

Princess Warrior, First Responder

One of my favorite things to talk about is [the Gender Spectrum](#), because I think it provides a very helpful understanding of people. Instead of a single spectrum with masculinity on one end and femininity on the other, I believe God has created a masculinity spectrum and a separate femininity spectrum.

The masculinity spectrum runs from the rough and tumble, athletic and physical kind of males on one end, to the sensitive, artistic, creative kind of males on the other—and everything in between. Although Western civilization tends to equate masculinity with the rough and tumble guys, I think that is a stereotype that gets in the way of appreciating the divinely created range of masculinity.

The femininity spectrum runs from the girly-girl on one end to the tomboy girl on the other. And just as with the masculinity spectrum, Western civilization tends to equate femininity with the stereotype of pink-loving, cosmetic-wearing girls who twirl in dresses to be admired. God delights to make plenty of females who are gifted athletically, are often natural leaders, and don't really care for the stereotypical appearance-oriented manifestations.

My belief is that Jesus Christ is the whole masculinity spectrum all at once, and as boys and men grow in Christlikeness (which is the goal of spiritual maturity), they will take up more bandwidth on the spectrum. Rough and tumble guys grow in sensitivity and compassion, and sensitive/artistic/creative men grow in their physicality and willingness to initiate and lead.

It seemed to me that a similar growth into taking up more

bandwidth should happen on the femininity spectrum as well, as spiritual and emotional growth would produce a fuller-orbed experience of God's beautiful intention for His beloved female image-bearers.

I have certainly observed this happening in fully devoted followers of Christ. I have seen tomboy girls become more comfortable in their feminine skin, especially those who didn't particularly like being female because of abuse or a lack of connection with other girls growing up. It's been good to see women who protected themselves with a hardened, tough outer shell grow softer and more trusting of the Lord and other women. But I've wondered, what happens when girly-girls start taking up more bandwidth on the femininity spectrum? How do they grow and change?

One of the things I love about my tomboy girl friends is their fiercely protective willingness to fight—bullies, injustice, evil. Most of them are not in the least interested in protecting their non-existent manicures or messing up their fancy, fussy outfits (since they don't own any). Some of them grew up with a burning desire to defend the defenseless, and they were frustrated at the unfair rule that girls weren't supposed to fight. And some of them felt shamed for this supposedly unfeminine passion.

Instead, in our culture, girls are usually expected to fall in love with Disney princesses and see themselves as a princess. Now, there's nothing wrong with being royalty. In fact, when I tell my story of trusting Christ and entering into His family, I share my childhood dream to grow up to be a princess. It was a major lightbulb moment of my life to realize that I am now a child of God, who is the King of Kings, and the female child of a King is a princess! Then I pull out my tiara and pop it on my head. I totally own the princess identity.

But one day I realized that the Bible's call to engage in spiritual warfare is not gender-related in the least. Every

believer is called to don the armor of God and do battle with demons with the Lord's protection and in His strength (Ephesians 6:1-18). The person who does warfare is a warrior, right?

Voila—the opportunity to be a princess warrior! Or a warrior princess, either one works, satisfying both ends of the femininity spectrum. Justice-fueled protectors who want to go to war or even just fight the bully on the school bus have every biblical invitation—it's actually a command!—to give themselves fully to the God-given desire to fight in a way that glorifies God. Girly-girls fulfill a larger vision for femininity when they move beyond a self-oriented focus on looking good, shopping, disdaining sports, and the domestic arts, and give themselves to standing firm against evil and serving others in intercessory prayer.

Recently, though, I had another lightbulb moment when the women's director at my church, addressing a "Leaders of Leaders" equipping time, told us that we are first responders. Invoking the image of 9/11 when firefighters ran into the burning buildings of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, she pointed out that we are also first responders when we deliberately walk into spiritual burning buildings to rescue those trapped by faulty, unbiblical thinking. We're first responders when we're willing to have hard conversations with those struggling with where scripture teaches unpopular and uncomfortable standards. We are first responders when we're willing to walk people in conflict through the steps of biblical conflict resolution (Matthew 7:3-5, 18:15-17). We are first responders when we are willing to reach out and love the unlovely and difficult. We are first responders when we are willing to walk a woman through spiritual warfare material to identify places she has given the enemy a foothold in her life and help her take back internal real estate that should belong to Jesus.

So, regardless of where a woman finds herself on the

femininity spectrum, she can glorify God as she trusts Him to expand and grow her into a more well-rounded follower of Christ. Even (and especially) if that includes pink nail polish and spiritual firefighting gear.

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How Bad is This Conversion Therapy Thing?

As pro-LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) voices and values grow louder and more insistent in the culture, what about those people of faith who experience same-sex attraction and don't want it? What are they supposed to do with feelings and desires at odds with their faith? How are they supposed to learn to reconcile their faith and their sexuality?

The cultural narrative has become, "LGBT represents normal, healthy variations in human sexuality, so everyone should support and



celebrate all forms of sexual diversity. And if you don't, we're going to punish you, shame you, and squelch your voice."

Part of the punishing and shaming includes outrage over “Conversion Therapy.” A growing number of states outlaw it. What makes it so bad and why are people so angry about it?

What is Conversion Therapy?

Conversion Therapy is usually defined as therapy designed to change a person’s sexual orientation. But is that what it really is? Therapy is a shortened form of the word “psychotherapy,” which means the treatment given by a licensed mental health professional such as a psychologist or psychiatrist, a social worker, or a licensed counselor. So Conversion Therapy isn’t therapy without a professional counselor of some kind, with the goal of changing someone’s sexual orientation.[\[1\]](#) But do a Google search for organizations being labelled as doing (or even promoting) Conversion Therapy—which will include a number of churches—and you’ll find neither element happening.

Conversion Therapy is the current buzzword that instantly communicates something that smears hate, shame, judgment and probable suicidality in those who undergo it, forced or not. It is not acceptable to say there’s anything wrong or unhealthy about any form of “sexual diversity.” Those that do—for example, anyone who holds to a biblical, traditional view of marriage and sexuality—are labeled as haters, bigots, prudes, outdated . . . and wrong.

Anne Paulk, director of Restored Hope Network, describes it as “an ideological term used by the GLBTQ activist community and their supporters who seek to link compassionate spiritual care and talk therapy with horrible, clearly disreputable practices.”[\[2\]](#)

These “disreputable practices” include stories of some extremists who used torture, pain and punishment to try and exorcise homosexuality from people. Most notably and recently, the movie *Boy Erased* purports to show the true story of a

teenage boy whose parents sent him to a strict camp that left heartbreaking wounds on his soul. (It should also be noted that the producers took a number of creative liberties to produce the most dramatic moments of the film, none of which actually happened per the book.) The cultural narrative lumps extremists with all those engaged in helping those with unwanted homosexuality, painting them all with a broad brush of condemnation.

Helping Those Who *Want* the Help

A number of ministries and churches actively seek to help those who don't want their same-sex feelings or their discomfort with their gender. Or, even if they don't fight against their feelings, they want to live lives honoring to God despite their desires, which means not giving into them. These ministries and organizations neither offer nor promise conversion of homosexual attractions into heterosexual ones. That would be like offering to make someone stop loving chocolate and start loving kale. Not gonna happen, right?

But they can teach what God's word says about sexuality, discipleship, and living a life pleasing to God. They can help people (note: choose to, not be forced to) submit every area of their lives to the lordship of Jesus Christ, including sexuality. There are many who define and identify themselves by their sexuality; God's word calls us to define and identify ourselves by our relationship to Him.

Human sexuality is a complex, many-layered issue comprised of a lifetime of experiences, perceptions, habits, and ways of thinking. There's nothing simple about it. It has also, for every one of us, been impacted by the Fall and the pervading presence of sin.

But Is Change Even Possible?

Ever hear the pejoratively-used phrase "Pray away the gay"? That's as effective as praying away fat. A prayer like,

“Please Jesus make me stop wanting people/things/food I shouldn’t” has never worked because He doesn’t have a magic wand. He says to all those who want to be His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24). That means saying no to ourselves and to our flesh, the part of us that operates independently of God. The apostle Paul instructs us in Romans 12:2 to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind. . .” Cooperating with God to renew our mind means submitting our thoughts and habits to Him, “taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). The call to surrender every part of us, including our sexuality, as the way to obey and honor God, is a difficult one, and it takes community. It takes the support of other Christ-followers to walk alongside us, pray for us, speak God’s truth to us, encourage us, challenge us, restore us when we stumble and fall, and help us keep going.

Change is not only possible, it is the mark of things that are alive. And it is the fruit of the gospel. Lasting change comes not from human effort but from supernatural transformation as we surrender to the work of God in our lives. We experience change as we are transformed into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Christlikeness produces change in how we think, what we believe, how we see ourselves and others, our behavior, and finally—like the caboose on a train—our feelings. But there’s no point in trying to change the feelings apart from the rest of the process.

Discipleship is often what’s happening in ministries and churches that are smeared with the label of “Conversion Therapy,” being lied about and attacked by people who can’t abide any position other than their own.

Next time you see the term “Conversion Therapy,” know that it’s not about shutting down bad therapists. It’s about shutting up people who agree with God about sexuality.

1. I am indebted to the amazing Joe Dallas for his crazy-great analysis and tender compassion concerning this issue, particularly this article: joedallas.com/2018/11/13/dances-with-snakes/

2.

www.wnd.com/2019/02/ex-gay-leader-jesus-still-transforms-lives/

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When Things Get Crazy on Social Media: Responding Biblically to Firestorms

Recently, a firestorm erupted over some viral videos of some high school students allegedly harassing a Native American veteran who was chanting and banging a drum. In a frenzy of name calling, people quickly ascribed disrespect, racism, and hatred to the students. The veteran made statements about the event that were also shared virally. Some media figures and a lot of Twitter users blew up the internet, condemning the students for their interpretation of what they saw.

But then, more and longer videos showing the true picture of what happened became available online, and the student at the center of the original viral video released an articulate statement explaining what really happened. It has become apparent that the media had mischaracterized the event, and some media figures have actually apologized for jumping to

premature conclusions.

We are in a new place in history, where the internet makes news available immediately, faster than the speed of thought and analysis. At least in the United States, we now live in a culture of criticism and rush to judgment before all the facts are in. This is fed by our postmodern loss of belief in truth. Without recognizing it, many many people no longer believe in Truth with a capital T, just individual truth with a lowercase t. We are encouraged to find and hang onto “our own personal truths” rather than pursue knowledge of what is actually True. (Ever heard the phrase “true for you, but not for me”?)

This loss of confidence in ultimate truth, combined with the technology to record and edit videos that provide what someone wants others to see disconnected from context, has brought us to this place where “fake news” is only distinguishable from real news by investigating the details, assertions and context of what is published and promoted.

That takes time. And deliberation. Neither one is a friend of those who want to manipulate how others think and react.

But we can protect ourselves from this manipulation if we will install a filter of the Bible’s sage wisdom that is even more true today than it was 2700 years ago when Solomon wrote Proverbs 18:17:

The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him.

As [Dr. Phil](#) loves to say, no matter how flat the pancake, it always has two sides. And particularly with stories and videos going viral, there’s always more information, there’s always context, and there’s always the worldview and agenda of those pushing the virality. The deeply beautiful truth of this proverb makes for an exquisite filter for every aspect of life. (See my blog post [Headed to the Courtroom](#))

What creates an online firestorm is people quickly jumping onto social media to comment, judge, and share. The immediacy of the social media universe feeds the bad habit of reacting instead of responding, of blurting out one's first thoughts before giving time to consider alternative explanations or perspectives. This is why the wisdom of the Lord's brother James shines through for us in 2019:

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. (James 1:19)

We should also take note of the keen observation that God gave us two ears and one mouth, so maybe we should listen twice as much (and as long) as we speak. Or tap. All three parts of this verse would have a profound effect on the frenzy of social media if more of us followed it!

One final suggestion for a filter as we experience this new post-truth, super-immediate, easily-manipulated world:

So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

How do we read a Twitter or Facebook or Instagram feed to the glory of God? By inviting Him into the experience, lifting people and situations before His throne and asking for His blessing, asking Him to show ourselves and others what's true, and remembering that He sees all, knows all, and loves all.

How do we respond to social and news media accounts, rumors and stories to the glory of God? By inviting Him into the way we process these, remembering His word that there's always more to whatever story we are hearing in the moment, and waiting to draw conclusions and take a position.

How do we post and comment on social media to the glory of God? By following His command in Ephesians 4:29—

You must let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth, but only what is beneficial for the building up of the one in need, that it may give grace to those who hear.

God's word has always been a source of great blessing, teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). But perhaps never more than right now!

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Celebrating Christmas Wrongly?

Today is Christmas. Happy Jesus' Birthday!

But not everyone is on board with celebrating Christmas. I was recently in an online conversation with someone who asserts that "true" Christians would never celebrate the birth of the Savior because the scripture doesn't command us to remember it, as we are told to do with Christ's death. Luke 22:19 records Jesus' instructions to celebrate the Lord's supper: "Do this in remembrance of Me." But the Bible bears no such instruction concerning His birth. So it must be wrong . . . right?

I couldn't disagree more. One of the things I most love about being a Christ-follower and a student of the Bible is that Jesus taught that the Kingdom of Heaven was about celebrating! (See Luke 14 and Matthew



22.) Since one of my identities is “God’s Party Girl,” that certainly resonates with me. Jesus continually got in trouble with the religious snobs who didn’t care for His habit of partying with sinners—who then turned into Christ-honoring disciples!

And Christmas, at its core, is a holy celebration of the most astounding thing that ever happened on Planet Earth—God becoming flesh and dwelling among us. Yes, there are parts of Christmas that are linked with pagan traditions. But God knows how to tell the difference, and by using our discernment skills, we can too. That’s one way we can love Him with our minds (Luke 10:27), which is part of the greatest commandment.

In this past month of ramping up to Christmas, I have not failed to be blessed by the Christmas music that’s everywhere, especially radio stations. Again, using discernment, I can dismiss (actually, in my mind I use the word “flush”) the non-holy Christmas songs like “Santa Baby” and “Jingle Bells,” and open up my spirit to glory in the gorgeous theology expressed in Christmas carols like no other songs. I still get chills when hearing my car radio proclaim, for example, the deep truths in “Hark the Herald Angels Sing”:

Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see;
Hail, th’incarnate Deity:

Pleased, as man, with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel!

The cheery Christmas lights in our neighborhood remind me that Jesus came as the light of the world, and I celebrate.

The Christmas gifts we give each other point to God's great gift of salvation through His Son, and I celebrate.

But can we celebrate Christmas wrongly? Is it even wrong to celebrate Christmas in the first place?

It always, always comes down to the heart, to our motives. Jesus continually pulled back the covers on people's masks and presentations to expose what was truly going on inside and allow them to see themselves in the light of truth.

Is God honored by how we celebrate His Son's birth in our hearts? When music or lights move us to a place of worship smack dab in the middle of our days, does that glorify Him? Of course it does!

On the other hand, if we are stressed by the compulsion to make our families look picture perfect on social media . . . if we have to go into debt to buy Christmas gifts we can't afford . . . if we're continually snarling and complaining at all the holiday-related traffic and social demands, does that glorify Him? Nope. That's not celebrating Jesus' birthday and it's not honoring Him.

It all comes down to motive.

It's not wrong to celebrate Christmas, but it's possible to celebrate it wrongly. Here's hoping you stay focused on Jesus. Merry Christmas!

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on December 25, 2018.

Lessons From a Hospital Bed

In the last several months, both of my severely arthritic hips were replaced. In addition to the wonderful blessing that I am out of pain, the surgeries and recoveries were full of lessons pointing me to spiritual truths I am so very thankful for:



For a long time, I needed help getting in and out of my car. To be blunt, it was always noisy with involuntary gasps and screams of pain. And while my family and friends were so very glad to be of assistance, it was hard on them to witness me hurting so badly. Now that the pain is behind me, I keep hearing comments like, "Wow! It's so great not to see your face contorted!" or, "Oh man! You're not making the horrible sounds you used to make when you were getting into the car!" I

told my husband the other day, "I have a feeling all that was a lot worse than I had any idea." He nodded his head, "Oh yeah. It was bad." While I am truly sorry that my sweet helpers had to see and hear what they did, it touches me that their compassion ran so deep. I have a new appreciation of what "rejoicing with those who rejoice, and weeping with those who weep" (Romans 12:15) looks like, and how powerful it is to enter into another person's highs and lows.

We have an amazing community group who love each other incredibly well. The night before my first surgery, they prayed over me. One of the men, with a twinkle in his eye, admonished me: "Sue, you may think this surgery is about getting a new hip, but it's not. It's about the people you're going to meet and minister to in the hospital. I just want you to remember—it's not about you, OK?" I know he said it to make me laugh, but his counsel bounced around in my head during both hospital stays. It allowed me to stay aware of the various people who came into my room, from doctors to nurses to housekeepers to the people delivering meal trays, praying, "How can I bless and encourage this person today, Lord?" It really WASN'T all about me!

I had heard from three different doctors, "You have two bad hips and they both need to be replaced." But I didn't sense the timing was right, especially with the expense of such huge surgeries and recovery. I learned yet again the importance of trusting God's timing; in February I turned 65 and crossed the amazing Medicare threshold, which covered basically everything. God's provision has been a huge part of this "adventure," including an exceptionally generous outpouring of gifts to a GoFundMe campaign for an expensive stem cell treatment that we had hoped would replace surgery, but it didn't. I learned again that the Lord is Jehovah Jireh, the God Who Provides (Genesis 22).

This adventure provided minute-by-minute practice in developing an "Attitude of Gratitude." During the first

surgery, it seemed that every time I turned around there was another reason to say, "Thank You, Lord!" From the marvelous shock of waking up in the recovery room in no pain, to walking on my walker a couple of hours after surgery, to the joy of being able to stand again for the simple pleasure of brushing my teeth and washing my hands at the sink, to the delicious hospital food, to the lovely flowers friends brought, to the blessing of being able to fall back asleep after every nighttime "visitor"—I was immersed in nonstop thankfulness.

The day after my second surgery, the Director of Food and Nutrition visited me to check on how the hospital was doing with the quality of the food and service. We had a delightful visit in which I was able to tell him about my immersion in thankfulness during my first hospital stay, but unfortunately I wasn't able to remember a lot of the things I was thankful for because pain meds made my brain fuzzy. "So," I pointed to my journal next to my bed, "this time I brought my gratitude journal so I could record the many blessings despite the pain meds. And your food is one of them!" The director grinned and said, "Ah, so that's where the joy is coming from!" I loved that I was able to recognize a brother in Christ, and that he was able to recognize the connection between gratitude and joy.

The second surgery was a challenge for the surgeon because my hip bones are deformed from polio. I learned that there wasn't enough hip bone to anchor the new socket with screws, so she had to use surgical cement. She has high hopes that it will hold, but warned me that if the cement doesn't work over the long haul, "We'll be in big trouble." So I started praying that the Lord would literally hold me together. Some of my astute friends pointed out that that is Jesus' job in Colossians 1:17: "In Him all things hold together." The context is all of creation, so He can certainly handle one little hip!

I've already shared some of the other lessons I've learned in

this adventure, about [how to handle fear](#) by sharing it with others and inviting the Lord into it and [how to handle unexpected grief](#).

But I'm pretty sure there are more lessons ahead. I just pray to keep my eyes open so I don't miss any of them.

Next Day Addendum:

I was right about there being more lessons, and I remembered one of them this morning as I easily stood up from my scooter to grab the coffee beans and mug from the cabinet for my morning cup of wake-up juice. After several years of not walking or standing because of the pain, I got out of a number of habits. Now I have to remind myself, "Hey! You can do _____ again!" I need to renew my thinking about what I can and can't do, and in order to make these new ways of thinking permanent, I need to *practice* thinking differently. That's how we experience spiritual transformation as well. One of my favorite verses is Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. . . ." We are transformed by intentionally submitting how we think and interpret life to the authority of God's word. But we have to *practice* new ways of thinking in order to be transformed (as opposed to a momentary flicker of a thought).

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“Why Are Children Born Blind?”

I have asked the question of why children are born blind. I get no satisfaction from any of any religious explanation. The fact of the matter is that the Almighty can see but these little children cannot. It is cold comfort to hide behind some doctrine when an innocent child will spend his or her life in darkness.

It's a great question. In fact, God considered it such a good question that it is included in the Gospel of John:

As [Jesus] went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. . . .” (John 9:1-3)

So the first answer of why babies are allowed to be born blind is so that God can put His goodness and His power on display through the person's life.

I can imagine that an immediate response might be, “How sadistic and egocentric can you get? Why would a good and loving God allow such pain and distress just to set Himself up to get glory?”

And my response would be, “When we start to understand God as He really is, as majestic and powerful and beautiful and most of all GOOD, we stop pushing back at His actions that reveal His character. Just like we don't raise a fist at the sun and scream, ‘How dare you shine so brightly that I can't look at you without hurting my eyes?! How dare you pour such radiant light into the world that it lights everything up? Stop being

so shiny and bright!'"

Another answer is that in the scope of eternity, there are many worse things than being physically blind. It would be far worse to live a life disconnected from God, refusing His invitation to the abundant life Jesus came to give, and enter hell with perfectly working eyes.

I do realize that this may seem callous, which is why I need to tell you that as a survivor of polio paralysis since I was eight months old, I have lived my entire life handicapped. I may as well have been born with a disabled body like a baby born blind. So this question is not a hypothetical, theoretical question. This is my daily life. And I have seen God "display His works in me" (John 9) in many ways not *despite* my handicap, but *because* of it. My very weakness is what allows His strength and joy to shine through me in the weak places.

Jesus went on to say immediately after the above statements that He was the light of the world. The juxtaposition of these two details, I believe, is making a statement: that things that exist in the physical realm point to corollaries in the spiritual realm. Blindness comes in various forms, physical and spiritual and emotional and intellectual, but Jesus is the light that makes all the difference with those kinds of blindness.

I do think it's easier to grasp this truth when we cultivate an eternal perspective, remembering that our life on earth is but a short breath compared to the bulk of our existence that will happen on the other side of death. Blindness, for believers in Jesus, is limited to life on earth. All physical maladies will be restored to perfection in the New Heavens and the New Earth, which means no blindness, no lameness, no illness of any kind in the next stage of life.

You might ask, "But what about babies born blind who don't

become believers in Jesus? What is the point of their blindness then?" It seems to me that the promise of healing and wholeness through a relationship with Jesus could be even *more* appealing to someone born blind. It might be the very best way for them to come to the place where they trust in Christ.

One final comment, addressing your statement that "the Almighty can see but these little children cannot."

There was a time when the Almighty restricted Himself to a human body while living on earth, leaving all His power and privileges behind in heaven when He took up residence in a young girl's body. I believe He experienced an even worse kind of blindness than merely physical blindness as He hung on the cross, absorbing all the sin, all the dysfunction, all the sickness, and all the brokenness of life in a fallen world into Himself for three hours. He was so immersed in the horror of a sin-sick world, I believe, that He could no longer "see" or sense His Father—because that's what sin does, it separates us from God, and the Bible tells us that He actually BECAME sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). No wonder He felt lost in sin's blindness. (Thus crying out "[My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?](#)")

So I would respectfully submit that Jesus, the Almighty, very much knows what the deepest kind of blindness feels like. He is Emmanuel, God with us—God who understands what it's like to be human and live in a broken world. Including blindness.

I do hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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What Do You Regret?

Years ago I encountered a word of wisdom: "At the end of our lives, what we will regret is far more about what we *didn't* do, than what we did." And then recently, in a conversation about what "youngsters" want to learn from "olders," a colleague said he wanted to know what we regret so he can learn from our lessons the wiser way (observation) instead of the hard way (personal experience). So I've been asking.



The answers fell in these categories:

Missed Time and Opportunities

- I regret not spending more time with my parents and immediate family when I could.
- I regret not asking enough questions of my parents and grandparents when they were still here. There is so much more I would like to know from them.
- I regret all the time I wasted looking for a man, dating and fretting over relationships. If I had it to do over, I would invest my time and energy differently. I would spend more time in study of the Word, pour into and

serve more freely in ministry and take mission trips! I would've trusted God more and Matthew 6:33.

- I regret not making Christ-centered connections earlier in my life.
- I regret not making connections to Christian organizations (including the church) earlier, and not getting help understanding the Bible.
- I regret not having a mentor.
- I regret not going to the Holy Land sooner.
- I regret not taking advantage of the opportunity to sightsee when on business trips.
- I regret letting work consume me. I regret not traveling because work was too big a part of my life.
- I regret not getting counseling to help me process and grieve my father's murder.
- I regret not learning as much as possible when I had willing teachers. The thought of sitting in a room with peers discussing a book sounds like heaven now, but in school it felt like torture. I did not appreciate the luxury of education then, and now I would LOVE to go back to school for another degree.

Seeking to Please People Instead of God

- I regret spending so much of my younger life being a people pleaser and carrying around burdens that weren't mine to carry.
- I regret being motivated by pleasing people instead of God—even godly people. People can counsel us, but we shouldn't put them in God's place.
- I regret worrying more about what people thought of me than worrying about what God thought of me.
- I regret “performing” for others instead of being true to me.
- I regret all the times I silenced myself at church in order to be the good pastor wife. I didn't even realize how it was slowly poisoning me.

Parenting

- I regret not spending time with my kids instead of trying to provide more things for my kids.
- I regret the time I wasted doing menial tasks that really didn't matter instead of sitting down longer with my boys. I also regret being too quick to speak and argue when they were teenagers. I wish I had been calmer and sought out conversation instead of confrontation.
- I regret wanting my little ones to be perfect in EVERYTHING they did instead of letting them just be kids, and spending way too much time on the daily tasks of housekeeping instead of using my time wisely to nurture them and being their spiritual leader and teaching them more about Jesus instead of making sure each toy was in place. Also being so strict on them when they were young and not realizing I couldn't control their reactions; that I needed to teach them how to react. Oh, and I used to yell at them as a young mom (because that's what I was taught) but I learned to control my reactions because I don't like to be yelled at, and to speak softly and with respect to each of them, using "sir" and "ma'am" with them as I do today with my grandchildren.
- I regret believing the lie that you should let your kids choose their own religion.
- I regret not creating a family culture when my kids were small.
- I regret not getting counseling for our son when he started into a downward spiral in middle school.
- I regret destroying my relationship with our then-13 year old son because he was failing in school and I was so afraid for his future! I reacted in such destructive ways until a pastor of mine told me, "Dear one, there is no vacancy in the Trinity. The position of the Holy Spirit has been filled!" That began a very long walk back toward a forgiven and reconciled relationship with

that now 39-year old son who graduated from college, was in the army for almost 7 years and is now a sergeant in a police force and married with four kids. Thank You Lord Jesus for your grace and mercy toward us all. You are infinitely better at your job than any of us ever could be.

Relationships

- I regret “mind-reading” what I thought others believed about me and reacted as if those beliefs were true...only to go to reunions years later, find out what people actually thought... and realized I could have had a way cooler high school and college experience had I just asked people outright what they thought instead of assuming instead.
- I regret so much that when I saw evidence in my first marriage that something was wrong, I did not fervently ask God to show me what was wrong. I regret it took me over twenty-five years to question red flags in the marriage. I regret not holding my husband accountable for decisions he made, especially financial decisions, and for not pursuing accountability with other believers. I regret that I did not question why, in our Christian culture, submission is confused with inferiority-and therefore a woman can't question any major financial decision her husband does in secret without accountability to his wife.
- I regret every single time I asked a newly married couple when they would have kids. Infertility gives perspective.
- I regret not standing up to an abusive teacher in high school and not reporting him, and I regret years of thinking I was just a bad kid.
- I regret being mean to my wife and kids.
- I regret not asking my husband to help me more with the kids and the house. I didn't ask, and then I got

resentful for him not doing what I never asked him to do. I regret shutting him out of my heart and big chunks of my life.

Body

- I regret not memorizing more scripture before mom brain and autoimmune issues took my good memory.
- I regret not taking better care of my body, especially now that I'm pushing 60. It would have been so much easier if I had just worked at it a little bit each day.
- I regret not realizing you could have sculpted muscles at 80; if I had known I would have exercised more starting much younger.
- I regret not going to the dentist more when I was still under my mom's insurance.
- I regret piercing my belly button myself with a needle and an ice cube. Not really for any reason except for sure my daughter is gonna try it.

Spiritual Life

- I regret buying the lies of the culture rather than the truth of God.
- I regret being so afraid of not having enough money (which is really about not trusting God) that I squelched my husband's generosity.
- I regret not learning sooner that I need to depend on the Lord and not myself.
- I regret the sin of self-reliance.
- I regret not allowing scripture to show me what I was really like.
- I regret allowing sin to become an addiction that took joy from my life and replaced it with shame and guilt.
- I regret that I got in God's way many times . . . when God says in His word says, "I've got this all under control, I have a plan for your life, trust in me with all your heart, do not lean on your own understanding,

rest in Me, Be still . . .” I have done the opposite more times than I can count. So instead of leaning in on Him and watching what He can/could do, I thought I could handle whatever was going on better and faster and tried and failed. (Still working on this, some of us take a little longer to learn.) God has shown me that even when I get in His way, He forgives, He still has a plan, He is still in control, He gives me strength to sit back and wait on Him, that I can change my heart and let go, and trust Him and rest in Him. As His children, He will never let us go . . . Rest and wait on Him, His ways are always better.

- I regret not learning how to really capture my thoughts and rebuke them with scripture. I learned a little too late that I can choose, truly choose what is in my mind. So many things would have been different . . .
- I regret not attending a healthy Bible-teaching church when I was younger.

Of course, we can't learn all our lessons from other people's mistakes. One especially wise friend wrote, “I know that we can, with God's Spirit in us, learn to avoid many things, and wise counsel helps. But until I had matured more and understood the value of certain things and perspective on others, things older believers shared were often more in my head than taken to heart.”

Some examples of regrets that just might have to be learned the hard way:

- I regret indulging and not grasping consequences of every big and little choice.
- I regret listening to legalistic people when I was more vulnerable to toxic religion.
- I regret blowing opportunities, self-imposed insecurity, bad decisions and choices.
- I regret getting upset over really insignificant things.

Finally, for a redemptive view of regrets, this wisdom from a believer who owns the truth of Romans 8:28, that God is able to make all regrets work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose:

“Sue, I think if you live long enough you realize there is a step beyond regret, and it’s thankfulness. Every regret that I would have spoken of, God has used to change me and grow me. As I look back on them all, my heart is full of joy that God has been a part of my life for 47 years. He has brought me out of the mire and filled me up with acceptance of what it’s like to live in this world and that He uses it all. And I thank Him for His goodness.”

What do you regret?

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/what_do_you_regret
on Sept. 4, 2018.

From Fears to Tears

In a previous blog post, [I’m Scared, Lord](#), I wrote about my apprehensions concerning my upcoming hip replacement surgery. My doctor was cheerfully confident that I would not experience the post-operative pain I was afraid of, but I was all-too-aware of my potential complications. As a polio survivor, I’m twice as sensitive to pain as those whose brains were not infected by the poliovirus. On top of that, I was extremely aware of the fact that my severely arthritic hips had become basically frozen, leaving me with a limited range of motion. I knew that the surgeon and her team would be moving my legs in

all kinds of unnatural (to me) contortions during the surgery, and I was extremely concerned about how my muscles and ligaments might scream in protest once I woke up from surgery. So I was scared.

But when I shared my fears with God's people, hundreds of them graciously prayed for me, and the Lord swept away my fears like blowing away smoke. Suddenly the fear was gone and I was graced with a very matter-of-fact willingness to just get 'er done. It was amazing. I was held in my Father's gentle and loving cuddle, and I walked in peace the remaining days until the surgery. Metaphorically walked, that is. I hadn't physically walked for well over a year because of pain and weakness.

Well, it has now been over a week since my surgery, and every day I stand amazed at the healing grace and pain-control grace of my gracious Lord. Not a metaphorical standing, either. For the first time in two years, I am able to stand upright and pain free. I try to maintain an awareness of the huge grace in which I stand, marveling at the privilege of being able to once more stand at the sink to wash my hands or brush my teeth. My recovery has gone exceptionally well. I'm able to walk with the aid of a walker and each day the distance I can walk grows longer. Soon I'll be able to go home from the inpatient rehabilitation facility I've been in—once we figure out how to get me into our car.

But I was not prepared for what kept happening in the therapy gym: tears.

I was flummoxed by the unbidden tears that sprang to my eyes the first time a physical therapist asked me to exercise my polio leg in the same way I had just moved my surgery leg. I knew I couldn't; I don't have the strength, and never have. My left leg was originally paralyzed when I got polio as an infant, and it barely functions. But I also live with the mindset of trying to do what people ask me to do, and the

clash of those two realities rose up in sadness and frustration that leaked out my eyes. It was rather embarrassing. I didn't know what was going on, I just knew my heart was a storm of unhappy feelings.

When the therapist asked me to climb a two-inch step and I didn't have enough pain meds in me for that, the stabbing pain in my surgery leg rose up through my body and exited through my eyes in tears again. It seemed that tears were just under the surface, ready to leak out at the slightest provocation, for two days.

I was so confused! What in the world was going on? Where were all these tears coming from?

It was my husband who provided the answer, and I thank the Lord for using Ray to bring clarity to my maelstrom of emotion. He texted me, "Honey, you have lived with decades of loss you have learned to manage. Now the loss is renewed and you now are reminded further of the loss in ways you haven't dealt with for a lifetime. Polio sucks. I understand."

That was it! The pain of loss is *grief*. I was grieving the impact of polio's losses on my life yet again, this time with a freshly painful punch: polio is now interfering with my recovery from surgery. Other people can just use their other leg to support themselves and climb into a mini-van with its higher seats—no problem! I don't have that choice. That's a loss. When asked to do the same exercise with both legs, other people can do that, but I don't have that choice. That's another loss.

I manage to navigate the losses of polio for months and sometimes years at a time without having to actively think about it, allowing me the luxury of not having to face my grief every day. But that luxury has been taken away today and I want to be real and honest about where I am. I live in a fallen world where the evidence of sin's destructive impact on

our world is everywhere. My grief, the pain of my losses, is part of that fallen world. But what is also part of that fallen world is God's promise that He would never leave me or forsake me (Hebrews 13:5). He tells me He is "the LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Exodus 34:6).

I remind myself of my new life verse that just seems to incredibly appropriate for one whose body is compromised:

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

I cried today. I let the tears fall as the grief flowed. But then I chose not to lose heart, because this momentary, light affliction is producing for me an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.

It's gonna be okay.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/from_fears_to_tears on June 26, 2018.

I'm Scared, Lord

My daughter-in-love recently sent me a video of my son introducing their new Golden Retriever puppy to a swimming pool in which he coaxes little Judah, "Don't be scared!

Bohlins don't get scared!"

. . . While I've been working on this blog post about being scared. Well yeah, sometimes we do.

For four years I've been living with the pain of severe arthritis and the late effects of polio (muscle weakness, pain, and fatigue). In a few weeks, Lord willing, I will have hip replacement surgery. When my husband had his hip replaced, he was in excellent physical condition and his experience was as close to perfect as you can get.

But I'm in a different place physically. I haven't walked in a year. I haven't been able to stand up straight for a couple of years, and even lying flat in bed is extremely uncomfortable. My pelvis and hip joints have lost the flexibility that is a sign of good health, and I just don't know how my post-polio will affect recovery from surgery.

On top of this, I'm a pain weenie. It turns out that the poliovirus affected everything in my body, including pain receptors, and we polio survivors are twice as sensitive to pain as everyone else. So . . . yeah, I'm scared of what I will wake up to after surgery.

My fear level kept rising. It didn't help when people would ask, "Are you excited about your surgery? To get rid of the pain?" No! No, I'm not excited, I'm actually quite fearful of the post-op pain, and not knowing what to expect from physical rehab.

One thing I've learned in life, though, is that if we're focused on our fears and anxieties, it's because we're leaving God out of the equation. He gives no grace for "what ifs" and our [vain imaginations](#) of potential scenarios where any number of things could go wrong.

That's why worrying is a sin.

And the Bible says “fear not” 365 times.

So what do I do with my “scaredness”? [Note: Microsoft Word really, really wants to keep flipping “scaredness” to “sacredness.” Not the same thing. Not by a long shot.]

I sensed the Lord nudging me to share it.

So I did.

And I discovered, once again, the power of prayer.

It started when I needed a CT scan for the robotic assistance of my surgery, but I couldn't lie flat on the table. The pain was unbearable. So I rescheduled the procedure and asked the surgeon to prescribe me some heavy pain meds to be able to lie down. I posted a prayer request on Facebook, asking for “lying flat grace.” I was able to tell the CT tech that over a hundred people had said they were praying for me—and she could see with her own eyes the answer to their prayers as I was able to lie flat and remain still for the scan.



So I was doing my part, by confessing Psalm 56:3—"When I am afraid, I will trust in You," and reminding myself of the power of Philippians 4:6-7—"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will

guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

But, in obedience, I also shared with another large group of people that I was working daily on surrendering my fears of post-op pain and inviting the Lord into my concerns about what lies ahead. Just like with the CT scan. God blessed the others' intercession for me. To my delight, after I shared my struggle with fear, it was evident that lots of people prayed—because the next day I realized that my fear had dissipated like letting air out of a balloon.

The bottom line of this “adventure with God” is that I am learning, yet again, the importance of trusting God and relying on the prayers of others to deal with my fears. The importance of not indulging in scary mental scenarios where pain is bigger than the presence of God Himself. And of choosing to throw myself wholly on the grace of God and keep speaking truth to myself:

It will be worth it.

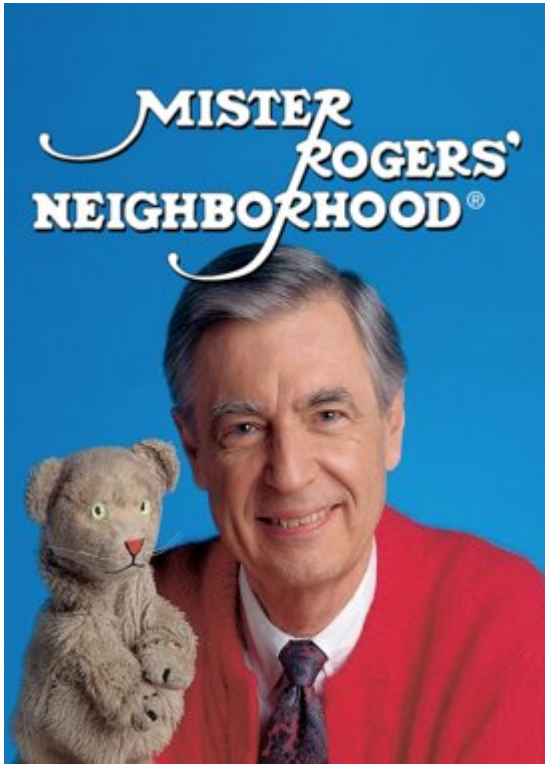
This too shall pass.

God will help me and uphold me.

It's going to be okay because God is good.

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https://blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/im_scared_lord on
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Mister Rogers and the Hunger for God



"You've made this day a special day by just your being you. There is no person in the whole world like you, and I like you just the way you are." —*Mister Rogers, to every person as we watched his show.*

With the news that a documentary about Fred Rogers (Public Television's "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood") will be released this summer, and a movie about him starring Tom Hanks will be in production soon, there has been a good bit of buzz in social media recently. I keep coming across articles about him and links to videos that often move me to grateful tears for this amazing man.

"Mister Rogers" had a heart for children that is unlike anything I've ever seen. His TV program ran for 33 years, from 1968 to 2001. My children grew up watching Mister Rogers, and I often sat with them, equally enthralled by his gentleness, his predictable routines (such as changing out of his jacket into a cardigan sweater and a different pair of shoes *every single show*), and his ability to speak straight to the heart of the audience. Except it wasn't that we were part of his audience; Mister Rogers communicated in such a powerfully personal way, with such soothing, calm tranquility, that we knew he was speaking to US. Individually.

Even before I learned he was an ordained Presbyterian minister, I sensed there was something deeply spiritual about

his message and the way he communicated respect, genuine caring, and encouragement to his “neighbors.” As Jonathan Merritt wrote in *The Atlantic*,

“Fred’s faith surfaced in subtle, indirect ways that most viewers might miss, but it infused all he did. He [believed](#) ‘the space between the television set and the viewer is holy ground,’ but he trusted God to do the heavy lifting. The wall of his office featured a framed [picture](#) of the Greek word for ‘grace,’ a constant reminder of his [belief](#) that he could use television ‘for the broadcasting of grace through the land.’ Before entering that office each day, Rogers would pray, “Dear God, let some word that is heard be yours.”[\[1\]](#)

I once heard a wise man say that since we are made in the image of God, everything we do and say either tells the truth about God, or it tells a lie about God. It seems to me that Fred Rogers showed millions of children what Father God is like. I am especially reminded of God’s own statement about Himself in Exodus 34:6:

The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth . . .

For decades, Mister Rogers demonstrated **compassion**: for people with different skin than his, for people with disabilities, for people going through hard times, and especially by showing unrelenting respect for children—their fears (such as haircuts and being sucked down the bathtub drain) and their pains (like divorce), and their celebrations.

Grace was a huge part of Mister Rogers’ worldview. He bestowed dignity and value on everyone because of his belief that all people deserve dignity and appreciation as God’s creations, made in His image. Who know how many little hearts God healed through the song “It’s You I Like”? In fact, when Joan Rivers had him as a guest on the Tonight Show, you can see grace wash over her like the warm blessing that it was:

God is **slow to anger**, and His servant Mister Rogers showed an amazing degree of patience and self-control in his shows. He always moved and spoke slowly and deliberately, as an antidote to the barrage of “Hurry up, hurry up!” children often hear from their frazzled, impatient caregivers.

God **abounds in lovingkindness and truth**, and apparently so did Mister Rogers. One of his quotes:

“There are three ways to ultimate success:

The first way is to be kind.

The second way is to be kind.

The third way is to be kind.”

This is a great quote, but countless people report that Fred Rogers *lived* it. He was the epitome of kindness—to everyone. One journalist reported a typical scene when he walked on the streets of New York:

“. . .but every time [the show’s producer Margy Whitmer] turned around, there was Mister Rogers putting his arms around someone, or wiping the tears off someone’s cheek, or passing around the picture of someone’s child, or getting on his knees to talk to a child. Margy couldn’t stop them, and she couldn’t stop him. “Oh, Mister Rogers, thank you for my childhood.” “Oh, Mister Rogers, you’re the father I never had.” “Oh, Mister Rogers, would you please just hug me?”

{2}

In the wake of the #metoo movement, ugly truths are emerging about certain celebrities. It’s good to be able to highlight one of the good guys, who shone his light to the glory of God as he nourished the souls of millions of children and anyone else who watched his TV show.

I think we are all hungry to know that we are loved, especially by God. I look forward to meeting him in heaven one day. I will close with this story I found on Facebook that powerfully expresses Mister Rogers’ legacy:

"A good portion of my pro-bono work is defending abused children. It's a cause close to my heart. In the course of my work I met a man who was an adult survivor. You wouldn't have known it looking at him. He was this gigantic Polynesian guy. Wild curly hair. I think of him every time I see Khal Drogo on GoT. He was counseling some of the little kids, and doing a fantastic job of it.

"I visited his home to get his opinion on something and I noticed a little toy on his desk. It was Trolley. Naturally curious, I asked him about it. This is what he told me:

"'The most dangerous time for me was in the afternoon when my mother got tired and irritable. Like clockwork. Now, she liked to beat me in discreet places so my father wouldn't see the bruises. That particular day she went for the legs. Not uncommon for her. I was knocked down and couldn't get back up. Also not uncommon. She gave me one last kick, the one I had come to learn meant 'I'm done now'. Then she left me there upstairs, face in the carpet, alone. I tried to get up, but couldn't. So I dragged myself, arm over arm, to the television, climbed up the tv cabinet and turned on the TV.

"'And there was Mr. Rogers. It was the end of the show and he was having a quiet, calm conversation with those hundreds of kids. In that moment, he seemed to look me in the eye when he said 'And I like you just for being you'. In that moment, it was like he was reaching across time and space to say these words to me when I needed them most.

"'It was like the hand of God, if you're into that kind of thing. It hit me in the soul. I was a miserable little kid. I was sure I was a horrible person. I was sure I deserved every last moment of abuse, every blow, every bad name. I was sure I earned it, sure I didn't deserve better. I *knew* all of these things ... until that moment. If this man, who I hadn't even met, liked me just for being me, then I couldn't be all bad. Then maybe someone could love me, even if it

wasn't my mom.

“‘It gave me hope. If that nice man liked me, then I wasn't a monster. I was worth fighting for. From that day on, his words were like a secret fortress in my heart. No matter how broken I was, no matter how much it hurt or what was done to me, I could remember his words, get back on my feet, and go on for another day.

“‘That's why I keep Trolley there. To remind me that, no matter how terrible things look, someone who had never met me liked me just for being me, and that makes even the worst day worth it to me. I know how stupid it sounds, but Mr. Rogers saved my life.’

“The next time I saw him, he was talking to one of my little clients. When they were done with their session, he helped her out of her chair, took both of her hands, looked her in the eyes and said: ‘And remember, I like you just for being you.’

“That, to me, is Mr. Rogers' most powerful legacy. All of the little lives he changed and made better with simple and sincere words of love and kindness.”

1.

www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/mister-rogers-saint/416838/

2.

www.esquire.com/entertainment/tv/a27134/can-you-say-hero-esq1198/

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