item at a time, telling them everything they need to know about what they did and how it affected us. Often it’s unwise, if not impossible, to actually dump all that anger on the actual person, but it’s amazingly healing to speak out the pain and anger with our words. Out loud. Emphasis on LOUD, if need be!

Once we have grieved the hurt, the next step is letting go: forgiving. Forgiving is like pulling out the soul-splinter that is causing pain and the emotional “pus” that accumulates from unresolved pain and anger. (Grieving discharges this emotional pus.) Forgiving releases the person who hurt us into the Lord’s care, for *Him* to deal with.

I’ll explain more about forgiving in my next blog post, The Keys to Emotional Healing – Part 2.

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blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/the_keys_to_emotional_heal

ing_part_1 on April 16, 2012.

Giving Thanks in a Hard Place

My husband and I are ministering in part of the former Soviet Union while I've been reading Ann Voskamp's book *One Thousand Gifts*. She focuses on seeing and living life through the filter of *eucharisteo*, the Greek word for "giving thanks." The title refers to the fact that she recorded a thousand little ways in which God revealed Himself and His goodness to her, most of which were a pleasure to receive, some of which were painful. She worked to practice gratitude, which not only built her faith but also made her aware of how deeply she was loved.

This is a physically and spiritually challenging place to be, so I've had many opportunities to practice *eucharisteo* here. I find that multiplying the "thank Yous" keeps my heart tender and makes me aware of how comfortable and privileged is my life in America.

Thank You that the tap water is not safe to drink. But I thank You that safe bottled water is easy to obtain at the little market a block away. I thank You that my husband is more than willing to walk to the market so I don't have to. I thank You that replenishing the bottled water at the Bible College where we teach is a high priority, especially since it's so dry here that we need to keep drinking from our water bottles all day long. Speaking of which, thank You for my Aquafina bottle that Ray bought me at the Dallas airport. The whole label is in English!

Thank You that this is a handicap-unfriendly country, that there are stairs everywhere and elevators only in buildings

over five stories high. Thank You that there's no point to bringing my scooter or wheelchair. Thank You that at home, I have plenty of mobility assistance. Thank you for the Americans with Disabilities Act. Thank You for allowing me to live in a country that is mainly accessible to polio survivors like me. Thank You for Lufthansa Airlines, which takes such good care of people who can't walk (or walk long distances) once I get to Germany next week.

Thank You that I got strep the day *before* we left Dallas and not *the morning of* our flight here! Thank You that my doctor could see me on short notice. Thank You for antibiotics that knocked it out immediately. Thank You for protecting our health while we are here.

Thank You that languages were splintered at the tower of Babel and we are surrounded by Slavic tongues we do not speak. Thank You for providing several gifted translators. Thank You for patience on the part of our friends here when we try to make our mouths produce unfamiliar, strange-sounding words. Thank You that in heaven, we will not need translators because we will all speak the language of the Lamb.

Thank You for churches with outhouses rather than heated indoor restrooms. Thank You that we are using them at the end of March rather than in January! Thank You for bathrooms at home with indoor plumbing, flush toilets, and flushable toilet paper. And thank You that our bathrooms don't stink.

Thank You that our luggage was delayed on the way here. But thank You for getting it to us only 24 hours later! Thank You for the lesson about what to include in my carry-on. I didn't learn that lesson when we were stranded for four days by the Iceland ash cloud two years ago, and I thank You for giving me another chance to learn the importance of packing a nightgown and a change of clothes and anything else I really need.

Thank You for sheets that don't cover the mattress and come

undone every night. Thank You for fitted bottom sheets on all our beds in our home. Thank You for top sheets with plenty of width and length.

I've never thanked You for many of these things, Lord, and I am so grateful for them now!

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/giving_thanks_in_a_hard_place on March 27, 2012.

Forgive Myself?

Have you ever been told how important it is to forgive yourself?

I know Christians who have struggled with doing this, some for several years, unable to get a handle on it. There's good reason for that—scripture never even mentions forgiving ourselves, much less commanding it. I understand the idea of giving oneself forgiveness comes from humanistic psychology; doctors know that experiencing forgiveness is an essential part of mental health, but where do you find forgiveness when God, the source of forgiveness, has been excluded from the big picture?

You forgive yourself. At least, that's the way it should work in principle. When God is "Xed out." But, as many have learned, just deciding to forgive yourself sounds easier than actually doing it. On what basis do you forgive yourself? Just because? How many times do you need to beat yourself up before it's time for forgive yourself? What if you forgive yourself prematurely, before you've beaten yourself up enough?

What a mess.

I've also heard Christians say, "I know God has forgiven me, but I just can't forgive myself." It sounds quite humble, but in reality, this is upside-down pride. The underlying message is, "God may have forgiven me, but my own standards of what constitutes forgiveness are higher than God's, and my standard is what counts."

So what do we do when we're still keeping ourselves on the hook for past sins?

First, by faith receive the forgiveness that God has already granted. This has nothing to do with *feeling* forgiven and everything to do with choosing to trust that God keeps His word: "But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). God has already forgiven every sin we have ever committed and ever will. He waits for us to gratefully choose to receive His amazing grace of forgiveness. *"Lord Jesus, thank You for paying my debt for my sin and restoring me to relationship with the Father. Thank You for forgiving me. By faith, and in Your strength, I receive Your forgiveness and cleansing."*

Second (if necessary), we choose to take ourselves off the hook and release ourselves from being our own prisoners. We remind ourselves that Jesus said, "If the Son sets you free, you will be really free" (John 8:36). We remind ourselves that His last words on the Cross were "It is finished." His work of freeing us from our sin and making forgiveness possible is finished. Done. Over and out. Which means we can take ourselves off the hook for something Jesus already paid for.

Recently I was teaching on forgiveness and painted a word picture of being handcuffed to the person who had offended us or hurt us. Forgiveness means unlocking the cuff from around our own wrist and snapping it on Jesus' wrist, giving Him

custody of our offender, releasing them into His care. Several people told me, “I realized my prisoner was ME! And Jesus was inviting me to take the handcuffs off myself!” They did, and they were free.

I love the sound of chains falling off and people being set free from their strongholds!

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/forgive-myself/_ on March 13, 2012.

Glee’s Pro-Gay Theology

Feb. 28, 2012

Recently, the wildly popular TV show *Glee*‘s Valentine’s Day episode featured a group of religious students called the “God Squad” discussing whether they should accept money to sing love songs to gay people (their term). The writers had students spouting pro-gay theology that was doubtless quite persuasive to the majority of viewers who don’t know the truth that counters the propaganda.

“They say that one out of every ten people are gay, and if that’s true than that means one of the twelve apostles might have been gay.”

That’s a very old, very inaccurate statistic from Alfred Kinsey. A more accurate estimate is in the 2-3% range.{1} The idea that one of the twelve might have been gay is sheer speculation with no grounding in truth and no evidence for it, but it certainly planted the idea in the minds of millions of people to normalize it.

“The Bible says it’s an abomination for a man to lay down with another man. But we shared tents in Cub Scouts, and slept next to each other all the time. So that would make Cub Scouts an abomination.”

No. No, it wouldn’t.

What the Bible actually says is, “You shall not lie with a male ***as one lies with a female***; it is an abomination” (Lev 18:22). This passage is talking about same-sex intercourse, not guys in sleeping bags sharing a tent.

Further, it’s always important to look at the context of any verse. That same chapter contains prohibitions against sexual activity we still condemn today: incest, bestiality and adultery. Those who want to dismiss verses prohibiting same-sex relations as archaic usually (but not always!) won’t take a pro-incest, pro-adultery, or pro-bestiality stance. Neither should it be okay to take a pro-homosexuality stance.

My friend Randy Thomas had a powerful “lightbulb moment” concerning this verse. He writes,

> *“The Father brought back the memory of Ron, the first man I thought I loved, and me together as a couple. In my memory we were in an embrace and I saw the Lord standing next to us. We were oblivious to His presence and He was grieving. His grief was so bitter I could see Him shaking with tears as He looked upon us. I was immediately struck with grief that God was so grieved. It’s a grief I will never forget.*
>
> *“At that point I felt the Spirit asking me, ‘Randy . . . what is the sin?’ The only Scripture I knew was Leviticus 18:22 (that’s only because it was on the signs that the Christians held up at pride parades and outside of clubs). I told the Lord that I didn’t like that Scripture. But He persisted, ‘What is the sin?’ I thought through the verse again: ‘When one man lies with another as a woman it is an abomination before the Lord,’ (emphasis mine). The word ‘it’ jumped out*

at me. I sensed the Spirit asking, 'What is "it"?'

"I answered, 'A gender neutral pronoun?' I was a little surprised that in the middle of this powerful time the Holy Spirit would be giving me an English pop quiz. I felt Him say, 'EXACTLY!!!'

"Then my world fell apart over one little word. 'It' meant that I was not the abomination, Ron was not the abomination. It was the abomination – the act itself was keeping Ron and me looking toward each other and not to God for fulfillment of who we were and what God intended. For the first time in my life I knew that God is aware of every secret and not-so-secret thing I have done. Instead of sending hellfire and brimstone, He sent a grieving Savior to pay the price of my ignorance and sin.

"He forgave and redeemed me."

"You know what else the Bible says is an abomination—eating lobster, planting different crops in the same field, giving somebody a proud look. Not an abomination? Slavery. Jesus never said anything about gay people."

There are different kinds of laws in the Old Testament. Civil and ceremonial laws, such as those concerning religious sacrifices and dietary laws, were time-bound and limited to the people of Israel. They are no longer in force for a variety of reasons: first, all the OT sacrifices and ceremonies were given as a foreshadowing of the Messiah's ministry and of His death, burial and resurrection. They are no longer necessary because they were the preparation for the Reality that has come. Second, the civil laws pertained to a nation of people who no longer exist. (The current nation of Israel is a political one, not the same as the group of OT people God called to follow Him alone as their Ruler.)

Moral laws, such the Ten Commandments and all the laws

constraining sexual immorality, are not time-bound because they are rooted in the character of God. It is always sinful to have sex with someone you're not married to, regardless of gender.

Slavery, as ugly as it is, is not inherently unnatural the way homosexual practice is. Dr. Robert Gagnon, a theologian who has a breathtaking understanding of homosexuality and its attendant arguments, writes, "The Bible accommodates to social systems where sometimes the only alternative to starvation is enslavement. But it clearly shows a critical edge by specifying mandatory release dates and the right of kinship buyback; requiring that Israelites not be treated as slaves; and reminding Israelites that God had redeemed them from slavery in Egypt."{2}

We don't know that "Jesus never said anything about gay people"; it's quite possible that His comments on eunuchs in Matthew 19 included those who would have never sex with women because of their same-sex attractions.

Usually, the argument goes, "Jesus never said anything about homosexuality." What He DID say about God's intention for His creation and sexuality in Mark 10:6-8 excludes homosexuality, along with other forms of sexual sin such as polyamory, incest and bestiality. Scripture powerfully indicates His intention for a male-female prerequisite for sexuality.

"Love is love" (so let's sing a love song to two lesbian students)

Is it? How would the "God Squad" feel about singing a love song to a woman committing adultery with one of their dads? How would they feel about a father paying them to sing a love song to the daughter he's regularly raping while calling it love? Our culture is so anxious to justify anything by slapping the label of "love" on it that we dishonor the God who IS love: a sacrificial, others-centered, giving love that

took Him to the cross to pay for the very sins that are being elevated and celebrated on network TV.

Notes

1. For citations, see my article on the Probe Ministries website "Homosexual Myths."
2. http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/03/03/my-take-the-bible-really-does-condemn-homosexuality/

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/glees_pro-gay_theology

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What Does Grace Look Like?

Grace is one of those theological words that we *think* we know and understand, but many people don't really grasp because they've never seen it modeled. Grace is what Mark Driscoll calls "ill-deserved" favor; it is the display of unwarranted kindness and love.

I've been writing a radio program (the transcript of which will become a web article) for Probe Ministries on grace. So for the last few months I've been paying attention to people's stories of grace, jotting them down so I wouldn't forget (because I leak!). What a blessing it has been to record these stories in my Day-Timer, of receiving grace from God both directly, and from Him through other people.

Personal Grace Straight From God

• The rain holds off till the second you get in the car, when a torrential downpour starts.

• Traffic lights turn or stay green, one after another, when you're running late. Especially when the timing of traffic lights doesn't usually work like that.

• You "just happen" to notice the stove burner still on when you're about to head out the door.

• You leave your car keys in the ignition, with the car still on, as you go into church—and the car is still there when you get back.

• You are rejected by the only college you wanted, scrambling to find a second choice and not enjoying that field of study, only to be directed to a completely different academic discipline that gives you the "a-ha moment" of realizing this is what God made you for.

• Your flight to Australia is delayed by 24 hours and you arrive at your destination two hours before a conference, in just enough time to change clothes, wash your face and brush your teeth—and then God provides a full complement of energy and clarity to speak all day.

• You are so traumatized by your parents' emotional and sexual abuse that you splinter into several different internal parts or personalities, but that splintering keeps you from going insane. As those parts integrate after years of therapy, you realize that God's grace enabled some of them to release (forget) memories that you didn't need to know.

God's Grace Through People

• You learn that the person in front of you has paid your toll.

• You don't nag or react with exasperation when someone forgets something you told them, or that they already told you, because you remember you're a fallen, faulty creature too.

• Giving people a safe place to be real, to express doubts and fears, to confess they messed up, and be met with loving acceptance without shame or condemnation.

• Not writing people off when they make a mistake.

• Lifting off the burden of needless "shoulds" and "oughts" that weigh people down. One grace-filled speaker invited people to respond in song at the end of her message, saying, "If you'd like to sing, great! Join us! If you need a rest, feel free to just listen." She removed any pressure to perform.

And one of my all-time favorite stories of grace:

• My dear friend had always patterned herself after her mother, who purported to be the ultimate Christian wife and mother. In therapy because of how her life was falling apart, she was starting to realize what monsters her abusive parents were; horrific memories began to surface and the pieces started to fit together. One night she realized that when she got married, she had even chosen the same dishes as her mother's. Suddenly she couldn't abide the thought of keeping them in the house a moment longer. She strode into the kitchen on a mission, grabbed a plate out of the cupboard and hurled it to the floor, smashing it to pieces. Her husband heard the noise and came to see what was going on. When she explained the connection between their dishes and her mother, her husband calmly said, "Have at it. Tomorrow morning I'll take you to get new dishes." Not only did he clean up the mess when she was done, but all those broken shards damaged their kitchen floor—and he never once mentioned it.

Now that's grace.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/what_does_grace_look_like on February 14, 2012.

PROBE MINISTRIES TEAMS WITH TOP CHRISTIAN NASHVILLE SONG WRITERS

PRESS RELEASE
Contact: Renea McKenzie
Direct Line: 972-941-4568
Email: rmckenzie@probe.org

“Now I’m Bound” is a practical, comprehensive curriculum currently in development for **OnceCaptive.** It is a learning experience for the entire church congregation spanning seven weeks. The integrated approach includes sermons, videos, and original music. Probe Ministries teamed up with Jennie Lee Riddle, a Dove Award winning song writer, best known for authoring “Revelation Song.” Under the direction of Probe Ministries, Jennie selected and co-wrote twelve targeted songs with a team of Nashville writers. Together Jennie Lee and Michael Farren (from Pocket Full of Rocks) co-produced the album “Now I’m Bound” that additionally features four artists from New Nation Music.

“It may seem like an odd combination for an apologetics ministry to team up with a Dove Award winning composer,” Ray Bohlin observed. “But Jennie Lee Riddle and Probe Ministries have hearts for those who are falling through the cracks due to unbelief. We both know that many of our young adults in our churches are disconnected. We recognize the need to appeal to both the head and the heart, the left side of the brain as well as the right side of the brain. This unique blend of original songs is meant to undergird the lessons and write the truths on their hearts. We can change the mind, but

until the heart is captured, we have not done a complete work. The album is to be used in conjunction with our church-wide integrated experience, 'Now I'm Bound,' the title cut of the new CD."

Bohlin added that Probe Ministries has developed a 10-year strategic plan for **OnceCaptive** that addresses the issues the Church is facing in order to help empower believers to become life-giving representatives of Christ Jesus to our hurting world.

"When I heard Jennie Lee express her concern for younger generations in the church," Steve Cable said, "God slapped me upside the head saying, "You are not going to impact the lives of the people I am calling you to reach with just the spoken word. You need music as well!" Jennie Lee seemed like the perfect person to help write the songs needed for "Now I'm Bound."

Dr. Ray Bohlin is available for radio and TV interviews and will also be available for interviews at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention (February 18-20, 2012) at The Hope Center booth (#726). For more information about *Probe Ministries* or to schedule an interview with Dr. Ray Bohlin, please contact: Renea McKenzie, 972-941-4568 or rmckenzie@probe.org.

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Probe Ministries was founded in 1973. Today, Probe's staff of theologians, scientists, philosophers, educators, and business professionals are dedicated to fulfilling the Great Commission in the United States and around the world. Probe's vision is to equip Evangelicals and help free culturally captive Christians, building them into confident ambassadors for Christ. www.probe.org. Contact: Renea McKenzie, 972-941-4568 or rmckenzie@probe.org.

Leaky Buckets

When I was a little girl, I watched “Captain Kangaroo” on TV. His friend Mr. Green Jeans wore green overalls, to which he would pin little pieces of paper like Post-It Notes (long before they were invented). I remember him pulling off each square and reading it out loud to remind him of something he needed to do. At the time, I thought it was a silly thing for a grown-up to do.



I get it now.
The older I get, the more memory assistance I need. I don’t know, really, that it’s so much about growing older, but rather about the overwhelming glut of information that cascades over me every day, which leads to a long list of things to do and things to remember that probably wouldn’t have existed in previous generations. But it’s not just me, and it’s not just about remembering to pick up the dry cleaning.

We are like leaky buckets, and we leak stuff. *Important* stuff. We leak the reasons why we should eat healthy foods God made instead of Twinkies and Diet Coke. When our children are small, we leak the perspective that our job is to lead them to their own personal relationship with their heavenly Father and to prepare them for life as adults. We leak the “lightbulb

moments” of supernatural enlightenment and illumination that the Holy Spirit gives us, and they fade into forgetfulness. We leak the conviction that a loving God is in control, so we freak out when things go wrong. We leak the memories of the many little and big things that the Lord does to show us that He loves us, personally and intimately.

God knows that fallen people in a fallen world would leak, and He understands how very weak we are. Leaky, weaky people we are indeed! That’s why He lovingly instructed His people in the Old Testament to keep talking about the things He did for them, to keep teaching their children so they would teach *their* children the things He did for them. That’s why in Joshua 4 He told them to build an altar of remembrance by picking up 12 big rocks from the middle of the Jordan River when they crossed into the Promised Land. Then, when their children asked, “What’s up with these rocks?” they would remember together God’s faithfulness and goodness.

We need to do something physical to help us leaky vessels remember. Some people have planted a tree as their “altar of remembrance.” Others have created monuments; at our previous church, one family had a large well built of rocks, into which was planted a tree with a plaque commemorating the life of a child who had died. It was right in the middle of a gathering area so people would ask, “Why is that there?” and remember the one who had died.

At the very least, recording in a journal helps us remember the things that leak. Two of my most valued possessions are my “God sightings” journal containing stories of when He has shown up in my life as well as the lives of other people, that I didn’t want to forget. And my “wisdom journal,” a collection of sayings and passages from other people that I re-read from time to time to refill my leaky bucket with the good stuff that had leaked out.

We leak the truth of God’s word too, which is why it’s so

important to keep refilling our bucket from the well daily. I love that Peter says it's good to be reminded of the things we already know but aren't "on the surface": "Therefore, I intend to remind you constantly of these things even though you know them and are well established in the truth that you now have" (2 Pet. 1:12).

Look, we leak—that's a fact of life. It is wise to live in intentional awareness of that unfortunate truth and keep getting our buckets refilled.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/leaky_buckets on Jan. 31, 2012

PROBE MINISTRIES ANNOUNCES NEW RESEARCH AND EFFORT TO REVERSE DISTURBING TRENDS IN THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

Plano, Texas – January 18, 2012 – Probe Ministries has completed one of the most extensive surveys of born again Christians in the Millennial generation in an effort to determine why so many of them seem to hold unbiblical views concerning belief and practice.

Probe Ministries is now moving ahead with an integrated strategy aimed at reversing these trends. The learning experience will involve an entire church congregation over a seven week period and includes sermons, videos, original music, and additional material for individuals and small

groups. As a result, Probe is developing a Cultural Captivity Self-Assessment Tool that can be used before and after completing the experience.

”The time has come to stop complaining and do something positive for believers around the country who have become disenfranchised from the church,” stated Dr. Ray Bohlin, president of Probe Ministries. “We are developing a tool that can bring about real transformation in the lives 18-40 year old believers and perhaps reverse the downward trends that study after study confirms.”

Bohlin added that Probe Ministries has developed a 10-year strategic plan that addresses the issue of cultural captivity while also empowering believers to become confident ambassadors for Christ.

Probe Ministries produces a daily radio program heard on over 600 radio outlets around the country. The Probe website is visited by both Christians and non-Christians from 140 countries around the world. Probe speakers address topics ranging from apologetics to worldviews in churches, conferences, and schools around the world.

Dr. Ray Bohlin is available for radio and TV interviews and will also be available for interviews at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention (February 18-20, 2012). For more information about *Probe Ministries* or to schedule an interview with Dr. Ray Bohlin, please contact: Renea McKenzie, 972-941-4568 or rmckenzie@probe.org.

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