

# Why Our Expectations of God Are Unrealistic

In my last blog post I talked about "[Unrealistic Expectations](#)" and promised to explore some of the reasons our expectations of God are unrealistic (and thus why we get frustrated or even furious with Him). I mentioned several ways in which we think God *should* act. Here are my responses to why those expectations are unrealistic.

- *Show the same grace to all of us by treating us all the same*

No child ever has to be taught about fairness. The heart's cry for justice is part of our design. But we are broken in our understanding of so many things, and we usually equate fairness with equality. We want God to treat everyone the same way. But God isn't doing the same thing in everyone; He is creating a masterpiece that will bring glory to Him and goodness to us for all eternity, and His means and tools will differ from person to person. Creating a masterpiece of sculpture in a piece of marble takes different tools and techniques than creating a masterpiece of an oil painting. It's a good thing that God doesn't treat us all the same.

- *Give us an easy life*

Easy, sheltered, enabled lives produce spoiled, entitled children. God's intention is that we grow up to maturity, which necessitates learning to survive the bumps in the road and the harder aspects of living in a fallen world. He is creating an adult, glorious bride for the Lamb, who is fit to reign with Him. An easy life is completely inadequate to the task of preparing us as the church to become the bride of Christ.

- *If I do all the right things to be "a good person," God should do His part to make life work the way I want it to*

That linear “A ensures B” kind of thinking makes sense to our limited, immature minds, but reality doesn’t work that way. We cannot manipulate God to make life work the way we want it to. We are part of a much bigger picture that involves spiritual warfare, the battle against our own flesh, and God’s purposes that can only be accomplished in ways we don’t understand in the process.

One of the most important places of understanding God wants us to reach is the profound truth I saw on a t-shirt once:

2 essential truths:

1. There is a God.
2. You are not him.

God is God, and we are not. We don’t get to dictate the way life works, and God will lovingly bring us to the point, as many times as necessary, where we let go of the illusion that we are in control.

He is in control. We are not. And that’s a good thing.

But the granddaddy of unrealistic, albeit understandably so, expectations are these:

- *Protect the innocent from pain and suffering*
- *Protect the people who maybe-aren’t-so-innocent-but-not-as-bad-as-axe-murderers from pain and suffering*

This is really the bottom line issue for most problems with our understanding of God, the age-old difficult question, “How can a good and loving God allow pain and suffering?”

The bottom line answer is that because of the sinful choices of Adam and Eve, we all live in a world where evil and suffering were unleashed. Our world is now fallen and corrupt, and bad things happen all the time. Part of the equation is that God honors our choices, which are significant and real—even the choices that bring unintended consequences of

pain and suffering. Yet God is in control, and He can redeem even the most heinous choices and the most awful pain and suffering. He delights to exchange “a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair” (Isaiah 61:3).

We have a hard time imagining how God can bring good out of evil, and especially out of our pain. Sometimes it's even harder when we look outside ourselves, to the suffering of innocent children such as the growing number of children abused and murdered by their mothers' boyfriends. And I really don't have an answer for that; I just know that God is good, and He is loving, and my inability to see how He will make it all okay in the end does not affect whether it's true or not.

One of my favorite stories comes from my dear friend whom I'll call Emily, who was not only raped repeatedly by her father from the time she was two years old, but he would take money from his friends so they could abuse her as well. Emily has a vibrant relationship with Jesus, especially because she has learned to listen to Him.

One day after the Holy Spirit gently restored a vivid memory of one of these gang-rape sessions for her to process, she said, “Jesus, I had a sense of being covered in something heavy, like a stack of blankets, while the abuse was going on. What was that about?” The Lord lovingly told her, “That was Me lying on top of you, protecting you from the full brunt of the abuse you were experiencing. The men had to come through Me to get to you, and I took a portion of their evil into Myself before it got to you.” Through her tears, she asked, “But why? How could there possibly be any good to come out of that horrific sexual abuse?” Jesus said, “Beloved, you are a diamond of great value. Every incident of abuse that you sustained was a hammer and chisel in My Father's hands, creating a new facet in the diamond. When you see the finished product, you won't believe the stunning beauty of the jewel

that you are. And you will say it was worth it.”

(Incidentally, Emily hasn't had to wait till heaven to start seeing the value of her horrific suffering. She has been able to be “Jesus with skin on” to other wounded women and children because she understands their suffering.)

The reason our expectations of God are so often unrealistic is because He is so much bigger, so much more glorious, so much more loving, so much more in control, than we can possibly comprehend. May we grow in our understanding as He continues to prove Himself faithful and good—in everything.

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## **Judge Shows: Spiritual Reality TV**

I've been listening to a lot of TV lately.

I'm a [calligrapher](#), and November/December is my busy season. I look for the kind of shows that don't need to be watched because I'm focused on my hand lettering. So I've been listening to quite a few of the courtroom shows: Judge Judy, Judge Alex, Judge Marilyn, Judge Lynn, Judge Joe, and the others.

Lessons to be learned from judge shows:

- Some people don't know how to communicate without

interrupting and talking over each other where neither can hear what the other is saying.

- When people roll their eyes and spit out contempt for each other, it's okay.
- There's nothing like money to break up friendships and family. Especially if you don't get \_\_\_\_\_ in writing.
- People go to court because there isn't an adult (read: parent) to mediate the way mom and dad used to referee sibling fights.
- People don't mind being exposed as foolish as long as they get their 15 minutes of fame on TV.
- People who watch judge shows will call into the program to give their opinion on a case that was closed long before it aired, and then listen to a sales pitch of their own free will.

I watch TV with a [biblical worldview filter](#) in place. I'm constantly comparing what I see and hear to what the Bible says. There's nothing like the judge shows to support a biblical view of people and of life in a fallen world. The brokenness of people doing life by their own rules, apart from God's wisdom and power, is just *so sad*.

People want to be loved and respected and valued and honored, and those are legitimate desires. But when they don't feel loved or respected, they'll act in unloving and disrespectful ways toward others.

People's hearts are hungry for what will fill them, but if they refuse to turn to the One who promised to "make their joy complete" (John 16:24), they will take the counterfeit of greed and materialism.

People haven't been taught biblical conflict resolution, and their pride often keeps them from taking responsibility for

their part in a conflict and asking forgiveness for it.

Sin makes us messed up people, and part of the messed up-ness involves a willingness to make it public.

So these shows are a kind of painfully true “spiritual reality show.”

How God must wince—and weep.

This blog post originally appeared at  
[blogs.bible.org/engage/sue\\_bohlin/judge\\_shows\\_spiritual\\_reality\\_tv](http://blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/judge_shows_spiritual_reality_tv)  
on Dec. 21, 2010.

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## Mommy Blogger Outs Her 5-Year Old Son

Last week, a mommy blogger caused a firestorm with her blog post “[My Son is Gay](#)” about how her 5-year-old dressed up for Halloween as Daphne from Scooby Doo. Her little boy had had second thoughts about wearing the costume, afraid that people would make fun of him, but she pushed him to wear it to his preschool. “Who would make fun of a child in a costume on Halloween?” she wrote.

Well, lots of people. And she was angry.

“If you think that me allowing my son to be a female character for Halloween is somehow going to ‘make’ him gay then you are an idiot. Firstly, what a ridiculous concept. Secondly, if my son is gay, OK. I will love him no less. Thirdly, I am not worried that your son will grow up to be an actual ninja so back off.”

Her post generated more than 26,000 comments and has gone viral as people blogged about it (like this one).

This mom doesn't have any problem with the idea that her son who likes bright colors and is attracted to a female costume might be gay, but I wonder what his dad thinks.

There is another way to think about boys like this. They don't have to be gender-confused; they are just created by God to be artistic, creative, and emotionally sensitive. They love color and texture, they revel in nuances in sound and light, touch and smell. They are God's gift to us: the musicians, the artists, the poets, the actors. When these boys are supported in their God-given flavor of masculinity (especially by their fathers), they can grow up to be great men who contribute their gifts to the church, to the world, and to their families. They make great counselors, pastors, teachers—and husbands and fathers.

My dear friend Ricky Chelette from Living Hope Ministries wrote an insightful article "[Parenting the Sensitive Soul](#)." He allays the fears of a growing number of parents of young boys who come to his office concerned that their boys are too girly. And Ricky, an incredible artist, writer, singer, cook—and devoted husband of 20 years—tells them their boys are not being effeminate, they are merely expressing their giftedness. He writes about what he explained to a worried dad:

"I reassured the father that his son did not want to be a girl and the only person that was really saying anything about him being a girl was the dad. But why then was this boy drawn towards things which were typically identified as more feminine than masculine? Simply, he was a very sensitive soul.

"Sensitive boys are real boys. They simply are extremely gifted with particular giftings that manifest in emotionally

and aesthetically expressive ways. His little boy's obsession with women's shoes were not because he wanted to be a girl, but more because he was aesthetically and visually oriented—and women's shoes are much more visually exciting than the black, brown or burgundy of men's shoes. Women's shoes have sparkles, bobbles and bows. They come in every color imaginable and are in different shapes and textures. They are an aesthetically gifted boy's dream! And he was not trying to identify as a girl when he grabbed his mother's skirt, put it on, and twirled around. To him, it was similar to our experience of going to the fair and doing drop art projects where we drop paint on a spinning paper and watch it splatter, but even better. As he moved, he created art and beauty as the colors whirled around him and flowed up and down in the air. Better yet, he was the center of it all!

"The dad looked at me with disbelief, but with a sense of relief. 'Do you mean he really isn't trying to be a girl?'

"'Absolutely not,' I replied. 'He is simply trying to express his giftedness as best he can. You have a very artistic young man with amazing potential to make this world a more beautiful place. He has the creative and masculine heart of God. You have the privilege of finding ways to affirm those gifts and channel them in a way that he can grow as gifted man of God!'

"It was as though I just found the lost key they had been searching to find for years; suddenly despair was replaced by hope and relief. But those feelings of relief were just as quickly followed by a look of bewilderment.

"'But how do I do that? How do I affirm him in those gifts when I obviously don't even understand what he is thinking or why he is doing what he is doing?'"

Read the rest of his article to find out: [Parenting the](#)



[Sensitive Soul](#).

This blog post originally appeared at  
[blogs.bible.org/engage/sue\\_bohlin/mommy\\_blogger\\_outs\\_her\\_5-year\\_old\\_son](https://blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/mommy_blogger_outs_her_5-year_old_son)  
on Nov. 9, 2010.

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## **“Should a Husband Divorce His Unfaithful Wife?”**

Hi, Greetings in Jesus name, I would like to know what the Bible teaches about when a wife is having sex with other men. What should the husband do in this case—should he divorce her and remarry? Will that be a sin in the sight of God according to the Bible?

Wow. There’s a lot of pain and anger connected to the situation that would result in asking this question! I’m sorry.

I do realize that some women are driven by such relational and sexual brokenness that their pathological pursuit of sexual partners outside the marriage indicates something is terribly wrong and needs attention. Telling such a woman, “Stop it!” will not have much of an impact. There’s much more going on.

But because God created women to be so relational, and because we long for safety and security in our relationships, if a wife is having sex with other men, that is not the norm. Something is driving her to do that, and I would want to know what it is. Since the second greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31), we need to pass your question through the filter of love: what is the most loving

response to this situation?

Because I am a wife, and because I know how much my heart, like most other women, longs to be loved and respected and cherished by my husband, my question is, "Why is this lady going outside her marriage for sex?" I wonder how her husband is treating her. A woman who feels cherished and respected and valued by her husband usually does not have any interest in going to other men for attention, affection and affirmation.

There is obviously conflict here, and the Bible instructs us how to resolve conflict in God-honoring and people-honoring ways. First, it is always up to us to examine ourselves for our role in the conflict. "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3) So I would counsel the husband to ask himself, "What have I done to drive my wife to the arms of other men? Have I loved her as Christ loves the church, sacrificially? What part have my attitudes and choices played in what my wife has done?" Since there is a good chance that he has a blind spot about this, it would be wise to ask others who know the couple for their honest input: "Have you seen anything in me that is less than loving and kind toward my wife?" Whatever the answer is, the husband needs to acknowledge it, confess it to his wife, and ask her forgiveness—as well as change his ways of relating to her.

The next step of biblical conflict resolution is to talk to the other person in private. "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother" (Matt 18:15). This would mean a private husband-wife conversation where the husband talks to his wife about her sin, leading off with taking responsibility for any part he has played. It would be appropriate to share how her choices have deeply hurt him and ask her to stop and repent of her sin.

The third step, if the offender will not repent, is to

escalate the conflict to involve others. "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed" (Matthew 18:16). This would mean bringing the situation into the light with others who are "doing life" with the couple.

The fourth step is to broaden the scope of the conflict to the larger community. "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Matthew 18:17).

If a husband has gone through all the steps of godly, biblical conflict resolution, and his wife is still hard-hearted and will not repent, then he does have the option of divorcing her. Jesus did give that option, but note the role of hard hearts in His teaching on divorce: "He said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery'" (Matthew 19:8-9). I find it interesting in view of your question about a man possibly divorcing his wife, that Jesus ascribes hard-heartedness to the men seeking divorce. Of course some women are hard-hearted and unrepentant, but I'd be interested in asking the unfaithful wife, "Why are you doing this? Tell me about your relationship with your husband. Do you feel safe, secure, respected and loved? Do his eyes light up when you enter a room? Do you feel God's love for you through your husband? What are you looking for in other men that you're not getting from your husband?"

Finally, you asked about remarriage. According to the Matthew 19 passage, it does appear that a husband whose wife was unfaithful has the freedom in the Lord to remarry without it being adultery for him. But I earnestly want to impress on you that what would far more please and glorify God is to find the reasons for the broken relationship and repair it with the

glue of grace and forgiveness. Ephesians 5:9-10 exhorts us to “live as children of light and find out what pleases the Lord.” Reconciliation pleases the Lord, and that is far more important than what a spouse is technically allowed to do in the wake of unfaithfulness.

I hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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## **“What Do You Know About Landmark Forum?”**

**What do you know about Landmark Forum? Received an e-mail from a relative about how this has changed her life and invited me to check it out. I came straight to your website to see if you had anything on this organization.**

We haven't done any research ourselves on The Landmark Forum, but others have:

[“Landmark Education” on Apologetics Index](#) (note the very beginning of this analysis: “NOTE: (Landmark Education lawyers, pay attention please!)” The litigious nature of Landmark is quite interesting! Note this corollary article:

[Landmark Education vs. A Link on Apologetics Index](#)

[Inside the Landmark Forum](#)

Watchman Fellowship, a trustworthy source of information on cults and false religions, took down their analysis of Landmark after being threatened with a lawsuit. However,

someone else has put it back up:

[web.archive.org/web/19980615070001/http://www.watchman.org/LandmarkProfile.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/19980615070001/http://www.watchman.org/LandmarkProfile.htm)

If you google Landmark Forum, you can find some intriguing information, including comments by people who have attended and/or experienced pressure from recruiters.

[ask.metafilter.com/15619/Opinions-of-Landmark-Forum](http://ask.metafilter.com/15619/Opinions-of-Landmark-Forum)

[www.ex-cult.org/Groups/Landmark/landmark-cherries.dir/\\_X00M/apostate/index.htm](http://www.ex-cult.org/Groups/Landmark/landmark-cherries.dir/_X00M/apostate/index.htm)

For what it's worth, Landmark uses experiential exercises rooted in its history of Werner Erhard's "est" program, which eventually morphed into Landmark. Some of the exercises themselves are helpful and do not violate any biblical principles. [Dr. Phil McGraw](#), formerly associated with Pathways, a similar program to Landmark, brought TV cameras into the "training room" of some of these same exercises when he was featured on Oprah, and periodically uses elements of the exercises on his programs.

And several Christians have taken the helpful parts of Landmark, rejected the rest, and created God-honoring, people-honoring seminars that are about discipleship and personal growth, not making money.

[www.heartconnexion.org](http://www.heartconnexion.org) (my son and I both participated in this one, and bless God for it)

[www.graceadventure.org/](http://www.graceadventure.org/)

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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# Gay Teen Suicide and Bullying: A Christian Response

The rise in gay teen suicides is alarming and heartbreaking, whether it is an actual rise in suicides or a rise in the reporting and awareness of these needless deaths. Five teens killed themselves in a recent three-week period because of bullying or “outing,” but no one knows for sure how many there are.

Teens who experience same-sex attractions are already stressed simply by the difficulties of adolescence. This is painfully exacerbated by the confusion that accompanies unwanted desires and feelings that make them feel “other than,” different, like they don’t belong. Many of those who struggle with gay and lesbian feelings are very emotionally sensitive, and they can feel their pain more deeply than many of their classmates. They can easily buy into the lies that life is too hard, the challenges too daunting, that the hopelessness is too overwhelming.

When one factors in the excruciating pain of being taunted and bullied for even being perceived as gay or lesbian, the shame can become too much. If one is overweight, there is a possibility of losing weight; if one is a poor student, there is a possibility of working hard and studying to do better. But if one feels disconnected from and unaccepted by their same-sex peers, and if they can’t explain and did not choose the attractions that plague them, then most students will despair, believing there is no hope of anything changing. This is especially true for those who have prayed—many of them

every single day—for God to take away their feelings, and He doesn't seem to answer. (There are [good reasons for this](#), but they don't know that.) Gender identity is at the center of one's identity; what do you do when you don't feel comfortable in your own skin?

Given these stresses, Christians could and should be the first ones to reach out to the marginalized, the ostracized, and the bullied. Every single person is precious to God, made in His image, and deserving of dignity and respect.

The emphasis needs to be on “teen suicides,” not “gay suicides.” Any time a young person takes his or her own life it is horrific and unacceptable—and, may I repeat myself, heartbreaking.

I am grateful for the way the media is highlighting the problem of bullying. This is a problem we can do something about—regardless of our particular beliefs about sexuality.

My friend Randy Thomas, executive vice-president of Exodus International, responded to the highly publicized suicide of Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi on the Exodus blog (Exodus is a ministry to those dealing with unwanted same-sex attractions):

Christians we need to speak out strongly against bullying and condemn vicious and violating behavior like this. God is the author of every breath. As long as there are Tylers in this world we have to defend their right to freedom and self-determination. We must afford them at least the very basics in human respect [and] dignity and defend them from those [who] would exploit and abuse them . . . . God is the author of every breath, and when we look into the face of another we are seeing a dim reflection of Him.

Whether they know Him or not. [\[1\]](#)

Christians should be at the forefront of the anti-bullying

movement. Bullying is the opposite of the second greatest commandment, to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Mark 12:31). The Gospels are full of stories of Jesus standing up for the underdog; consider how He stood up to the religious bullies who had entrapped a woman caught in adultery (John 8). When it comes to bullies, what would Jesus do? Stand up to them. Defend the bullied. Communicate that they are precious, valued, and loved.

I have read a number of stories of people who were bullied when they were growing up. I can't imagine how difficult it is to live through the painful isolation and rejection, of feeling that no one cares and nothing can fix the problem (apart from the bullies disappearing). I can't imagine how painful it is to see teachers, bus drivers, and other adults say nothing and do nothing to come to the defense of kids being picked on—for being different, for being new, for being "other than," for no reason at all other than the arbitrary attack of someone who felt small, and who bullied someone else to feel "bigger than."

To understand the problem of gay teen suicides, it's helpful understand the issues for gay teens (please see my article ["Helping Teens Understand Homosexuality."](#)) We also need to understand more about bullying and what to do about it. The very wise and experienced Dr. Allan L. Beane offers "Tips for Parents, Assertiveness Skills for Students Who Are Bullied" and "Assertiveness Strategies for Siblings and Other Students (Bystanders)" on his web site.[{2}](#)

Parents, pastors, youth workers and students need to encourage one another to stand up against any bullying of any student. There is strength in numbers, especially when it comes to dealing with a bully, although it only takes one voice to say, "Stop it." Experienced teachers say a no-tolerance policy toward bullying is essential to taking power away from bullies. The key is the community—the school, the church, the neighborhood, the youth group: when the community says



nothing, bullying explodes. When the community refuses to allow bullies to exploit others' weaknesses, it is quenched.

At the same time, however, as we encourage teens to reach out to their marginalized peers by standing with them against their bullies, we don't want to be naïve. Although community pressure on bullies to stop often works, Scripture makes it clear that living like Jesus and standing up for the outcast will not be easy. Just as the Pharisees were upset by the way Jesus interfered with their social hierarchy, so too things will get sticky for those who upset those at the top of the social ladder. High school bullies are often at the top of the social food-chain. We need to prepare our students for the teasing and bullying they very likely will face for defending the marginalized, reminding and encouraging them that being persecuted for doing the right thing is to be expected, and is part of what makes the hope we have in a world and a kingdom beyond this one so sweet.

Gay teen suicides happen when students feel alone and isolated, when they feel "other than" and feel judged for that other-ness. Many of those who find themselves attracted to other boys or other girls are already uncomfortable with their desires; most of them try to pray or wish them away, but that's not how those feelings are changed into the God-given, normal attractions for the opposite sex.

We can do something to prevent more gay teen suicides. The most influential people in gay teens' lives are their peers, whose affirmation or shaming holds extreme power. But teens need to be instructed in how to fulfill the second greatest commandment, in loving their neighbor. We can teach them that all young people need to be loved, to be accepted as people made in God's image, to be valued. They all need the "three A's": attention, affirmation, and affection. If sexually confused or gender-insecure teens, who are often marginalized by the other students, experienced Christians reaching out to them in friendship, simply communicating the grace of

acceptance and value, that could make a big difference. It can be choices as simple as inviting someone to sit with them at lunch, or telling others to “lay off” if they make insulting and negative comments about one of those marginalized students. They can even say affirming things to the bullies like, “Hey. You’re better than that, dude. Leave him alone.”

Jim Wallis recently wrote something stellar in a blog post on “Christians and Bullying”:

My mother used to give us kids two instructions:

1. If there is a kid on the playground that nobody else is playing with—you play with them.
2. If there is a bully picking on other kids—you be the one to stand up to him or her.[{3}](#)

Being “Jesus with skin on.” That’s how teen suicides, regardless of sexual identity, can be prevented. May God use His people to love these hurting young women and men whom He loves dearly.

## Notes

1. Thomas, Randy, “Step Up, Speak Out Against Bullying: The Tragic Case of Tyler Clementi,” Exodus International Blog, posted Oct. 1, 2010, accessed Nov. 11, 2010: [blog.exodusinternational.org/2010/10/01/step-up-speak-out-against-bullying-the-tragic-case-of-tyler-clementi](http://blog.exodusinternational.org/2010/10/01/step-up-speak-out-against-bullying-the-tragic-case-of-tyler-clementi).

2. Beane, Dr. Allan, Bully Free Program, “Tips for Parents” and other posts: [www.bullyfree.com/free-resources/tips-for-parents](http://www.bullyfree.com/free-resources/tips-for-parents) accessed Nov. 11, 2010.

3. Wallis, Jim, “Christians and Bullying: Standing with Gays and Lesbians,” God’s Politics blog: [blog.sojo.net/2010/10/21/christians-and-bullying-standing-with-gays-and-lesbians](http://blog.sojo.net/2010/10/21/christians-and-bullying-standing-with-gays-and-lesbians), accessed Nov. 11, 2010.

# Your Board of Directors

At a conference several years ago I was given a thought-provoking challenge, to identify the people on the board of directors of my life: whose voices do I listen to? Whose counsel do I follow? Whose values do I respond to?

The speaker pointed out that some people ought to be kicked off our board—like parents, if their voices of shame and criticism still control and restrict us. So should voices of much of the media, especially TV. And we can replace them with wiser, more godly voices who can offer us direction and perspective. There was a discussion of categories of potential board members. They don't have to be alive, and we don't have to personally know them, either.

The Lord Jesus, of course, needs to be the #1 board member. If we're married, our spouse should be on our board. The Apostle Paul is a good board member. Peter and James are good too, as is Solomon. So are some of the church fathers and Christian writers like C.S. Lewis. Or a pastor, and not necessarily our own. (I have a friend in a distant city who has adopted my pastor as hers, and listens to every audio recording my church puts online.) Mentors are great board members, and so are wise and trusted friends.

A few weeks ago, John Townsend, one of the co-authors of [the Boundaries series](#), was at my church. I love what he writes and listen to him on the radio show "New Life Live" whenever possible. I had a chance to talk to him briefly, so I told him about my board of directors. "John," I said, "Several years ago I installed you as a permanent member of my board. Other

people have come and gone, but you're always there. I really appreciate your wisdom and godly perspective, and you have equipped me to respond to various life challenges. Just wanted you to know how you've blessed me even though we've never met."

(To my delighted surprise, he lit up and asked if he could hug me!)

Who's on your board? Who can you kick off to the glory of God? (Hint: magazines that make you unhappy with how God made you as you compare yourself to the celebrities and models inside, certain internet sites, particular TV shows. . .)

Who can you put on your board? Let's hear it.

This blog post originally appeared at  
[blogs.bible.org/engage/sue\\_bohlin/your\\_board\\_of\\_directors](http://blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/your_board_of_directors)  
in July 2009.

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## **Zap the Lies, Hug the Truth – 1**

As the scriptures tell us that King Saul stood head and shoulders above everybody else, there is one aspect of the spiritual growth process that seems to stand head and shoulders above the rest: identifying and renouncing the lies that hold us in bondage, and embracing God's truth which sets us free.

Recently, I have been blessed by the experiences of two dear friends, both dealing with the fallout of trauma, as Jesus

lovingly takes them through this process.

One of them is a college student whose parents wisely equipped her in how to think through negative thoughts and feelings:

1. Is \_\_\_\_\_ the truth? [No.]
2. That makes it a . . . [Lie.]
3. Where do lies come from? [Satan.]
4. God tells us truth because He is truth. So what does He say about it?

Armed with this powerful weapon, my friend successfully handled a molestation that happened in the middle of the night while she spent the night at the home of a friend. Wounds like that are “lie factories” that pump out pain and destruction. But she was able to pull out the arrows that had pierced her heart and let Jesus’ truth bring healing.

**Lie #1:** “You got what you deserved. It’s YOUR fault, because you didn’t lock the door.” **Truth:** I did NOT deserve it. That man is responsible for his own sinful choice to violate me. 1 Corinthians 6:18 – Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

**Lie #2:** “Ha! Hypocrite! You make everyone think you’re leading a pure life, but you’re nothing but a soiled dove.” **Truth:** I’m a hypocrite when it was something done TO me?? 1 Timothy 5:2b – [exhort] younger women as sisters, with all purity. He did not treat me with purity. I did not invite his mistreatment of me.

**Lie #3:** “You want your husband to be a virgin on your wedding day. Why should he be? You only have your ‘technical’ virginity left.” **Truth:** My innocence was not freely given; it was taken. My “full” virginity has been restored. Psalm 147:3 – He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

**Lie #4:** “No guy will want a soiled dove. That guy you are

growing to love? Ha! You aren't good enough for him." **Truth:** I may not be good enough for HIM, but Jesus thinks I'm to die for! John 3:16; Jeremiah 29:11-13...

Since this was the biggest lie and the deepest wound, God also provided these powerful verses: Psalm 37:4 – Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 84:11 – For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Praise God that His truth is powerful enough to show lies for what they are, and destroy their power to shackle us! His word is sharper than any two-edged sword, able to zap lies and allow us to embrace the truth that gives life and light.

[Next time](#) I'll share the way Jesus revealed truth to zap the lies binding the heart of my other friend.

This blog post originally appeared at  
[blogs.bible.org/engage/sue\\_bohlin/zap\\_the\\_lies\\_hug\\_the\\_truth](https://blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/zap_the_lies_hug_the_truth)

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## **Zap the Lies, Hug the Truth – 2**

In my last blog post [“Zap the Lies, Hug the Truth – 1,”](#) I shared how one of my friends faced the lies of the enemy in the wake of a molestation, and successfully stood against them in the truth of God's word.

Today I will let another friend share how the Lord Jesus has met her on prayer walks, addressing the lies that have held

her in bondage since her trauma-filled childhood and then adulthood.

This is what she wrote to me:

Jesus said, "First I will take off the lie you have believed, then I will wash you with the water of the word of truth, then I will put on your real identity in Me."

I saw a picture, and realized it was me—as a beggar. My whole body was covered in rags and filth. The filth was garbage and dirt and waste that had been there so long it had hardened into a thick leathery shell all over my body. This shell adhered to my skin like glue, penetrating the rags I was wearing as clothes.

"This is going to hurt some," Jesus said, "and your soul will be naked and exposed before Me, but it will be all right."

I nodded my assent.

He then reached out and pulled off a piece from my shoulder to my elbow on the front side of my arm. The skin underneath was very pink and soooo tender.

Jesus: "Tell Me the lie you believe about your weight."

Me: "I'm fat and it makes me ugly and undesirable. I'm huge and when people look at me they just see the fat lady. I'm gross."

Jesus (commanding tone): "NOW, tell Me the truth I have shown you about this." (With that, He put water on the exposed skin, and it healed and tanned.)

Me: "That I'm 20 lbs. overweight, that I have a sedentary lifestyle due to chronic pain and damaged joints. That I am making appropriate efforts by walking and watching what I eat. That my body type will NEVER be 5'5" and 100 lbs. and

that is okay with You because You made me to be this size.”

Jesus: “What is another lie you believe?”

Me: “That I am worthless, of no value, that I benefit no one and that people would be better off without me. I am refuse.”

Jesus: “Now what is the truth I am showing you?”

Me: \*tears\* “That You, Lord God, wanted spiritual offspring, and I am that. You, God, benefit, You gain a daughter. That my kids gain because they needed a mom who could make it alone (with You) with five kids. That my students benefit because others have given up on them. That my pastor benefits because he is seeing someone walk out of sexual brokenness first hand. Sue benefits because she sees how my relationship with You works. The online community of women benefit because You speak through me to encourage them.”

Abba: “You are Mine, My daughter, heiress, friend. Your purchase price is set, the holy blood of the son of God. I did not find that price too high. You are precious in My eyes.”

So my friend writes me these healing scriptural truths she hears from the heart of God as they go walking, and then when she forgets them, I have the privilege of reminding her what He has said. It’s like that old saying, “A friend is one who knows the song of your heart, and will sing it back to you when you forget the words.”

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on Sept. 15, 2009.



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# Swords of Blessing

This Father's Day weekend, my to-do list included personalizing almost three dozen wooden swords. A dear friend has a wonderful boys' summer camp called ["Warrior Week"](#) where men sow love and truth (along with a fair share of messy fun) into the souls of boys. I am privileged to use my calligraphy experience to letter each boy's name and a prayed-over character trait that is a blessing for each boy concluding his last year of Warrior Week. So I lettered blessings like "Justin the Magnanimous" and "David the Faithful" and "Cooper the Strong," under which was lettered "Dangerous for Good."



The camp leaders asked each boy's father to write a letter affirming his son, in his own handwriting, and walked them through what to say. Affirmation is a mystery for many dads, who never received it from their own fathers. "You can say whatever encouraging words you'd like to in your letter," the dads were told, "but we would like for you to at least include these four points:

1. I love you.
2. I am pleased with you.
3. I am for you/in your corner no matter what.
4. God has a plan for your life."

Wow. This is powerful stuff! I rejoice in the power of a father's words of affirmation because I have seen firsthand what a difference it makes in the lives of our sons. For all

our gifts and strengths, women cannot imprint masculinity on the souls of boys and men. We can confirm what we see, but we can't put it there. And a father's voice, whether spoken or verbal, can have a "weight of glory," to use C.S. Lewis' term, that lasts for an eternity.

While I'm thrilled for the boys who will be receiving this amazing blessing, I am also reveling in the truth that my heavenly Father delights to affirm each of us. He says, "I love you, I delight in you, I am for you, and I know the plans I have for your life!"

Even if we don't get a sword. . . at least we get the letter. It's bound in a Book.

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