

“How Do I Encourage My Gender Role-Reversed Kids?”

Thank you so much for [your commentary](#) on encouraging our children to feel blessed in their own unique gender. I have a boy (6) and a girl (7) (and a child of unknown gender on the way). I was really nervous about raising a little boy, because I am one of two girls in my family, and had an absentee father for most of my life.

My little boy is the love of my life. He is so loving and sensitive. His dad has trouble dealing with this side of him. He also has many male qualities, but my girl child is rather rough and teases him unmercifully. How can I encourage them despite their apparent role reversals?

You brought up SUCH a great question, and I wanted to provide as powerful an answer as I could, so I asked a good friend for whom same-sex attraction is part of his story. God has done a huge work of grace in his life to bring him to the point where he can truly enjoy being a man, and has been healed from some of the woundings that came from not being supported in his masculinity when he was a boy. This was his answer for you, and I couldn't be more pleased with what he wrote:

It's OK to be nervous about raising a boy. I think that's natural. However, there are many very helpful resources out right now that will help you in guiding your little man in the right way (i.e., Dr. James Dobson's *Raising Boys* etc.). Dad is perhaps the most important factor in guiding the young man into gender security. Even though Dad might have difficulty dealing with sensitivity and other “less masculine” traits, I urge Dad to look at Jesus, study our Savior, see what godly masculinity is. Come to grips with the fact that what our society deems masculine is often brutal cruelty. The ultimate guidebook for healthy gender

security is none other than the Bible and Jesus is the ultimate example of the godly MAN.

That having been said, in the early years, I believe that it is very important to make sure your children are taught good manners and how to be accepting of people that aren't like themselves—even if they are siblings. If your little girl picks on or teases your little boy, I would encourage you to stop that behavior—through discipline, through reasoning or any other effective method. Your little boy must have an advocate in this early stage of life that is present and visible. It really is best if it is Dad but certainly someone he loves and trusts. And little girl must be taught to respect not only other people but the other gender as well.

On a more scientific note, there is a theory called the neuro-endocrine theory. This theory states that anywhere from the 8th to the 12th week of gestation, there is a hormone wash that is released in the womb that kind of kick-starts the development of gender depending on the chromosome makeup (xx being female and xy being male). Sometimes the hormone wash is not as strong as at others and the process by which the masculine moves into the left brain and the feminine moves into the right brain is not fully completed. This is not to say that any child is less male or female or more so. But it does apparently make some male children more sensitive and creative (right brain) and some female children more aggressive and decisive (left brain). It's not a bad thing or a good thing. Simply a scientific explanation of why some male children might be a bit more sensitive etc.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

“Can I Be Forgiven for My Abortion?”

What if someone really believes that they were saved at a young age (14). . .but is then faced with an unwanted pregnancy at age 15 . . .and she terminates the pregnancy even though she KNOWS in her heart that it was wrong – do you believe that she can be forgiven? God tells us that He will never put more on us than we can handle . . .so what if we make the WRONG choice . . .what if we take the easy way out??? Do you think he can forgive us for this? I mean . . .what about the sacredness of life . . .I mean a baby is the most innocent of His creation . . .I hope with all my heart that it can be forgiven. . .but I just don't see how!!! I interfered with His plan!!! Plus what about the scripture in Proverbs . . .about a man being tortured by the guilt of murder shall be a prisoner forever . . .let no one support him . . .doesn't this mean that I'm supposed to be tormented by it FOREVER!!! and no one should help me????

Okay . . .Here's my story . . . [Story edited out]

Thanks so much for listening . . .this has been hidden for so long that it has been so difficult re-living it!!! Maybe it is my judgment to live with this internal struggle . . .maybe I'm not supposed to find peace . . .

What a mess I've made of my life!!!!!!!

Dear _____, precious child of God, beloved daughter of the King–

I am so very very VERY glad you wrote! I hurt with you. . . in fact, there are tears in my eyes as I write this to you--my

heart hurts for you and for the burden you have been carrying all these years.

Let's get to the bottom line first: In Jesus' name, YOU HAVE ALREADY BEEN FORGIVEN!!! Because you have trusted Christ, the first time you confessed your sin of abortion and asked for God's forgiveness, He gave it to you. In fact, He POURED His forgiveness out on you like an anointing of oil. Listen to 1 John 1:9:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You confessed your sin, and because He is faithful and He is just (meaning, Jesus already paid for your sin at the cross), God the Father not only forgave you of your sin, He cleansed you from the stain of your guilt. Your feelings of being unforgiven and dirty and shame-filled have been lying to you, because the truth is, you are forgiven and clean and accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6 KJV)

I want to challenge you to do something that will help you really GET this truth. Three times a day (at least), say out loud, "Thank You, Lord for forgiving me because Jesus died for me. I receive Your forgiveness and I receive Your cleansing. Thank You for making me clean and pure again." It really helps to say it out loud so that your spirit hears those words of truth come out of your mouth. This is the way of faith, the way we receive God's blessings by faith even before we feel them.

You have some work to do to get to the point where you can feel unashamed and pure again—but that's not a matter of EARNING those things, but of changing your thinking so that you can embrace the reality that is yours to live out. Is there an Abortion Restoration or Recovery ministry near you? Ask the Lord to show you if there is; I don't know of any network of programs to check with, but I can point you to an

excellent workbook you can do on your own. This is the book that is used at our church for the Abortion Restoration class that healed, post-abortal women offer a couple of times a year.

Her Choice to Heal by Sydna Masse and Joan Phillips

Also, there are a couple of websites where you can do some reading that will be very encouraging to you as you work your way through the necessary grieving of the loss of your baby (who is in heaven, and you will see him or her again someday!), and the necessary forgiving of those involved: yourself, the boy who got you pregnant, your parents, the Planned Parenthood people, and anyone else who played a part in the trauma to your soul.

[After Abortion](#)

[After Abortion Message Boards](#) (Online Christian Support at the above site)

www.hopeafterabortion.com

I also suggest you listen to a lot of praise and worship music so that you focus on the Lord and let Him minister His love to you. As you do that, there's one prayer I would strongly suggest you pray, regularly: "Lord, show me how much You love me." He LOVES to answer that prayer!

You have not gone further than God's grace can reach, and you have done nothing that He cannot turn into good, for His glory and for your benefit. God wants to soak His grace down into the very bottom of your soul. Jesus' blood has covered and cleansed your sin, and you are clean and forgiven because He loves you so much He paid the ultimate price to prove it to you.

I'm glad you told me your story, because with every telling, you release more of the shame and the guilt, and you take another step toward healing. Who knows. . . some day you may

find yourself telling your story to young girls BEFORE they make the same mistake you did, and you will watch God redeem your pain to change lives to His glory!

I SO hope this helps.

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

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Addendum: I received this note from someone who works in abortion recovery ministry:

Hi Sue,

I was just reading your response to the email question: Can I be forgiven for my abortion? My heart is heavy for her and I am lifting her up in prayer.

She might also locate a recovery support group in her immediate area by doing a zip code search at www.optionline.org.

About the same time, I received this wonderful letter from the original writer:

Dear Sue,

I did find a place that ministers to women like me. . . and I am planning to participate in the "Forgiven and Set Free" Bible study. I've been through the study guide 3 times and I can't even tell you how much it helped me!! I know that I am not alone and I will continue to work on my healing...

I wanted to share a poem that I wrote with you—it comes from my heart. . .

A Baby's Perspective. . .

I can hear her talking with someone ~ I know it is all about me . . .

She says she's just not "ready" and the TRUTH she cannot see . . .

The truth that You made me and meant for me to be with her . . .

That You would never put more on her than she is able to endure.

For You created my inmost being & placed me in her womb. . .

But she does not realize this and will make a choice real soon.

Please be with her and help her to make the choice that is right . . .

And to know that NOTHING can be hidden from Your sight!

For I am a precious baby and deserve the right to live. . .

If she could only know ~ I've got lots of love to give!

They have NO RIGHT to decide to remove me from this place. . .

But I know that real soon I will be looking upon Your face.

For You are already aware of the choice she will make. . .

Oh God ~ she just doesn't realize all that is at stake!

For as hard as she tries ~ she will be UNABLE TO FORGET. . .

I just pray someday she will feel the NEED to REPENT!

And when that time comes ~ help her to cope with what she's done. . .

And to find strength, love and compassion in the arms of Your Son!

For the blood of Jesus can purify her from all of her sin. . .

No matter how SEVERE & HORRIBLE it might have been!

I know she feels scared inside as I can hear her every cry. . .

She even prays and wishes that You would let HER die.

She is being faced with a TREMENDOUS internal struggle. . .

So many feelings and emotions she will try to juggle . . .

The biggest decision she's faced thus far has been 'what to wear'. . .

But now she feels as if she is living a TERRIBLE nightmare!
Please help her to realize the truth before it is too late . .

.
That a baby is a precious gift and NEVER a mistake!

These people talking to her right now don't even have a clue!
They are telling her what they believe she really needs to do.
They tell her she would be better off without me in her life.

. .
Even though he says he loves her -she's too young to be his wife!

They tell her: "You must make a choice and do it really fast .
. .

Then you can get on with your life and put this in the past. .
.

Just go and take care of this 'problem' and never think of it again"

Oh – God – Don't they even realize the SEVERITY of this sin-
!?!??!

Why is this the ONLY advice that they have to give !?!?!?
That it's not in her best interest to even let me LIVE!?!?!
They tell her that she has so much to look forward to ~
And forgetting about this "situation" is all she needs to do!

How can they make this option sound so easy and so right??
Oh – please God ~ before it's too late – help them to see the light!

Please forgive them – they do not know what they are saying!
When instead they should be on their knees and praying!

She is now talking to her mom about her big "mistake"
Surely my grandma will help her before it is too late!
But instead I hear my grandma say she doesn't want me to be born. . .

She says that I will only bring the family a lot of shame & scorn.

God – please be with them as they face this tragic event. . .
And when it's all over – please show them their NEED to REPENT!!

What are they thinking!?!? – THIS SHOULD NOT EVEN BE AN OPTION!!!

I never once heard anyone mention the possibility of adoption!

Why do they continue to talk as if I'm not "real". . .
That I'm just a "blob of tissue" and really "no big deal"
They do not know that You made me and have a Plan for me. . .
If only we could open their eyes so that THIS they would see!

Sooner or later she will be faced with the reality of her action. . .

And grief, despair, guilt & shame will be part of her reaction.

When this time comes – God please help her to know that it is true . . .

That there is NOTHING in this world that You cannot do!

And when my mommy is forced to deal with this someday . . .
Please let her know when she seeks You ~ everything will be okay!

That Your amazing Grace and abounding love will see her through . . .

That all she needs to do is to place all of her trust in You!

When she puts her faith in Jesus and what He did on HER behalf. . .

Then surely You will save her from all of Your wrath!
For You sent Jesus into the world to save us from EVERY sin. .
.

From even the most horrendous ones that are hard to comprehend!

Please help her to realize that in Your Word she needs to

trust. . .

That if she confesses this sin to You, You will be faithful & JUST. . .

You will forgive her and make her “pure” again. . .

And You will no longer remember this terrible sin!

So please let my mommy confess & feel Your presence in her heart. . .

So that she will realize that she can have a brand new start!

Please protect her from all the people who will be quick to condemn. . .

For You said let him throw the first stone who is completely without sin!

For ALL sin separates us from You and no one is “good” enough. . .

For being “perfect” and always doing “right” is just way too tough!

For we have a “sinful nature” – the bible says it through & through. . .

But if we believe & trust in Jesus we can be made completely “new”!

For You can turn ANY situation into GOOD for Your glory. . .

She may even help others someday by telling her story!

For Your love is GREATER than we can ever comprehend. . .

And Your Grace covers even the very worst of sin!

Even though I wish we would never have to be apart. . .

Please let her know I still love her with all of my heart!

Tell her I forgive her and forgive herself she must . . .

For I am in heaven with You and in that she can trust.

I pray that someday she will come to You with this big “mess”. . .

And I know that You will help her in her time of great distress. . .

When she finally finds you -in Your loving arms she will stay.

. . .

And I will be so very happy that I will see her in heaven one day!

“At What Point Is It Lust?”

At what point is it lusting? I often find myself looking at a girl's back side a lot. But not to the point of looking at her in a sexual way. Just admiring the figure. It sounds stupid, but I know other Christian guys that do it, but I feel convicted every time I casually look at a girl.

There is nothing wrong at first glance with noticing and even admiring that a woman is attractive. God created women to be attractive to men and that's normal.

Wise people have said that lusting starts when you either give a second look, or you let your look linger. When that happens, it's usually because you're filling your eyes on the woman's physical appearance, not who she is as a person made in the image of God.

You don't have to be sexually aroused to be lusting. If you're "looking at a girl's backside a lot," you're headed toward lusting. Allowing your gaze to linger so you can admire a girl's figure is something that should wait for your wife. It's a husband's prerogative, but not anyone else's. You may be admiring God's handiwork, but you are letting your eyes rest too long on someone else's wife, either present or future.

How would you feel if you knew there were guys watching your future wife's backside?

Hope this helps!

“How Far Is Too Far?”

My question is one that has been posed to me on many occasions by many a frustrated teenager. They hear all the information about sex and everything that goes with it, but the one question which I still find being asked all the time is... “How far is too far?” as well as ways to prevent themselves from reaching these boundaries. Would it be possible for an article to be written from a biblical perspective on how far is too far and ways to prevent adolescents from crossing these boundaries?

Since I have worked with high school students and addressed this issue a lot, let me share what wisdom I have gleaned from others and learned from the Word.

Another way to phrase your question is, “Where should I draw the line?”

The line is the place where our behavior moves from that which glorifies God, to that which is sin or leads to sin (either mental or physical sin).

Scripture says, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman” (1 Cor. 7:1). One of the meanings for the Greek word for “touch” means “to press against in such a way as to kindle or catch on fire.” So another way to translate this verse would be, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman so that they become sexually aroused.”

This is true wisdom, because once people become sexually aroused, hormones kick in and it gets hard to think

rationally. So it is far easier to stay in control by limiting our behavior to that which isn't sexual.

I suggest that this means not touching anyone in a way you wouldn't dream of touching one's pastor (or pastor's wife, depending on your gender), or family member. When it comes to dating couples, that means not kissing each other with anything more than you'd give your sister or brother.

So the bottom line is, I suggest that "the line" should be drawn between a short kiss and a long kiss. Short kisses are not necessarily sexual, but long kisses are. Sexual arousal happens after you cross the line from a short kiss to a long kiss. Sexual activity outside of marriage is the sin the Bible calls fornication; it's a sin because God wants all sex (and sexual activity, even if it's far short of intercourse) to be contained within marriage since it's so powerful. Many kids define sex as intercourse, but God's view of sex is far broader than that. Even physiologically, we can tell that sexual feelings occur as a result of doing things that are a long way from intercourse.

Things become startlingly clear when you think: "What if I touch or kiss my brother or sister in this way?" If the thought of French kissing your sibling grosses you out (and I hope it would), then that means it's sexual, and it falls in the category of "off limits."

This discussion is a different approach from "How far is too far," because that question really means "How close to the edge of the cliff can I walk without falling off?" God wants us to ask, "What do I need to do to stay holy and glorify God in everything I do?"

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“I Can’t Forgive Myself for Not Being a Virgin”

I am writing you in order to possibly get some advice on something that has been laboring me for a long time now. I am an extremely strong Christian who is attending a Christian university in order to become a Youth Pastor as a career/mission. Unfortunately though I have made some very bad choices in my life, and I continually have trouble giving them entirely to God. The biggest battle that I face day in day out is the fact that I am no longer a virgin, and I’m not married. Three months ago I broke up with my girlfriend of two years, because I could no longer live with myself continuing having sex outside of marriage. Since then I have fully given myself to Christ once more, except for the fact that I can not live in peace with the fact that I would not be able to give my virginity to my wife if I get married. I was just wondering if you had any advice for me in how I could possibly live with myself a little better than I am now. I realize that I made an irreversible mistake, and that I must suffer the consequences of my actions, so if you don’t have any advice for me than I completely understand. Thanks for being there for people to ask their tough questions to. I know I appreciate it greatly.

Consider the dynamics of the Lord Jesus’ exchange with the woman caught in adultery. He looked right past her sin to the precious soul underneath, with total love and acceptance. The same way He looks at you! When He told her, “Go and sin no more,” He was acknowledging that she had sinned but the grace of His acceptance was a shame-buster. Don’t you know that the shame just fell off her in chunks? Those words communicate the ability to move forward, beyond our sin, into the life of holiness and righteousness God calls us to.

It's true you can't give your virginity to your future wife. But you can give your purity to her. Consider the response of a godly young woman accepting this truth about you and forgiving you for it anyway—as the Lord Jesus said, “He who is forgiven much, loves much.” It prepares you to love this kind of special woman that more more!

I think the enemy of your soul has succeeded in keeping your focus on yourself and your sin—now confessed and repented of, so it's GONE—instead of on Jesus. He has no condemnation for you, and He invites you to give Him your shame since He knows how to deal with it . . . He despises it! (Heb. 12:2) He makes it wither up and disappear!

Don't let Satan have another minute of your life. Every time you are tempted to wallow in your remorse and guilt, turn it around and thank the Lord for forgiving and cleansing you. (Have you let Him cleanse you? [1 John 1:9] If not, thank Him for cleansing AS WELL AS forgiving you.) But He's probably preparing a young lady right now for you who will deal graciously with your past. That young lady might just be someone who has committed the same sin as you, who will not only forgive but fully understand. Then you can both rejoice together in being understood and giving each other lots of grace.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Where Does Scripture Say That Men Should be Strong and Women Should be Soft?”

Re: God’s order for the “strong, leader” capabilities of men, and the “soft, nurturing” capabilities of women.

Chapter and verse, please, where is this laid out in scripture?

In the Bible we seem to have a wide mix of all characteristics in both genders, and no specific statement that “strong” characteristics belong only to men, and “soft” only to women.

Hi _____,

Thanks for your letter.

Re: God’s order for the “strong, leader” capabilities of men, and the “soft, nurturing” capabilities of women. Chapter and verse, please, where is this laid out in scripture?

Well, I was thinking of Joshua 1:6-9, where Joshua is exhorted three times to be strong. And I was thinking of the role of the helpmate in Genesis 2, where Eve was created to respond and complement Adam, and a wife’s responsibility is further spelled out in the New Testament to submit to and respect her husband. Are there “chapter and verse” delineations where the observations about men and women are laid out? No, I don’t think so. We can’t point to specific chapters and verses for many of the things we believe (there is no specific verse, for instance, that says “abortion is sin” or “do not go into pornographic chat rooms”), but I do think we can draw conclusions based on our observations of life that correspond with what we DO know in scripture.

In the Bible we seem to have a wide mix of all characteristics in both genders, and no specific statement that “strong” characteristics belong only to men, and “soft” only to women.

I agree, we do have a wide mix of all characteristics in both genders, and I see problems that arise when men and women go against the way we were created to be. For instance, when men become passive, weak responders (Adam, Ahab) and when women become harsh controllers (Jezebel, Michal, Rebekah).

I would agree with you that strength is not a male-only characteristic, for we see many examples of strong, godly women in scripture. But that doesn't cancel out God's call for men to be strong. (For instance, the qualifications of elder and deacon in the pastoral epistles.)

However, the concept of a “soft man” seems to call up unfortunate, unflattering images of milque-toast characters. Who wants a man to be spineless and too-easily influenced or intimidated? I don't see any place in scripture where wimps are held up as role models. ****BUT****—there is a huge difference between a “soft man,” and a “gentle man,” or a “sensitive man.” The Lord Jesus was hardly a soft man, but He was certainly gentle and sensitive, while at the same time charismatically attractive to the most masculine types of men.

I hope this has communicated my heart better than my article apparently did.

In His grip,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“What About Virgins Marrying Non-Virgins?”

I am engaged to a born again Christian who is not a virgin. Does the Bible say anything about this? We are equally yoked. Why is it strongly advised not to marry someone who is not a virgin even if their past is just that . . . their past. I have read a few articles on the subject, but few give reasons why. Thank you for taking time to answer my question. Your website has been a wonderful source of help to me and I have passed along several email answers and articles to friends and family who are facing such issues.

I'm so glad you wrote, because it is a privilege to encourage you about this. I think it is a form of legalism or judgmentalism to make non-virgins into an inferior class of people. Does the blood of Jesus not cleanse us from all unrighteousness? You know, there are a lot of technical virgins who are very sexually experienced with everything but intercourse; that is certainly not purity, and it still brings memories of past sexual partners into any marriage. Then there are people who haven't had sex but are still addicted to pornography and masturbation. Guess what: that is a tremendous burden to bring into a marriage!

The ground is level at the foot of the cross. So a person who has repented of their sexual experience and is living a holy and pure life can well be at the same place spiritually as a virgin.

Enjoy this story I came across a few years ago:

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Slandering The Blood of Jesus

One night in a church service a young woman felt the tug of God at her heart. She responded to God's call and accepted

Jesus as her Lord and Savior. The young woman had a very rough past, involving alcohol, drugs, and prostitution. But, the change in her was evident. As time went on she became a faithful member of the church. She eventually became involved in the ministry, teaching young children. It was not very long until this faithful young woman had caught the eye and heart of the pastor's son. Their relationship grew and they began to make wedding plans. This is when the problems began. You see, about one half of the church did not think that a woman with a past such as hers was suitable for a pastor's son. The church members began to argue and fight about the matter. So they decided to have a meeting. As the people made their arguments and tensions increased, the meeting was getting completely out of hand. The young woman became very upset about all the things being brought up about her past. As she began to cry the pastor's son stood to speak. He could not bear the pain it was causing his wife-to-be. He began to speak and his statement was this: "My fiancé's past is not what is on trial here. What you are questioning is the ability of the blood of Jesus to wash away sin. Today you have put the blood of Jesus on trial. So, does it wash away sin or not?" The whole church began to weep as they realized that they had been slandering the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Too often, even as Christians, we bring up the past and use it as a weapon against our brothers and sisters. Forgiveness is a very foundational part of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the blood of Jesus does not cleanse the other person completely then it cannot cleanse us completely. If that is the case, then we are all in a lot of trouble. What can wash away my sins, nothing but the blood of Jesus . . . end of case!!! God forgives . . . so should we.

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Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

“What’s God’s Plan for Sex in Marriage?”

I’m wondering if the bible addresses the issue of sexuality after marriage. Is sex only for pleasure acceptable once a couple is married? If so are there certain ways married couples can have sex? I.e., different positions that are appropriate and others that are not?

I look forward to the day when I have a wife and can enjoy these gifts, but I want to make sure that I’m doing it in a God honoring way.

It sure does! A whole book about sexuality after marriage! The Song of Solomon is extremely erotic, but it’s written in symbolism so a lot of people miss it if they’re looking for only the literal. For instance, the use of “fruit” usually refers to the husband’s genitals, and “garden” to the wife’s. God’s word on sex after marriage is “Eat, O friends, and drink; drink your fill, O lovers.” (SoS 5:1)

Jody and Linda Dillow have written two excellent books on God’s view of sex; Jody wrote *Solomon on Sex* (which is out of print, but you can find it used online), and Linda co-wrote (along with Lorraine Pintus) the book *Intimate Issues*. They offer three guidelines for discerning what God permits in sexual expression:

1. Is it prohibited in God’s word?
2. Is it beneficial? (In other words, does it harm people or hinder the sexual relationship?)

3. Does it involve anyone else?

Here's their list of what God prohibits in His Word:

- Fornication (immoral sex, which is any sex outside of marriage)
- Adultery
- Homosexuality
- Impurity
- Orgies
- Prostitution
- Lustful passions
- Sodomy
- Bestiality
- Incest
- Obscenity and coarse jokes

There is more freedom than there are restrictions for married couples. If God doesn't prohibit something, and it doesn't involve anyone else (whether through video, the internet, print media or in the flesh), and it's acceptable to both people, then God gives a green light and says, "Enjoy!"

The Dillows also provide six reasons God gave the gift of sex:

1. To create life
2. For intimate oneness
3. Knowledge
4. Pleasure
5. Defense against temptation
6. Comfort

As you can see, only one is procreation!

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

“How Do You Treat Those in Heretical Churches?”

Define what it is to be a Christian? More importantly, how do you treat those in heretical churches? As brothers? With careful separation? Confrontationally?

Let me give some context for the questions; I come out of a cult or heretical church and am now in a mainline evangelical church after a conversion and great spiritual awakening.

The importance of these questions was demonstrated very clearly to me this last weekend as I spoke with a neighbor about some job difficulties that have been going on in his life for some time. I've always considered him a Christian because of his participation in church activities and the many conversations we've had on faith issues. Later, after reflecting on our conversation, I began to understand that what he calls “his faith” really means his religious culture. He does not believe/is NOT a believer/is NOT saved—in the sense that he is not willing to stake any risk on his beliefs. His belief is barely an intellectual one but by his actions and upon close examination even by his assertions he rejects a saving faith and relationship in a loving God in whom he can put his trust in the form of action.

I assume the reasonable and Christian response would be through a relationship based on grace and love—that those two will have the greatest impact. Where I run into difficulty is that having believed the lie, I never want anything to do with it again no matter what the form. So, to be able to defend the faith and more importantly to take ground, there has to be a

point at which a separation occurs between Truth and what is not true. I think that is why Truth is often so offensive and why 1 Peter 3:16 is so important. With that said—any help?

Dear _____,

Your passion for truth and for souls to know the Lord Jesus in true relationship is a marvelous blessing! You honor God so greatly with your heart of understanding.

I think the simplest answer is to look to the Lord for how He handled those in the religious system of His day. He didn't paint whole groups of people with a single wide brush; He dealt with people individually. So He made a great separation between Himself and the Pharisees and leaders who were so addicted to their power and their system that they missed the Lord of Glory standing in front of them. Yet, He made Himself available to Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, because they were genuine seekers after God and truth.

Since the Lord warned us to discern between sheep and wolves, we know there are people calling themselves Christians who are merely religious (or not Jewish or Muslim!). So I think you are right to look for someone who has trusted in Christ and has spiritual fruit to indicate new life within as the definition of a biblical Christian.

I think we need to show grace and truth and love to those in heretical churches so that those with eyes to see and ears to hear can have a chance to respond to truth. Jesus said, "If I be lifted up, I will lift all men to myself." So we need to lift Him up, with the unhappy understanding that some people won't care when they are shown Life and Truth.

I don't think a confrontational approach is wise because most often, being in a heretical church is a matter of spiritual deception rather than deliberate evasion or avoidance of the truth. So the wise thing to do is to pray that they will see where they're being deceived as a result of being exposed to

the truth. The enemy of our souls is very crafty and he uses religions and systems as well as individuals.

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Do You Handle the Nasty E-mails and Criticisms? I Get MAD!”

Dear Ms Bohlin,

A Godly day to you. After reading the nasty things that are e mailed to you regarding several and various topics at your site, I find it very interesting how you handle the nasty criticisms. Which brings me to the question, how do you handle the nasty and very angry criticisms? Do you get tipped off by them at all? I'm very interested because as I have seen from your answers, you seem to be handling them well. I wish to emulate from you. I always have a hard time handling situations like these. Whenever I share spiritual truths to some people they are very critical about what I say and I always get tipped off. It is as if I feel like I'm wasting my pearls to swine when people react the way some of your readers do and this kinda discourages me. I feel like what I'm telling them is important (considering the eternity they'll probably end up if they don't hear what the Bible has to say) but they simply are stubborn to have any of it. I'm not very good at handling my anger and I have no qualms about showing it. Is rage in some way connected to my practice of the occult from

my past? I have read your response to the 17 year old person who had a brush with death (["Did I Encounter a Demon?"](#)) and this made me think of my former practice and its relation to my reactions.

Thank you for your very sweet and kind comments concerning my e-mail responses. What you DON'T see is the time I let elapse between the time I first read the nasty e-mails, and when I answered them. I never fire off a response immediately because it would be too easy for it to come from my flesh instead of God's Spirit. Sometimes I feel angry and defensive, but I've learned to release those reactions into the Lord's hands and invite Him into the situation.

And then other times, I recognize what I think are the underlying motivations of people's venting. Often there's been hurt, always there is some deception of the enemy. They don't know that they are just pawns of the enemy, and I feel sorry for them. I've been involved in ministry for a long time, including some lay counseling training, so I see things a little differently.

Concerning your rage and anger, I would say that those are secondary emotions, and SOMETHING is fueling them. Anger doesn't occur in a vacuum. Usually it is the result of fear or pain or both. Although, if you have a history of occult involvement, I wouldn't rule out the possibility of demonic "button-pushing." Have you gone through any process of renouncing your occultic practices (Rom. 13:12) so you shut any doors to the enemy into your spirit? Neil Anderson's book *The Bondage Breaker* has a powerful chapter called "Steps to Freedom in Christ" that walks you through a list of possible open doors to the enemy that you can close as you renounce them. I would strongly suggest that for you.

However, if you have an ongoing problem with anger, particularly angry words, know that the Lord Jesus said that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Angry

words come from an angry heart. Not that it's a sin to be angry, but it sounds like you need to look at what's making you angry and deal with it through forgiveness, if someone has hurt you. Or readjusting your belief system—such as developing realistic expectations of life, of God, of other people, of yourself.

I understand your anger when people don't appreciate the spiritual truth you share with them. Let me try and reframe what's happening to hopefully help you react more wisely. You have the truth, they need the truth. HOWEVER, if they are spiritually blind (think cataracts), they cannot see their need for the truth OR the truth itself. First God has to do a work in their hearts before they can receive it. Or, you are offering the Living Water, but their cups are upside down. If you pour out Living Water into an upside-down cup, it doesn't benefit them at all. . . it just makes a mess. That's why you can offer spiritual truth, but if God hasn't prepared their hearts to receive it, they won't—they CAN'T get it. After all, it takes a miracle for a dead person to make the CHOICE to be born again, and it takes a miracle for spiritually deaf and blind people to hear and see truth. So instead of getting angry when they don't receive what you're offering, just let it go and tell yourself, "How sad that they're not ready to receive. Lord, do a work in this person's heart to open their eyes and heart."

I love your passion in seeing sacred things trampled underfoot. That is a love of justice and goodness speaking. However, please remember that when the Lord Jesus was being crucified, He kept saying over and over (that continual action is in the Greek, but it doesn't show up in the English), "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." People don't know what they're doing. They can only see what the world tells them is real, what their feelings tell them is real. They are deceived and ignorant, and God extends grace to them.

Keep on serving the Master by continually submitting yourself into His hands. One very specific way to do that is to ask him, "Lord Jesus, what is my anger about? What do You want to show me about that? What do you want me to DO?" and then listen over a period of time for Him to answer. He loves it when His people ask that kind of heart question.

In His grip,

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries