

What Would You Say to Your 8-Year-Old Self?

Recently I watched Disney's *The Kid* again. This is a movie recommended by a counselor friend of mine, and I have heard of several other counselors who assign people to watch it because of its insights into why we can become the adults we are. Bruce Willis plays a not very nice man who meets up with his 8-year-old self, and the two have some important information to give each other.

There is a scene where a friend helps him process what it means to be talking to his little boy self, and asks, "What would I say if little Deirdre turned up, bursting out of her St. Mary's uniform, asking me what comes next?" Suddenly, my eyes welled with tears at the thought: what would I say if little 8-year-old Susan LeClair appeared in my living room? What would I want her to know, after 30+ years of intentionally seeking "wisdom beyond my years," the prayer the Lord instructed me to pray for myself right after becoming a Christian?



Here's my first pass:

"You are not damaged goods. You are not the ugly crippled girl you think you are. God made you beautiful, and He put you in a handicapped body to greater put His glory on display. Your frailty will make your gifts, and your intensity, less threatening to others. When His joy radiates out from you, He will get the glory, and you will love that. It's OK that you had polio. One day, your scars will be beauty marks, and you will see that your ever-present limp simply *is*. It's not a shameful thing. Jacob's limp was the souvenir Yahweh chose for

his nighttime wrestling match with Him.

“Your purity is a precious gift. Don’t let anyone steal it from you.

“Your intellect doesn’t make you better than anyone else. It’s like the color of your hair or eyes. It’s just part of the package God put together when He made you. Yes, you’re smart. Don’t be a show-off about it. That’s ugly. And nobody will figure out, especially seventh-grade girls who will leave a deep wound on your soul, that you’re desperately trying to cover up a core of shame by proving you’re not hopelessly rotten, damaged, not-OK. Speaking of which, you ARE hopelessly rotten, damaged, and not-OK in your flesh, the part of you that operates independently from God. That part of you deserves to die, and one day you’ll recognize that and it will be crucified with Jesus. Then He’ll give you a new heart and a new spirit that is whole and perfect and indescribably lovely—just like Him. You will realize that all the parts of you that you really like are all gifts from Jesus or His character shining through you.

“Oh, and Mom tells you that since your eyes change color depending on what you’re wearing, you have hazel eyes. You don’t. They’re green. Mom doesn’t know everything, but it will take you 40 more years to learn that.”

In the movie, Deirdre says she would answer little Deirdre’s question by saying, “Baby, don’t you worry about a thing. Everything’s just going to be great!” If it were me, I’d cup little Susan’s face in my hand and reassure her, “Sweetheart, I’m not going to spoil the adventure by telling you how it’s going to play out. I can just promise you that because you’ll put your trust in Jesus in college, He’s going to give you a life so full of joy that you can’t begin to imagine it right now. He’s not going to make your dreams come true; He’s going to give you new and better dreams, and make those come true. There will be pain, but the joy and richness will far outpace

it. It's going to be a delightful life, sweetie. I promise."

What would you say to *your* 8-year-old self?

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/what_would_you_say_to_your_8-year-old_self on June 9, 2009.

35 Years and Counting

Yesterday (August 3, 2009), Ray and I celebrated 35 years of marriage. My good friend and fellow Engage blogger Gwynne Johnsons wrote on my Facebook, "Congratulations . . . got you beat by 15 years :) ☐ ...Good guys are the BEST of God's gifts . . ." Amen to that!

We've been privileged to walk through almost all those years with our dear friends and fellow Probe Ministries staff Kerby and Susanne Anderson (whom you may recognize from the national radio show Point of View), who were married the same day. Last night, as we visited together, I asked the Andersons and Ray what they had learned over our 35 years, and we were all in agreement about the basics.

The non-negotiable part of a successful marriage is to continually love, accept and forgive the other. That starts with the absolute commitment to mean and to live out our wedding vows. It's a covenant, a "promise on steroids," that goes far beyond "I promise to be here as long as love shall last."

I've been thinking about what I've learned for sure over 35 years.

As one of our pastors once said, "The AIDS of marriage is

justified self-centeredness.” Selfishness is a oneness-killer. God intends to use our spouse to shape us and mold us and give us daily opportunities to crucify our flesh, our self-centeredness, as He forms us into the people He intends us to be.

It’s helpful to see marriage as two “forgiven forgivers.” Extending forgiveness as we have received it from God, as quickly as possible, keeps the oneness and intimacy flowing.

We need to keep a balance between what we overlook and let go from a heart of grace, and what we need to address because it is big enough to cause us to withdraw from the other. [Godly conflict resolution](#) is essential for living well with another sinner.

Cultivating an “attitude of gratitude” and verbally expressing gratitude for the small things the other does to serve and love us, goes a long way.

There is no substitute for creating habits of kindness toward our spouse. And we are just as pleasant and courteous to each others as we are to strangers, which is simply a habit as well as a character issue.

Learning about communication skills truly enhances the marriage relationship. The most powerful tools I’ve ever come across, and which we have made a part of how we live with each other, are:

1. Don’t interrupt the other person.
2. Tell the other what you heard to make sure you understood them right.
3. Avoid being a [WENI](#) (sounds like “weenie”): **W**ithdrawing, **E**scalating when arguing, **N**egatively interpreting what the other is saying, and **I**nvalidating the other.

God has been good, and we thank Him for His blessing of a great friendship and relationship with each other!

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/35_years_and_counting

A New Look at *Twilight*, Different Conclusion

Last year (June 8, 2010) I [blogged about *Twilight*](#), connecting the dots between the supernatural vampire character of Edward Cullen and Jesus. I suggested that perhaps the reason millions of people so resonate with that character is that what they're really looking for is the glory and perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ, which Edward appears to manifest in various ways.

Since then, I have read all the books and done months of research. It's like pulling the camera focus back, back, back. . . . and finding some extremely disturbing details now in our field of vision.

I have now come to a very different conclusion.

I was stunned to learn about how the idea for *Twilight* came to the author, Stephenie Meyer. She tells this story:

"I woke up . . . from a very vivid dream. In my dream, two people were having an intense conversation in a meadow in the woods. One of these people was just your average girl. The other person was fantastically beautiful, sparkly, and a vampire. They were discussing the difficulties inherent in the facts that A) they were falling in love with each other while B) the vampire was particularly attracted to the scent of her blood, and was having a difficult time restraining himself from killing her immediately."

“Fantastically beautiful, sparkly, and a vampire”? Consider what vampires are, in the vampire genre that arose in the 1800s: demon-possessed, undead, former human beings who suck blood from their victims to sustain themselves. A vampire is evil. And the vampire who came to Stephenie Meyer in a dream is not only supernaturally beautiful and sparkly, but when she awoke she was deeply in love with this being who virtually moved into her head, creating conversations for months that she typed out (obsessively, she says) until *Twilight* was written.

When I heard this part of the story, it gave me chills. 2 Corinthians 11:14 tells us that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, which is a perfect description of the Edward Cullen character.

Then I learned that “Edward” came to Meyer in a second dream that frightened her. She said, “I had this dream that Edward actually showed up and told me that I got it all wrong and like he exists and everything but he couldn’t live off animals. . . and I kind of got the sense he was going to kill me. It was really terrifying and bizarrely different from every other time I’ve thought about his character.”

I believe that Stephenie Meyer’s dream was not your ordinary dream. The fact that “Edward” came to her in a second dream that terrified her (but she dismissed it and kept on writing), indicates this may have been a demonic visitation. I do believe *Twilight* was demonically inspired.

But there’s more.

All four books are permeated with the occult. The *Twilight* vampires all have various kinds of powers that don’t come from God. They are supernaturally fast, supernaturally strong, able to read others’ minds and control others’ feelings. Some can tell the future, others can see things at great distances. These aspects of the occult are an important part of what

makes *Twilight* so successful.

In both the Old and New Testaments, God strongly warns us not to have anything to do with the occult, which is part of the “domain of darkness” (Colossians 1:13). *Twilight* glorifies the occult, the very thing God calls detestable (Deuteronomy 18:9). This is reason enough for Christ-followers to stay away from it!

Last year I wondered if Edward was something of a Christ-figure. Now I think this character is a devious spiritual counterfeit to Jesus that has captured the hearts of millions of obsessed fans who are in love with a demonic “angel of light.”

And they don't know it.

Note: My article on the Probe website is now online, with much more information than what's in this blog post: probe.org/twilight

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

Aprons and Glamour

August 26, 2008

At our son's rehearsal dinner, we invited our guests to come up to a podium for a time of addressing the happy couple. Kevin had asked for this since his now-wife's love language is words of affirmation. (But even if he hadn't, we would have planned that anyway. I'm a huge believer in helping people love and encourage each other publicly.) My husband, as the host, first welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming, then it was my turn.

I had donned a bright red, brand new apron for the occasion and spoke to my precious new daughter-in-law. "For 24 years I have been the number one woman in Kevin's life, but that ends now. Lauren, I have a gift for you. . ." I untied the apron and gathered the strings in my left hand, and from a pocket on the apron I pulled out a pair of scissors with the other. I snipped off the strings and handed them to Lauren.

Her mother exclaimed out loud, "She's cutting off the apron strings!" But Lauren's face was a mixture of bewilderment and confusion. She was clearly thinking, "What's going on?!??"

All the people in the room over 40 knew what I was doing: making a symbolic statement that I was no longer Mommy, and I would not be mothering my son the way I did up to that point in his life. But the under-40 crowd didn't have a clue. Many of them hadn't seen their mothers in an apron, and the expression "cutting off the apron strings" as a metaphor for letting a child go free into adulthood was foreign to them.

In my fantasy, it was going to be a sweet, tender and powerful moment. I was going to make an eloquent statement that would communicate to everyone there my faith in Kevin to be a full adult man and my promise to his bride that I would not interfere with the priorities of his affections.

It sure didn't turn out that way!

It was more like lamely having to explain the punch line of a joke.

Which is why we need to be aware of how culture shifts and changes, and that what is relevant to one generation may well be lost to the next. If we want to minister to women across all age ranges, we need to keep our eyes and ears open to what it's like to be 20, or 30, or 40, or beyond. My son and his wife live on a college campus where they are surrounded by youth culture, and they have already blessed me with perspective on songs I need to be aware of, and the ways college students are thinking and processing life.

Which is why, when *Glamour* magazine started arriving unordered at my house, I didn't toss it. I read it. Yikes!

And Lord have mercy.

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

Birthday Gifts FROM Jesus

Dec. 22, 2009

Christmas 2009 will forever be our most memorable, because of the gifts we have received from God this year.

He once again showed His generous heart through the breathtaking gift of one of our donors (Ray and I raise support for our salaries at Probe Ministries) who wanted to see us in a larger home. He thought that the president of a

ministry should be able to have people over without feeling cramped the moment they walk in the door. So, a week ago, we moved into a home two and half times bigger than the one we'd lived in for 25 years, the home in which I always assumed we'd live out our days.

As always, God's timing is exquisitely perfect, and He arranged for us to find this home—two blocks from Probe's new offices in the [Hope Center](#); my husband walked to work this morning!—just ten days after it went on the market. We closed in time to host three Christmas parties in this amazing house that is perfect for entertaining.

We moved in five days before the first party. That sounds absolutely nuts, but the Lord's Christmas gift had a "Part Two." One of the reasons He wants us to live in community is because He knows we need other people to "do life" with. And every day, women came over to help me unpack boxes, organize my kitchen and office, hang pictures, and decorate for Christmas. One day as I gave thanks for the lunch one especially productive and energetic friend and I were about to eat, I believe the Lord whispered to my heart, "Tammy is one of My Christmas gifts to you."

And *that* is what's really nuts. . . the idea that the God of the Universe, whose incarnation we celebrate at the core of all the "Xmas" hoopla, would give *me* a Christmas gift.

But that's what grace looks like. It looks like this amazing, lovely home we don't deserve. It looks like a friend giving up her vacation week to make sure my home was ready to bless others. It looks like women coming over to be my hands and feet when post-polio has diminished my strength and energy reserves.

And it looks like God wrapping Himself in flesh to live among us. Happy Birthday, Lord Jesus!

This blog post originally appeared at

Car Wrecks and God's Care

I received quite the birthday present from God this year.

My husband was in a car wreck on the way to speak at a church, and was taken by ambulance to the hospital where he was checked out because his chest hurt. A lot. (Airbags hit your chest at 200 mph!) No broken bones, just a scratch on the forehead, a lot of soreness, and a residual (but slowly subsiding) sense of fragility.

When I walked into the exam room, Ray murmured wryly, "Happy Birthday."

And it was, because my beloved husband was all right. God protected him from serious harm, and I am so thankful! That was a wonderful gift to me.

This was the second time I was called to the ER. Several years ago, Ray was "T-boned" on the driver's side by a car speeding through a red light. He received a concussion and nine months of soreness, but again nothing broken, no internal injuries. He still has no memory of being hit (or even being extracted from his totaled car or taken to the hospital by the paramedics).

There was a big "no accident" to the timing and location of that first wreck. He was hit three blocks from home, just a couple of months before our older son started basic training in the Air Force. My mama's heart was of course concerned about what could happen to our son in the military during a war. I got the message loud and clear: "Ray wasn't safe from danger three blocks from home, and I protected him. You can

trust Me to protect Curt no matter where he is or what he's doing."

The Lord knew that both of Ray's accidents were going to happen. Months before, I had been invited to speak at women's retreat in Germany. I was excited about the invitation, but as I prayed about it, God gave me a resounding "NO!" in my spirit. I had no idea why He wouldn't let me go, but obediently, regretfully declined. When Ray had his wreck three days before I would have been scheduled to fly to Europe, I was so grateful for God's goodness in the timing. I was grateful for the "no."

For years, I have been hanging into what is probably the most important truth I have ever learned in my life: ***a loving God is in control***. This year, for my birthday, God gave me the gift of saying, "Yes, I am, and let me show you once again how true that is."

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blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/car_wrecks_and_god's_care
on March 16, 2010.

"You Should Improve Your Article 'A Short Look at Six World Religions'"

My name is _____ and I am a born again Christian. I have a BA in Pastoral Theology and a MA in Philosophical Theology. I believe that there could be improvements to your article [A Short Look at Six World Religions](#).

I do believe that "snapshot" looks at our neighbors' faiths are valuable but they do have limitations. It can be difficult to convey the rich diversity of their sects, denominations, and teachings. This being the case, and given that adherents of any faith often do not align strictly to orthodox doctrine, it may be worth noting in your piece in the sections that deal with "relating with folks from these faiths" that on top of prayer and Biblical knowledge they should listen closely to the others' perspectives. Listening at first will give more clarity to the type or specific tradition the person is a part of.

Islam has been called a religion of works, but I have found this to not be true upon both study and speaking to Muslims. They are fully dependent on Allah's mercy and the grace of God. They will often say that even if they were perfect and without sin, God could cast them into hell if he wanted because God owes no one anything—it is His grace and mercy alone that allows salvation. This is an important facet of Islam that I feel should be included. The six tenets of faith are of course much more flexible in many Muslims' eyes than the five pillars and this could be emphasized. I also would say that Islam is no more fatalistic than many expressions of Christian faith. As many Christians would say, God is sovereign and everything that happens is in His purview and is because He allows it. Even Satan's and hell's existence is only because of His allowing it to be so. I do not think of Christianity is fatalistic because of this teaching. One Christian tradition that may deviate from this is Process Theologies of Christianity, which in my reading give more a 'participant' role to God than 'sovereign'. You write that Allah is a distant spiritual being, but again this is not how I have heard Muslims describe God. They will often as Christians do also balance transcendence and immanence. I have read of Allah being the center of all things, not 'out there'. It is we who may feel like we're 'out there' when we are distanced by sin.

I appreciate that you note Hinduism's diversity. *Star Wars*, however, I would argue is closer to Taoism.

There are some forms of Buddhism that pray, and worship divine beings. I would disagree with C.S. Lewis—Buddhism may be said more properly to be a 'reformation' of Hinduism, not a heresy. Buddha wanted to bring a more 'democratic' and less austere faith. The 'I don't exist' is the ego. A Buddhist would recognize a pinch hurts and that a pinch hurts any living creature. Buddhists would say that Nirvana is not a goal, and is not something that is sought. There is no inconsistency of no-self and karma continuing the ripple effects. Karma is just cause-effect. A Buddhist would seek to absolve all action, cause-effect. Though a person dies, the consequences of their actions will still effect the next generation and their environment.

It may be worth noting the Messianic Jewish movement—I worshipped alongside these folks in a St. Paul Minnesota Temple and they are really Jews for Jesus!

It may be more appropriate to refer to Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses as 'sects' rather than cults as this is the trend in writing, commentary, and popular usage.

I hope that some of this may be useful to you, even if to a small degree. I do thank you for your ministry at Probe and am grateful that you write on these other religions with great love in your writing voice. My best wishes to you!

Thank you, _____.

It may be helpful for you to understand that the article on our website is the radio transcript of a week of programs I was asked to do for Moody Radio some years ago, giving a 35,000-foot overview of major religions to their radio audience in a very restricted time parameter. And that's why it's called a "Short" look at world religions.

Your excellent observations are about fine-tuning the details of an article that was intentionally written with broad brush strokes. So I'm going to add it to our website from a link at the bottom of the article, highlighted in a "See Also" box.

Thank you, thank you for "hearing" the love in my heart and in my fingertips as I wrote this article! You have greatly blessed me today!

Warmly,
Sue

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“Am I Judging When I Recognize Sin in a Friend's Life?”

Dear Sue,

My question is about judging. There are several of us friends and we are all Christians but go to different churches. One of

our friends was widowed several years ago. After several failed relationships where she became sexually intimate with each of the men, she is now in another relationship with what seems like a nice man. She is also very active in her church and is involved in a discipleship ministry. After she leaves the meetings to prepare for these discipleship events, she leaves town to go stay the weekend with her new friend.

I told one of the other friends that I did not think it was right that she was doing that and that may be why she had problems with her relationships, and that I felt it was wrong that she would be speaking before another group of women on this retreat. My other friend told me I was judging and that only God should do that and no one is without sin and that one sin is no greater than any other sin. I do not interpret the bible that way. I feel that if she is putting herself before others as a leader of God she should be striving to live sin free and be repenting when she does sin. Am I judging when I recognize a sin in another person's life? I do not want to be a judgmental person and am very confused about this. Please help me to understand and how I should have responded to her.

You are right. There is a huge misunderstanding about judging both outside and inside the church, and it comes from not knowing what the Bible teaches about judging. Everybody seems to stop with "Judge not, lest ye be judged" (Matt. 7:1). That is the Lord Jesus' call not to judge hypocritically. But in John 7:24 He also calls us to judge rightly. And remember the passage about pulling the plank out of our own eye so we can see clearly to remove the speck from our brother's eye (Matt. 7:5)? That's about judging as well. The point there is about examining ourselves first before dealing with another's sin, *not* to ignore other people's behavior.

But then there's the "big daddy" passage of 1 Corinthians 5:9-13:

I have written you in my letter not to associate with

sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.”

This passage clearly says that we are to judge those inside the Body of Christ. (News to your other friend, I'm sure!) Judging doesn't mean condemning, though; in the case of your immoral friend, it would be a matter of comparing her behavior with what is right, and pointing out the dangers of her choices, the way we would want to warn someone in a burning building to get out, or urge someone headed toward a cliff to turn around.

It might sound like, “This is a hard conversation but I need to talk to you because I care about you. You're making decisions that are not consistent with the Christ-follower and the woman of God I know you want to be. Sexual immorality is still sin, and sin has consequences, and I don't want you to be hurt. But even more than that, you are dishonoring the Lord by your disobedience to His word. I am concerned that you are continuing in a leadership position while you are engaged in unrepented, continual sin. James 3:1 says that teachers will be judged more strictly, and I am concerned for what that might look like for you down the road. I just want to plead with you to choose chastity and integrity, and make choices that honor both God and yourself.”

If she gets defensive and starts pushing back, making comments like, “And you're so perfect yourself?” I would counsel you to

not get defensive yourself. Just say something like, "You know, I'm aware that I'm a sinner in need of God's mercy and grace every single day. I would hope that if my eyes were blinded by my own feelings and sin and I were headed toward a cliff, you would love me enough to warn me and challenge me to live consistently with who God says I am."

I'm so glad you wrote. I hope you find this helpful.

Sue

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"Is Clairvoyance Wrong?"

A lady popped into one of our meetings recently who said she is clairvoyant and has worked with tarot cards in the past. Someone in another church had told her it was wrong so she got rid of her tarot cards but wants to know if her gift of clairvoyance is also wrong and what to do about it. She said she has had dreams of disasters, etc. before they have happened and they have been reported as she "saw" them. We are a church who operates in the prophetic but I was at a loss how to explain the difference in "layman's" terms. I know one is in the occult but have never met anyone who said they had correct predictions before as I always believed Satan could not predict the future and now I am a little confused as to how to explain it.

Clairvoyance is indeed a manifestation of the occult. Satan has all kinds of supernatural knowledge (although he is not omniscient) so we shouldn't be surprised when he feeds people knowledge of some future events. Particularly since this lady has worked with tarot cards, which is another open door to the

occult, someone needs to explain to her how important it is to renounce her openness to the enemy's power and secret knowledge because if power and knowledge don't come from God, they are coming from an evil source which will prove to be harmful eventually.

The biblical standard for prophets, either fore-telling or forth-telling, is 100% accuracy (Deut. 18:22). Clairvoyance is a demonic counterfeit to the way the Holy Spirit gives knowledge supernaturally, and this lady can probably identify at least one dream or vision or thought that did not come to pass or in which she got a detail wrong because unholy and UN-omniscient Satan cannot perfectly mimic the actions of our perfectly holy God.

Concerning what to do about it, the way to slam shut the open door to the kingdom of darkness is to repent of participating in occult activities which God has forbidden for our own protection, and to "renounce the deeds of darkness" (Rom. 13:12) in Jesus' name. For further information, check out Neil Anderson's book *Victory Over the Darkness*.

So glad you wrote! I hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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See Also:

["What's the Difference Between a Prophet and a Clairvoyant?"](#)