

How Should We Think About Pride Month?

How should Christ-followers think about Pride Month?

Well, first, in case you are not aware, Pride Month is a time of highlighting and celebrating everything LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender). You might have seen a few more letters tacked on—QQIAA (queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, ally).

It's hard NOT to notice it's Pride Month when rainbows suddenly appear on all kinds of products and logos. Many cities have Pride marches, much of which is not safe to broadcast on the evening news because the behavior in these parades is definitely not family-friendly.

How should believers think about it all?

We need to pass our thoughts and judgments through the filter of God's word. What does God think about Pride Month?

First, every single person who is part of the LGBT community is a precious soul that He made in His image, for whom Christ died. And very few who identify as LGBT have not sustained some sort of soul wound, which makes this promise in Isaiah 42:3 even dearer: "A bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice." So in terms of the individuals who participate in Pride Month, God knows each of them by name and He loves them, tenderly and great compassion.

God understands the heart cry of those in the LGBT community to belong, to be included and not excluded, to be visible and heard and understood and cared for, to hear that they matter. These are the heart desires of those who align under the Pride flag.

And God gets it, because those are legitimate desires that we all have because we're born that way. God made us that way, all of us, to long to be loved, accepted, and affirmed.

It means the world to those who have found community under the LGBT banner because they were "different," they were "other," so they often felt marginalized and ostracized from their families or school communities or religious communities.

So Pride Month is a call to love the people who celebrate it.

But that's not all.

God has also revealed His design and intention for human sexuality and gender identity, both in the Old Testament and, in the words of Jesus Himself, in the New Testament: "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?" (Matthew 19:4-5)

God made human beings male and female. It really is that simple, regardless of how complicated people's feelings can be about gender.

And He intended sexual expression to be limited to husband and wife within marriage, which we see by the Bible's 44 references to sexual immorality (sex outside of marriage) as sin.

In view of the LGBT community's desire for not just legitimacy but commendation in any and all sexual expression, we need to remember that God specifically forbade same-sex behavior in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable." In the New Testament, the apostle Paul expands this prohibition to include lesbianism in Romans 1:24-27:

Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. . . . Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men . . .

So how should Christians think about Pride Month? With discernment.

- Remembering that the people involved are precious to God, but the identity they are choosing falls short of the glory of God (the Bible's definition of sin, Romans 3:23) because it does not submit to and align with God's intention for human sexuality.
- Not being fooled by the slogan "Love is love," which is a slick gloss over the false declaration that calling something "love" automatically validates it. How about brother-sister incestuous "love"? How about adulterous "love"? How about polyamory (multiple partners in a relationship) "love"? And, especially since we have already started down the slippery slope, how long before there is a call to extend the sexual underpinnings of "love is love" to children and animals?
- Comparing one's view of all things LGBT to God's word. Those who identify as an Ally should ask themselves why they want to support behavior and an identity God calls sin.
- Taking seriously the sin of pride, holding two important ideas as equally important: Philippians 3:19 says those who "are proud of what they should be ashamed of" (such as those exhibiting their broken sexuality in Pride parades) are "enemies of the cross of Christ." But Proverbs 16:5 warns, "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD." So every single one of us needs to confess our sin of pride, of comparing ourselves to anyone else so we feel we are better than others. In fact, seeing the Pride flag during Pride Month would make a great reminder to examine ourselves to look for a prideful, judge-y heart, to confess it as sin and repent.

Many of those who have come out of homosexuality are deeply grieved by Pride Month because they know it encourages hurting, lonely, wounded people to try to find life where it can never be found. They know the truth of Jeremiah 2:13, where God says,

"For my people have done two evil things: They have abandoned me— the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all!"

How should a Christian think about Pride Month? With compassion and prayer for those caught in it, that they will turn to Jesus as the fountain of living water. And with humility for ourselves, to repent of any pride that comes from comparing ourselves to those waving rainbow flags. As Billy Graham said, "Never take credit for not falling into a temptation that never tempted you in the first place."

This blog post originally appeared at

blogs.bible.org/how-should-we-think-about-pride-month/ on June 15, 2021.

Heterosexual and Homosexual Marriages - Are Straight and Gay Marriages Identical?

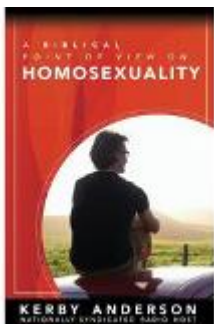
Although Kerby wrote this article before same-sex marriage was legalized, his assessment of homosexual relationships has not changed because the intrinsically disordered nature of same-sex relationships has not changed. He identifies the measurable benefits of heterosexual marriage over other types of family set ups. Then he considers the difficulties introduced by homosexual marriage in obtaining the same benefits. With the fundamental differences between them, considering them to be equivalent will not make it so.



Is there any difference between heterosexual marriage and homosexual marriage? We are told that there is essentially no difference between the two and thus marriage status should be granted to anyone of any sexual orientation. This is not true (as I discuss in more detail in my book *A Biblical Point of View on Homosexuality*^{1}).

Traditional, Heterosexual Marriage

Let's begin by talking about the benefits of traditional marriage. Traditional marriage is the foundation of civilization. So before we even consider the impact of homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and other alternative lifestyles, we should consider the benefits of traditional marriage to society.



An excellent summary of the studies done on married people can be found in the book, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better off Financially* by Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher.^{2} Here are just a few of the many findings from the research:

- Married people are much happier and likely to be less unhappy than any other group of people.
- Married people live up to eight years longer than divorced or never-married people.
- Married people suffer less from long-term illnesses than those who are unmarried.
- Married people are less likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors such as drug and alcohol abuse.

- Married people have twice the amount of sex as single people and report greater levels of satisfaction in the area of sexual intimacy.

A look at individual studies by social scientists also confirms these conclusions. For example, married men and women report greater satisfaction with family life.^{3} Married couples report greater sexual satisfaction.^{4} Married women report higher levels of physical and psychological health.^{5} Married people experience less depression.^{6}

Researchers at the Heritage Foundation have also compiled numerous statistics that also demonstrate the positive impact of marriage. Traditional marriages have higher incomes when compared to step families, cohabiting couples, or those who never married.^{7} Traditional marriages also result in lower welfare costs to society when compared to divorced couples or out-of-wedlock births.^{8} Married women are less likely to be victims of domestic violence, and married couples are more likely to be happy and less likely to attempt suicide.^{9}

The studies compiled by the Heritage Foundation also found many positive effects on children.^{10} For example, they found that:

- Children in married families are less likely to suffer serious child abuse.
- Children in married families are less likely to end up in jail as adults.
- Children in married families are less likely to be depressed as adolescents.
- Children in married families are less likely to be expelled from school.
- Children in married families are less likely to repeat a grade in school.
- Children in married families are less likely to have developmental problems.
- Children in married families are less likely to have behavioral problems.
- Children in married families are less likely to use drugs (marijuana, cocaine).
- Children in married families are less likely to be sexually active.

Children benefit from traditional marriage in the same way just as was previously mentioned adults. For example, they are better off financially. The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth found that child poverty dramatically increased outside of intact marriages.^{11} Children in married homes are generally healthier physically and emotionally when they reach adulthood than children from other home situations.^{12}

Although these are relatively recent studies, the conclusions have been known for much longer. In the 1930s, British anthropologist J.D. Unwin studied 86 cultures that stretched across 5,000 years. He found that when a society restricted sex to marriage, it thrived. However, he also found that when a society weakened the sexual ethic of marriage, it deteriorated and eventually disintegrated.^{13}

Differences Between Heterosexual Marriages and Homosexual Marriages

Are heterosexual couples and homosexual couples different? The popular media treats heterosexual couples and homosexual couples as if they are no different. One headline proclaimed, "Married and

Gay Couples Not All that Different,” and essentially said they were just like the couple next door.{14}

There is good reason to question that assumption. Dr. Timothy Dailey has compiled numerous statistics that demonstrate significant differences.{15} He shows that “committed” homosexual relationships are radically different from married couples in at least six ways: relationship duration, monogamy vs. promiscuity, relationship commitment, number of children being raised, health risks, and rates of intimate partner violence.

Consider the duration of a relationship. Gay activists often point to high divorce rates among married couples, suggesting that heterosexuals fare no better than homosexuals. Research shows, however, that male homosexual relationships last only a fraction of the length of most marriages. By contrast, the National Center for Health Statistics reported that 66% of first marriages last ten years or longer, with 50% lasting twenty years or longer.{16}

Various studies of homosexual relationships show a much different picture. For example, the Gay/Lesbian Consumer Online Census of nearly 8,000 homosexuals found that only 15% described their “current relationship” lasting twelve years or longer.{17} A study of homosexual men in the Netherlands published in the journal *AIDS* found that the “duration of steady partnerships” was one and a half years.{18} In a study of male homosexuality in reported in *Western Sexuality: Practice and Precept in Past and Present Times*, Pollak found that “few homosexual relationships last longer than two years, with many men reporting hundreds of lifetime partners.”{19}

Another key difference is “monogamy versus promiscuity.” Married heterosexual couples are more monogamous than the popular culture and media would have you believe. A national survey published in the *Journal of Sex Research* found that 77% of married men and 88% of married women had remained faithful to their marriage vows.{20} A national survey in *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States* came to essentially the same conclusions (75% of husbands and 85% of wives).{21}

By contrast, homosexuals were much less monogamous and much more promiscuous. In the classic study by Bell and Weinberg, they found that 43% of white male homosexuals had sex with 500 or more partners, with 28% having 1,000 or more sex partners.{22} And a Dutch study of partnered homosexuals, published in the journal *AIDS*, found that men with a steady partner nevertheless had an average of eight sexual partners per year.{23}

The authors of *The Male Couple* reported that in their study of 156 males in homosexual relationships lasting from 1 to 37 years, “Only seven couples have a totally exclusive sexual relationship, and these men all have been together for less than five years. Stated another way, all couples with a relationship lasting more than five years have incorporated some provision for outside sexual activity in their relationships.”{24} They also found that most homosexual men understood sexual relations outside the relationship to be the norm, and usually viewed standards of monogamy as an act of oppression.

A third difference between heterosexual and homosexual couples is “level of commitment.” Timothy Dailey argues: “If homosexuals and lesbians truly desired the same kind of commitment signified by marriage, then one would expect them to take advantage of the opportunity to enter into civil unions or registered partnerships.”{25} This would provide them with legal recognition as well as legal rights. However, it is clear that few homosexuals and lesbians have chosen to take advantage of these various unions (same-sex marriage, civil unions, domestic partnerships), suggesting a difference in commitment compared with married couples.

These three differences (along with others detailed by Timothy Dailey) demonstrate a significant difference between heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Gay and lesbian couples appear less likely to commit themselves to the type of monogamous relationship found in traditional marriage.

Is It Natural?

Many in the homosexual movement say that their feelings are natural. Often they even say that their feelings are God-given. So how could they be wrong? Years ago Debbie Boone sang a song with the lyrics, "How can it be so wrong when it feels so right?" That is the argument from many in the homosexual movement. It feels natural, so it must be natural.

But God's character as revealed in the Bible should be our standard. There are many sinful acts that feel natural, but that does not mean they are moral. Romans 1:26-27 makes it very clear that these passions are unnatural:

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

Homosexual desires and temptations may feel natural to some people, but they are not what God intends for human beings. Any sexual encounter outside of marriage is immoral. The Bible refers to the sin of sexual immorality nearly four dozen times. Homosexuality, along with fornication and adultery, are all examples of sexual immorality.

Although God created a perfect world (Genesis 1-2), it was spoiled by sin. The effects of sin impact us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Homosexual temptation, like other sexual temptations, is a result of the fall (Genesis 3). When Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees, He reminded them that God "created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'" (Matthew 19:4-5).

Although there is a concerted effort to push for homosexual marriage within our society, we have seen in this article that there are fundamental differences between heterosexual marriage and homosexual marriage. For more information on this topic, visit the Probe website and read many of our other articles on homosexuality. And you might pick up a copy of my book, *A Biblical Point of View on Homosexuality*.

Notes

1. Kerby Anderson, *A Biblical Point of View on Homosexuality* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008).
2. New York: Doubleday, 2000.
3. Linda J. Waite, *The Ties that Bind: Perspectives on Marriage and Cohabitation*, (New York: Aldine de Gruyter 2000), 368-391.
4. Scott Christopher, "Sexuality in Marriage, Dating, and Other Relationships: A Decade Review," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62, no. 4, November 2000: 999-1017.
5. Peggy McDonough, "Chronic Stress and the Social Patterning of Women's Health in Canada," *Social Science and Medicine*, 2002: 767-782.
6. Allan Horwitz, "Becoming Married and Mental Health: A Longitudinal Study of a Cohort of Young Adults," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, November 1996: 895-907.

7. Patrick Fagan, et. al., "The Positive Effects of Marriage: Economic Effects of Marriage," The Heritage Foundation, www.heritage.org/Research/Features/Marriage/economic.cfm.
8. Patrick Fagan, et. al., "The Positive Effects of Marriage: The Effects of Marriage on Welfare," The Heritage Foundation, www.heritage.org/research/features/marriage/welfare.cfm.
9. Patrick Fagan, et. al., "The Positive Effects of Marriage: The Effects of Marriage on Adults," The Heritage Foundation, www.heritage.org/research/features/marriage/adults.cfm.
10. Patrick Fagan, et. al., "The Positive Effects of Marriage: The Effects of Marriage on Children," The Heritage Foundation, www.heritage.org/research/features/marriage/children.cfm.
11. See the U.S. Department of Labor for the various longitudinal studies, www.bls.gov/nls/home.htm.
12. James Dobson, *Marriage Under Fire* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 54.
13. See J. D. Unwin, *Sexual Regulations and Human Behavior* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1933).
14. Robert Gebeloff and Mary Jo Patterson, "Married and gay couples are not all that different," *Times-Picayune*, 22 November 2003.
15. Timothy J. Dailey, "Comparing the lifestyles of homosexual couples to married couples," *Family Research Council Insight*, www.frc.org/get.cfm?i=IS04C02.
16. Matthew Bramlett and William Mosher, "First marriage dissolution, divorce and remarriage: United States," *National Center for Health Statistics*, 31 May 2001: 1.
17. "Largest gay study examines 2004 relationships," GayWire Latest Breaking Releases, www.glcensus.org.
18. Maria Xiridou, et. al., "The contribution of steady and casual partnership to the incidence of HIV infection among homosexual men in Amsterdam," *AIDS*, 17 (2003): 1031.
19. M. Pollack, "Male Homosexuality," in *Western Sexuality: Practice and Precept in Past and Present Times*, ed. Philippe Aries and Andre Bejin, trans. A. Forster (New York: Blackwell, 1985), 40-61.
20. Michael Wiederman, "Extramarital sex: prevalence and correlates in a national survey," *Journal of Sex Research*, 34 (1997): 170.
21. E. O. Laumann, et. al. *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 216.
22. A. P. Bell and M.S. Weinberg, *Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity Among Men and Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 308-309.
23. Xiridou, "The contribution of steady and casual partnership," 1031.
24. David McWhirter and Andrew Mattison, *The Male Couple: How Relationships Develop* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 252-253.
25. Dailey, "Comparing."

© 2008 Probe Ministries

Helping Teens Understand Homosexuality - Facts to Help Youth Withstand the Current Culture

Sue Bohlin provides practical ways to communicate with teens about common misunderstandings and the truth concerning homosexuality. Recognizing that teens deal with peer pressure to

experiment and feelings of same sex attraction, she provides real ways to help teens make their way through this maze of contradiction and confusion.



In this article we look at ways to communicate the truth about homosexuality to teens. We examine the lies they are told and the sexual pressure they are under. We also look at ways to help kids process their gender confusion, as well as address helpful ways to encourage teens who already identify themselves as gay or lesbian. And finally, we provide perspective on how to treat those who struggle with same-sex attraction in a compassionate and godly way. By looking at this topic, from a Christian, biblical worldview perspective, we can communicate the depth of God's love and His desire for us to experience the best life possible.

The Lies They Hear

In many schools and in the rest of the culture today, only one perspective is allowed to be heard. Consider four lies that are very familiar to teens today:

First, *"Homosexuality is normal and healthy."* It's neither. The fact that it simply occurs (in about 2% of the population) doesn't make it normal. When we look at the way males and females were designed to complement each other both emotionally and sexually, that tells us something about the nature of homosexuality, that something has gone wrong somewhere. This is not judging the people who experience same-sex attraction; it's like a red light on the dashboard of a car, denoting that something needs attention.

Acting physically on same-sex attractions is certainly not healthy. Those who do are at far greater risk for sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS; alcoholism and drug abuse; depression; emotionally exhausting relationships; and a shortened lifespan. {1} Please see the "Facts About Youth" website from the American College of Pediatricians, especially this article: Health Risks of the Homosexual Lifestyle.

Lie #2: *"If you're attracted to someone of the same sex, that means you're gay or lesbian."* Not so. It really means that there are unmet, God-given needs for love and attention that were supposed to be met earlier in life. Having crushes on other people, of both sexes, is also a normal part of adolescent development. It means teens are transitioning emotionally from child to adult.

The third lie is, *"Since you were born that way, you can't change."* First, there is no scientific evidence that anyone is born gay. It's a myth that has been repeated so often that people believe it. Second, thousands of people who were once gay have experienced significant changes in their attractions and behavior. {2} Change is possible.

The fourth lie is, *"Embrace and celebrate your gay identity, because gay life is cool."* Those in ministry to those dealing with unwanted homosexuality have heard many heartbreaking stories of the truth: a dark side of intense and difficult relationships, relational patterns of disillusionment and breakups, physical and emotional unhealthiness.

Countless people have said they wished they never entered the gay community in the first place, but it's hard to leave.

Teens and Sexual Pressure

Adolescents are under an extraordinary amount of sexual pressure. They live in a sex-saturated culture, and the messages they receive from the media and, unfortunately, in school, clearly communicate an expectation that sex is just part of having a social life. Rarely do they hear about the heart-wrenching consequences of being sexually active, both physically and emotionally. The agenda pushing sexual freedom is also engaged in trying to normalize homosexuality as well.

Teens are pushed to decide early if they are gay, straight, or bisexual, as young as elementary school. But kids in their early teens, much less even younger than that, are no more equipped to “decide” their sexual orientation than they are to choose a college major and career track. A landmark study done by the University of Minnesota determined that at age twelve, one fourth of the students were unsure of their sexual orientation. Their bodies were just beginning to experience the changes that would turn them from children into adults, and they were being asked if they were gay, straight, or bisexual. No wonder so many were confused! But by age seventeen, that number of kids unsure of their sexual orientation had dropped to 5%.^{3}

And psychiatrist Dr. Jeffrey Satinover says, “[W]ithout any intervention whatsoever, three out of four boys who think they’re gay at age 16 aren’t by 25. So if we’re going to treat homosexuality as a state, 75% of ‘gays’ become ‘non-gay’ spontaneously. That’s a statement which I consider ludicrous, but if you accept this tacit proposition—that being gay is an actual state, like being short or being tall, black or white—then in three out of four people that condition changes itself spontaneously. . . . That’s with no outside intervention, just the natural processes of development.”^{4}

We need to tell teens, “It’s too soon to ‘declare a major’ in your sexuality.”

Teens are also pressured to experiment with both sexes as the only way they can know their sexual orientation. It’s presented as nonchalantly as our cruise ship table partner suggesting we try escargot—“Hey, how can you know if you like it unless you try it out?”

Teenage sexual behavior can have lifelong consequences, but they are not in a position to recognize that. Their brains don’t finish developing until age twenty-five, and they tend to make decisions out of the region of the brain that controls emotion. So they are easily swayed to make dangerous and irresponsible choices, like engaging in any kind of sexual behavior.

Teens need to be encouraged to face the sexual pressures and stand against them.

Gender Insecurity

At a conference I attended, author and ministry leader Andy Comiskey^{5} shared a painful experience in junior high where one day, out of the blue, the whole school was abuzz with the rumor that Andy was gay. There was even graffiti about it on the wall. He struggled with his sexual identity, but he had never acted out. He walked into a classroom on an errand and on his way out, two boys called “Faggot!” He was crushed and humiliated. Later on, he made it into a self-fulfilling prophecy and immersed himself in the gay lifestyle.

I went up to him and asked, “If you could rewrite the script of that incident, knowing what you do today, what would it look like?” He said, “Oh, I wish there had been some sensitive adults, especially in the church, to talk freely with me and other kids about ‘gender insecurity.’ They wouldn’t even have to talk about homosexuality or use the word—many kids can relate to the idea of ‘gender insecurity.’ It would have been so freeing for me to have someone acknowledge that it’s a real thing, but it didn’t mean I was gay. I wish there were people who could have spoken truth into my life at

that point.”

One kind of truth that kids should hear is that around age ten, attraction for the same sex begins. This attraction is emotional, non-sexual, and involuntary. It doesn't mean teens are gay or lesbian; it means they are transitioning through normal adolescent development. We have to learn to attach to people of our same sex before we can learn to attach to people of the opposite sex. But most teens don't know this.

Some kids don't feel secure in their masculinity or femininity for a variety of reasons, usually having to do with not being affirmed by parents and peers. God gives each of us needs for attention, approval and affection. When those needs are not met, the onset of hormones can sexualize this “hole in the heart.” Some teens can find themselves longing for the attention, approval and affection of people of their same gender. When others put on them the false and hurtful labels of “homo,” “fag,” or “lez,” they can easily find themselves believing the lies.

When teens are not secure in their gender, they *don't* need to be pointed to gay groups at school. They need to be affirmed and encouraged to develop their innate, God-given masculinity or femininity, to see their gender as good. They need to have other kids reach out to make them feel “one of the guys” or “one of the girls.” They need time to finish growing up.

Teens Who Identify as Gay or Lesbian

Growing numbers of teens are self-identifying as gay or lesbian. In many circles, being gay—or claiming to be gay—is now considered cool, especially among girls.

Teenagers experiment with same-sex relationships for a variety of reasons. Some experience normal crushes on same-sex peers and think this means they are gay—or their friends *inform* them that's what it means. What it really means is that they are learning to form deep and intense attachments which is a necessary precursor to maintaining long-term adult relationships like marriage.

Others experiment with same-sex relationships out of a legitimate need to belong. Some kids are simply curious; they just want to try it out like a new shade of lipstick.

Some teens experiment with same-sex relationships because others have labeled them gay or lesbian, and they wonder, “Am I? Do they know something I don't know? Maybe I am and I need to go in that direction.” This is one reason it's so important to impress on all kids the absolute unacceptability of name-calling and other cruelties. It's not only bullying behavior, it can have terrible emotional consequences.

Some adolescents pursue same-sex relationships because they are anxious about growing into adolescence and the responsibilities of adulthood. So they hide behind immature and emotionally volatile same-sex feelings and behaviors.

Often, what teens are attracted to in same-sex peers are the characteristics they wish they had in themselves: popularity, good looks, a winsome personality, a strong physique. This kind of jealousy doesn't mean they are gay or lesbian; it means there is an area they need to build confidence in!

Most girls who get involved in same-sex relationships start out in friendships that grow increasingly controlling and needy. In these emotionally dependent relationships, girls can get so enmeshed with each other that their relationship turns physical.

Many people who later identify as gay or lesbian report feeling different from others, feeling like they don't fit in or belong. Girls can feel like they don't belong to the world of girls, and guys almost

always feel like they can't measure up in the world of males. This is gender insecurity, not homosexuality, but teens usually don't hear this message. They need to.

Labels such as "gay" and "lesbian" and "homo" and "dyke" are incredibly hurtful, and it is easy for those who are slapped with those labels to believe them. But God doesn't call anyone homosexual or lesbian; those labels are man's invention, not biblical truth. It's essential for teens to know who they are in God's sight—beloved, precious, and stamped with the imprint of His acceptance and delight.

When Teens Struggle with Same-Sex Attraction

If you know teens who are struggling with feelings of same-sex attraction, or who seem to be experiencing gender insecurity, let me make some suggestions on how to minister to them.

First, don't address the issue of homosexuality head-on. Same-sex strugglers are always wrestling with feelings of inferiority, rejection, shame and fear, so it's extremely uncomfortable for anyone to bring up the subject. The heart of the issue for kids who find themselves attracted to others of the same sex are these dark and negative feelings. It's much better to ask indirect questions that encourage them to talk about the underlying feelings of disconnection with a parent, or the ridicule of their peers, or depression and sadness.

Second, don't use any labels. Teens who struggle with their gender identity already have a huge struggle with feeling that the rest of the world has put an unwelcome label on them. The false, man-made labels of "gay" and "lesbian" are hurtful, false, and restricting.

Consider what it would be like if we created a label such as "angro" for people who are easily ticked off and walk around in a continual low-level state of hostility. What if people went around saying, "I'm an angry person. That's just the way I am—that's WHO I am. I'm an angro." They might believe they were born angry, that they have an "angro gene." Not only is the label of "angro" false and misleading, but it can lead people to believe the lie that it is a permanent state or condition rather than a description of one's current feelings.

That's what happened with the relatively recent labels of "gay" and "lesbian." They can become like jail cells, making people feel hopelessly trapped in a state or condition. It's much better to help teens deal with the fact that they are experiencing some attractions to their same gender, and those feelings are like the red light on the dashboard of a car. They mean there's something going on inside that needs some attention. And that's literally true: God creates all of us with the need for attention, affection and approval, and those are the things adolescents are craving when they have feelings for people of the same sex. The needs are legitimate; we need to help them be met in healthy ways. This is where the church and other Christian youth organizations can make all the difference in the world.

Third, communicate to kids who struggle that God did not make them gay. God doesn't make anyone gay, and there is no scientific evidence that there is a biological basis for homosexual feelings or behavior. Even if they feel that they were born gay, this is the result of being told a fairy tale. Were American kids born English speakers? That's all they ever knew, right? No, they weren't *born* English speakers, they were born *language* speakers. Which language they speak is a matter of the shaping influences of their upbringing. Kids who experience same-sex attraction were born to be relational creatures, but how those relationships shape their souls is a function of their temperaments, their home life, and how they relate to other kids.

Fourth, give them a safe place to process their feelings without being shamed or condemned. For many teens, this unfortunately rules out their home, school, or church. I'm sure it grieves God's

heart that for many people, church is the most unsafe place on the planet for those who struggle with various life-controlling sins and urges. But there is a great free, online support group for struggling youth, moderated by an experienced and understanding youth pastor, at www.livehope.org. Kids can safely talk to others like themselves and learn how intimacy with Jesus Christ brings healing and change to broken and wounded hearts.

Fifth, many students who experience same sex attraction often feel fake if they don't choose to identify with or act on their feelings. They have believed the lie that gay or lesbian is what they are. They want to be real. But getting real is becoming who God created them to be, despite their feelings of what those around them might say. Finding out who God says they are is the true path to being real and not fake.

The Call to Understanding and Compassion

Many teens feel, "I just don't get this whole gay/lesbian thing." That's perfectly understandable. Only 2-3% of the population deals with same gender attraction. The fact that it's such a huge issue in our culture is completely out of proportion to the actual number of people experiencing it.

Kids need to know a few things about those who do struggle with same-sex attractions and feelings. First, they didn't choose it. It's something people *discover*, not something they *decide on*. And almost every single person who discovers they have strong feelings and fantasies about the same sex is horrified and terrified by this discovery. It's a very painful part of their life, so it's important for others to be respectful and kind.

Second, having crushes and strong feelings for friends and teachers of the same sex is a normal part of adolescent development. It doesn't mean a teen is gay or lesbian. When other kids assure them that it does, it is slapping a false and hurtful label on them that they may find almost impossible to take off. If someone walked up to you and put a "Hi, My Name Is" nametag on you that had someone else's name on it, you probably wouldn't have any trouble taking it off and saying, "There's a mistake here—that's not who I am." But when kids do the same thing with the "nametag" of "gay" or "lesbian," they usually put it on kids who don't have the security and self-confidence to realize that's not who they are, and they can go through the rest of their lives believing a lie.

Third, be compassionate. People don't know who around them is struggling, either with their own same-sex desires and attractions, or the painful burden of knowing a family member or loved one has them. They only have to show contempt once for those who experience same-sex feelings to show that they're not a safe person.

Fourth, be respectful. That means cutting phrases like "Oh, that's so gay" out of their vocabulary. It means not throwing around words like "homo" or "fag" or "queer." Every gay joke or insult is like sticking a dagger in the heart of those who carry a painful secret.

The bottom line for helping teens understand homosexuality is to call them to see God's design as good, and show grace and compassion to those who don't see it. Be "Jesus with skin on" in both His holiness *and* His kindness.

Notes

1. Peter Freiberg, "Study: Alcohol Use More Prevalent for Lesbians," *The Washington Blade*, January 12, 2001, p. 21. Karen Paige Erickson, Karen F. Trocki, "Sex, Alcohol and Sexually Transmitted Diseases: A National Survey," *Family Planning Perspectives* 26 (December 1994): 261. Robert S. Hogg et al., "Modeling the Impact of HIV Disease on Mortality in Gay and Bisexual Men,"

International Journal of Epidemiology 26 (1997): 657.

2. Read a few of the testimonies at the Living Hope Ministries website, www.livehope.org.

3. www.freetobeme.com/yw_minn.htm

4. Homosexuality and Teens: An Interview with Dr. Jeffrey Satinover, Massachusetts Family Institute.

www.mafamily.org/Marriage%20Hearing%202003/satinover2.htm

5. Founder and Director of Desert Stream Ministries, author of *Pursuing Sexual Wholeness and Strength in Weakness*.

6. www.becomingreal.org

© 2005 Probe Ministries, updated 2019

See also: answers to many questions in “**Probe Answers Our E-Mail: Homosexuality**”

Addressing Anxiety in Tumultuous Times

Byron Barlowe connects the dots between the universal problem of anxiety, what brain science is teaching us about our minds, and how Scripture and spiritual disciplines can help. In a world consumed by violent riots and trauma surrounding the Covid virus, this is a timely topic that God and science speak to well.

Millions of people worldwide are battling anxiety in a tumultuous time. The Coronavirus pandemic response has created a new abnormal: heightened fear of sickness and death, economic damage, and social isolation. Loneliness is the number one health crisis in America according to many epidemiologists, psychiatrists, and social scientists.^{1} While we’re all still reeling from this, racial strife has erupted into looting, killings, and anarchy in American streets.



Mental health is an increasing concern too. One study found that during the spring 2020 mass quarantine, prescriptions for anti-anxiety meds spiked.^{2} A San Francisco area hospital has seen more deaths by suicide than by Covid-19, prompting a call for an end to mass shutdowns.^{3} *It’s been a perfect storm of stress.*

Are there real solutions *right now*? Yes, brain science is confirming the truths and promises proclaimed in Scripture in exciting ways! We have wonderfully adaptive minds—especially when they are focused on God. These built-in mind-morphing capabilities show the genius of our design as Image-bearers of God. Audiologist, cognitive researcher and outspoken Christian Dr. Caroline Leaf writes, “As an individual, you are capable of making mental and emotional change in your life. Through your thinking, you can actively recreate thoughts and, therefore, knowledge in your mind.”^{4}

And this has profound implications for true hope. Leaf continues: “Thoughts are real, *physical* things that occupy mental real estate. Moment by moment, every day, you are changing the structure of

your brain through your thinking [it's happening right now as you read]. *When we hope, it is an activity of the mind that changes the structure of our brain in a positive and normal direction.*" {5} The biblical book of Hebrews defines faith as "the *substance* of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). The thankful, attentive, willfully hopeful mind creates positive emotions, thoughts, and acts of the will. In other words, *we significantly control whether we have a healthy soul.*

Dallas Willard writes, "The transformation of the self away from a life of fear and insufficiency takes place as we fix our mind upon God as he truly is." As Scripture teaches, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." In this article we'll explore this transformation.

Morphing Your Mind—It's Mostly Up to You!

Everyday stress is hard enough—but what about work-related anxiety? Money? Riots, memories of abuse, bullying, and abandonment? We have little control over family, culture or epidemics. But we can make amazing internal changes through our responses. Science and Scripture *agree* on this.

The transforming mind-renewal encouraged by Scripture is possible for us all, especially for people who have invited God to lead their lives. We can intentionally train our minds to reshape our brains—we are *not* perpetual victims of our past or circumstances. Nor are humans mere products of matter in motion. Dr. Caroline Leaf, author of *Switch on Your Brain*, claims that "Choice is real, and free will exists. You are able to stand outside yourself, observe your own thinking, consult with God, and [work with him to] change the negative, toxic thought or grow a healthy, positive thought. When you do this, your brain responds with a positive neurochemical rush and structural changes that improve your intellect, health, and peace." {6}

Even traumatic memories can be starved, defanged, broken down, and replaced. Brought into conscious awareness, they can become plastic enough to be recreated. Leaf explains that "Neurons that don't get enough signal (that is, rehearsing of the negative event) will start firing apart, wiring apart, pulling out, and destroying the emotion attached to the trauma." Also, desirable brain chemicals that bond and remold chemical connections, increase focus and attention, and increase feelings of peace and happiness begin to weaken traumatic memories even more. So bad memories, hatred, hurt, and other negative thoughts and emotions that form toxic beliefs: "If they stop firing together, they will no longer wire together. This leads to . . . rebuilding new ones." {7}

Ideas have consequences and our beliefs guide our behavior. In the words of King Solomon, "As a man thinks in his heart, so he is." {8} That is, we construct frameworks of beliefs and *then* speak and act from them.

Science seems to confirm this biblical view of self-control. Measuring magnetic fields, electrical impulses, chemical effects, photons, vibrations, and quantum energy paints a picture of intricately [networking] neurotransmitters, proteins, and energy—that is, signals—that change the brain's landscape. {9} This "neuroplasticity [seems to be] God's design for renewing the mind." {10}

And there's nothing magic about it: overcoming anxiety can be helped a lot through habits of the mind, heart, and soul.

Mindfulness & Meditation—Self-Control and Seeking God in Silent Solitude

It's no wonder that the concept of "mindfulness" has become a "thing" these days. Meditation and concentration are new-old survival skills. How do they work?

Dr. J.P. Moreland, noted philosopher and author of *Finding Quiet: My Story of Overcoming Anxiety and The Practices That Brought Peace*, candidly shares his struggles with anxiety and the need he had for medications. He also discovered the power of seeking God in self-directed solitude. He emphasizes sustained habits of the praising, thankful, and self-controlled soul.

Mindful meditation is not like taking a drug, is not a quick fix, or denying the senses to rid oneself of desire.{11} “By charting new pathways in the brain, mindfulness can change the banter inside our heads from chaotic to calm.”{12} New habits are formed over time. When it comes to our minds, “practice doesn’t make perfect; it makes permanent.”{13}

Remaining at rest via the practice of spiritual disciplines takes advantage of our mind’s ability to “move into a highly intelligent, self-reflective, directed state.” And the more often we go there, the more “we get in touch with the deep, spiritual part of who we are.” This exercise switches brain modes in a way that can create wisdom and potential connection with God.{14} As Jesus taught his disciples, “Keep awake (give strict attention, be cautious and active) and watch and pray, that you may not come into temptation.”{15} We can mentor our own minds, settle our souls, habituate our hearts, and free our spirits to respond to God. Brain science is catching up on this reality.

So, what’s going on physically when we stop to meditate in focused solitude and silence? A post at *Mindful.org* claims, “The impact that mindfulness exerts on our brain is borne from routine: a slow, steady, and consistent reckoning of our realities, and the ability to take a step back, become more aware, more accepting, less judgmental, and less reactive. . . . Mindfulness over time can make the brain, and thus [ourselves], more efficient regulators, with a penchant for pausing to respond to our world instead of mindlessly reacting.”{16} How different would social media conversations be—especially on politics and race—if more people practiced patient contemplation!

Various regions of our brains change while meditating. The “fight or flight” area actually shrinks in size.{17} It’s a real chill pill!

God keeps “him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.”{18}

Thankfulness and Happiness—Healthy Habits of the Mind & Heart

In trying times, we all want to return to happiness. It’s a God-given right to pursue it, according to America’s founders. The biblical worldview recognizes the inherent brokenness of both creation and human beings, so it is no surprise that confusion, discord, and tragedy—along with evil spiritual powers—“steal, kill, and destroy”{19} our joy. What can be done?

Christian philosopher J.P. Moreland writes, “You have it in your power to begin a regimen of choices, assuming you would choose the right things, and form a habit of this that can *substantially improve your happiness and decrease or get rid of anxiety*. There really is hope.”{20} Our non-conscious mind turns thoughts over and over. Through spiritual disciplines, we bring these into our conscious awareness, which manipulates actual proteins, creating overhauled memories. Intentionally bringing God to mind—His attributes, the wonder of creation and His blessings, promises, answered prayers—such a focus leads to a cycle of good thinking, feeling, and *knowing* that turns into believing real truth. Faith is a gift so we’re not alone in doing this. But it is up to us to put to use the gifts described here to “work out [our] salvation with [reverence and proper humility].”{21}

Remember, we have a strong influence in reshaping our own brains—especially with God’s help. Secular scientists are discovering the wonderful power of thankfulness. Scientific studies prove seven benefits according to *PsychologyToday.com*. Gratitude improves relationships, physical and mental health, sleep, self-esteem, and mental resilience. It even reduces aggression, the urge for

revenge. Scripture aligns with physical reality again when it tells us: “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”{22}

Moreland jokes, “If we’re not careful, we may even come to think we were designed to flourish best when we are thankful and grateful! Yet as exciting as these psychological studies are, we didn’t need them to know the importance and value of expressing gratitude and thanksgiving to God. The Bible insists on this . . . [it’s] filled to overflowing with exhortations to be grateful to God and express thanksgiving to him.”{23} As King David famously prayed in Psalm 23, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life”—he trusted a good God to lead, protect, and bless him. That’s joy far beyond happiness!

Takeaways & Practical Applications

Brain networks form an inner life of the mind. We can switch between various networks constantly. Like a mom monitoring kids running around inside several contained rooms, this enables us to control the controllable—our reactions to events and circumstances. Brain scans confirm how we capture and police rogue thoughts in ways prescribed in Scripture: “We . . . take every thought captive to obey Christ.”{24}

UCLA researchers address how our habitual non-conscious thoughts can drive anxiety—negative self-talk like:

- “I’ll be in real trouble if...”
- “What if so and so happens next week?”
- “I’ll probably fail that exam!”

“It’s what we say to ourselves in response to any particular situation that mainly determines our mood and feelings.”{25}

“Forming a new habit requires doing things you may not want to do in the early stages of formation,” as any coach or teacher will tell you.

For retraining our brains, experts have devised methods like **The Four Step Solution**:

It goes as follows:{26}

Step 1: Relabeling: call out thoughts as having no necessary connection with reality: tell yourself “That is a destructive lie.” Call on Proverbs 4:23, “Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life.”{27}

Step 2: Reframing: take the power out of the bad thoughts. Reset your perception of the deceptive message by being mindful that it exists, its content, and how you are now feeling by correctly categorizing the distorted message. Bad self-talk includes:

- all or nothing thinking (for example: “it was a *total* failure”)
- overgeneralizing
- singling out one thing to focus on

- catastrophizing (or making too big a deal out of things) and
- discounting the positive

Reframing them creates stable memories formed by repeated updating.

Step 3: Refocusing: Set your mind on anything else—distract yourself from the negative thoughts. Stop obsessing! Get into “the flow” of something. Focus elsewhere. And don’t ruminate about the message—analyzing it will deepen the grooves in your brain.

Step 4: Revaluating: After a while, reflect on how you did Steps 1-3. Recommit to repeat these steps throughout the day.

Over 21 days, a “newly formed neural network” will decay in less than a month: thoughts are like muscles that atrophy and die or get stronger with use. {28} Starve the bad, feed the good.

As Paul instructed the Philippian church, dwell on what is good and pure, true and worthy of praise. {29}

Notes

1. Senator Ben Sasse, *Them: Why We Hate Each Other and How to Heal*, quoted by Richard Doster in Christian Healthcare Newsletter, June 2020, “Can the Church solve the country’s worst health problems?”
2. Nick Givas, Fox News, “Prescriptions for anti-anxiety meds spike amid coronavirus outbreak, new report finds,” posted April 18, 2020.
www.foxnews.com/health/prescriptions-anti-anxiety-meds-spike-amid-coronavirus.
3. Amy Hollyfield, “Suicides on the rise amid stay-at-home order, Bay Area medical professionals say,” posted May 21, 2020, abc7news.com/suicide-covid-19-coronavirus-rates-during-pandemic-death-by/6201962.
4. Dr. Caroline Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain: The Key to Peak Happiness, Thinking and Health*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013, p. 19 (emphasis mine).
5. Ibid.
6. Leaf, 39.
7. Leaf, 64.
8. Proverbs 23:7.
9. Leaf, 47.
10. Leaf, 65.
11. As with Buddhist meditation practices seeking utter emptiness.
12. Jennifer Wolkin, Mindful.org, “How the Brain Changes When You Meditate,” posted September 20, 2015, www.mindful.org/how-the-brain-changes-when-you-meditate.
13. J.P. Moreland, *Finding Quiet: My Story of Overcoming Anxiety and the Practices that Brought Peace*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 67.
14. Leaf, 82.
15. Matthew 26:41.
16. Ibid. Wolkin
17. Various Authors, *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*, Volume 191, Issue 1, 30 January 2011, Pages 36-43. Posted Nov. 10, 2010:
www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S092549271000288X.
18. Isaiah 26:3.
19. John 10:10.
20. *Finding Quiet*, 54-55 (emphasis mine).

21. Ephesians 2:12, Amplified Bible.
22. Philippians 4: 6-7, New Living Translation.
23. *Finding Quiet*, 113.
24. 2 Corinthians 10:5.
25. Psychologists Edmund Bourne and Lorna Garano, cited by Moreland.
26. Entire section, *Finding Quiet*, p. ?
27. Proverbs 4:23, CSB.
28. Leaf, 151.
29. Philippians 4:8.

©2020 Probe Ministries

Grace and Truth About LGBT

Sue Bohlin provides a compassionate, biblically based look at what is happening as LGBT ideology has taken root in the culture.

What Does God Think About LGBT?

This article is about grace and truth in the context of LGBT, those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. What does God think about people for whom this is their primary (or even secret) identity?



After 20-plus years of walking with dear friends dealing with unwanted same-sex attraction, the very first thing that comes to my mind is the deep compassion and tenderness of our God toward wounded and deceived people that He loves very much. I am reminded of Isaiah's words (42:3), "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out."

People *discover* attractions toward those of the same sex. They don't initially choose them. These disordered feelings are like the warning lights on the dashboard of a car. They are saying, "Something's wrong under the hood; check it out!" So in the beginning, same-sex attractions constitute *temptation* rather than sin, but it easily crosses over to sin when people choose to feed and nurture thought patterns that God's word says are sin.

And God's word has always called sexual behavior outside of marriage between a man and woman, sin. That's because sex is deeply spiritual as well as physical, and He wants to protect us from the harmful consequences of sexual sin. His word will last forever, and it doesn't change. So I believe God is grieved when people reject His clear biblical statements about sexual sin, as is now happening in many churches and individuals.

God's word calls us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. An important part of the

Kingdom message is that God changes believers more and more into the likeness of Jesus. That means that God endorses *change*, which makes sense since growth and change are an intrinsic part of life.

But the cultural narrative says that your sexuality can't be changed. If people don't want their broken same-sex attractions, and seek help recovering God's intended design for them, it is becoming illegal to do that. It's labeled as "Conversion therapy." But if someone says they're transgender and seek to inject their healthy body with artificial hormones and mutilate it with surgery to pretend they are something they're not, that's called "gender affirmation." Yes, it's backward.

God addressed this backward thinking in Isaiah 5:20—"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."

Back to the cultural narrative says that your sexuality can't be changed. That's not what some social scientists have found, which is that sexuality can be quite fluid and changeable.^{1} There is no magic switch to flip from homosexual to heterosexual; but when people invite God into the woundings and deficits of their earlier life and receive healing in their souls, some can develop attractions to the opposite sex. I have personally seen this happen multiple times. The problem is that people aren't telling their stories, or when they try, they aren't believed.

Disordered thinking and unnatural desires are not too hard for God to handle. Remember, He can raise the dead!

Cultural Lies vs. God's Truth

There is a massive clash between the lies of our sex-saturated culture, and the eternal truth of God's word.

CULTURE'S LIE: Who I am is a sexual being. Whether it's a culture or an individual, when God is left out of the equation, sex is elevated to the #1 most important spot because it's so powerful and a source of such intense pleasure (or can be). So people define themselves by their sexuality.

GOD'S TRUTH: Who I am is God's beloved creation. Made in the image of God, created for intimacy and fellowship with Him, my worth proven by what the Son was willing to pay for me: His very life.

CULTURE'S LIE: Sex is a need and a right for everyone to experience. Many people believe it is on the same level of necessity as food, water and sleep.

GOD'S TRUTH: Sex is so powerful it is to be contained only within marriage between one man and one woman. The mingling of bodies and souls through sex is deeply spiritual as well as physical. God's prohibitions against sex outside of marriage are His gift to us, meant for our protection from the painful consequences of sexual sin. They are like guard rails on a treacherous mountain road, intended to keep us from going off the cliff to pain and destruction.

CULTURE'S LIE: I create my own identity depending on what I feel. Untethered from a connection to God as Creator, people live out the sad, repeated description of Israel in the book of Judges, where "all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes." (Judges 17:6, for one).

GOD'S TRUTH: My identity is who my Creator says I am. All of us exist because God wanted us and hand-crafted each of us (Psalm 139). Feelings are real but they're not reliable. Jeremiah 17:9 instructs us on why our feelings can't be trusted: "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?"

CULTURE'S LIE: Gender is whatever we want it to be. Biological sex has been separated from gender (how one feels about maleness and femaleness). (Personally, this strikes me as illegitimate as proclaiming that the white keys on a piano are bad and the black keys are good.)

GOD'S TRUTH: God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:27) The first words in the room when a baby is born are still, "It's a girl!" or "It's a boy!" Gender is still binary because God still creates only male and female.



CULTURE'S LIE: I can create my own reality. For example, recently a man abandoned his wife and seven children, announcing his chosen identity of a 6-year-old girl. {2}



Another man, deciding his identity is a female dragon, cut off his ears and nose, dyed his eyes, and inserted horns in his forehead. {3}

GOD'S TRUTH: There is objective truth and objective reality because God is real and true. We do not have the freedom to dismiss what is objectively true and real; $2 + 2$ will always be 4, not 7 or 200, and gravity will always be operational on the planet. These things are real and true because a real and true God rooted His creation in His own nature.

CULTURE'S LIE: "Born this way." This lie has so much traction because it's repeated so often people assume it to be true.

GOD'S TRUTH: No Evidence. There is actually no scientific evidence of a gay gene or any other determiner of same-sex attraction. And in identical twins (who share the same DNA), when one identifies as gay or lesbian, the other one only identifies as gay or lesbian about 11% of the time. If homosexuality were a genetic issue, the correspondence would be 100%.

American culture continues to pump out the illusion—the fantasy, the myth—that sexuality is the most important thing about life and about us, and that sexual identity and expression is where life is found.

Life is found in Jesus, and nowhere else.

Transgender: The Emperor's New Clothes

In the old story of the Emperor's New Clothes, scam artists appeal to the pride of a conceited emperor, claiming they can create a magical outfit for him that is invisible to anyone who is unfit for their position, stupid, or incompetent. He parades his new suit of clothes before his subjects, which of course no one can see because it's a scam. But no one will say they don't see it lest they be seen as stupid. Finally a little boy pipes up and blurts out the truth: "But he isn't wearing anything at all!" {4}

The transgender narrative is the equivalent of the Emperor's New Clothes. The objective truth is that there is no such thing as magical clothes, and there's no such thing as changing genders. People can only deceive themselves (and others), damage their bodies, and mutilate themselves—but our God-ordained maleness and femaleness, our biological sex, is stamped into every cell of our bodies.

It's especially alarming when parents, educators and other authorities feed a child's fantasy that they are the other gender. We would never do that if a child declared herself to be a cat or a unicorn; we would gently and lovingly correct her wrong thinking by speaking the truth to her. But if a boy insists he's a girl or vice versa, many progressive-minded adults are so proud of their "wokeness" that they rush to board the child on the transgender train.

Most often, children who reject their gender are reacting to gender stereotypes. Girls can think that boys get to do cooler stuff than girls, and sensitive boys who love pink and purple sparkly things can think it's better to be a girl. Both sexes who experience abuse can believe that it would be safer to be the opposite sex.

Children never see the big picture—that's why God gives them parents to help them see their world more accurately. One little boy told his parents he wanted to be a girl but no one inquired why, they just jumped on the transgender bandwagon. Turns out that when his baby sister was born and consumed a lot of attention because she was very sick, he concluded that if he were a girl, he would get the same attention.

Transgender - Part 2

When a person experiences a conflict between their biological sex and their internal sense of whether they are male or female, that's called gender dysphoria. Various studies have shown that this very painful emotional state resolves itself about 85% of the time simply by going through puberty. It appears to reset things. So the best and wisest treatment is no treatment at all, but of course wise parents and other adults will continue to speak truth about a child's identity—especially the truth that God who is good, loving and wise chose their gender for them, so we need to receive it as His gift.

This whole transgender phenomenon has ignited where children have access to the internet on their smart phones. The illusion of transgender is easily spread by social contagion. Children and teens talk about their beliefs that they are transgender on social media, and their impressionable peers are influenced to start thinking and feeling the same way. The popularity of social media has sped up the spread of this fantasy, especially on the Tumblr platform. One academic who studied the reports of parents alarmed by sudden changes in their children coined the term "rapid onset gender dysphoria." {5}

Anyone who has been around adolescents for any length of time doesn't need to be surprised by this dynamic. Teens copy each other in all kinds of ways.

Many adolescents who identify as transgender suffer from anxiety, depression, and self-injury.{6} There is a whole constellation of painful mental health struggles all bound up together. We are also finding that a disproportionate number of teens who explore the transgender identity are on the autism spectrum.{7}

They already feel the shame of being different, of being “other than,” and it’s easy for them to mislabel themselves as transgender instead of just different.

One final note on transgender: we must not go along with the Emperor’s New Clothes story that athletes can compete as the opposite sex just by declaring themselves so. It’s not just heartbreaking, it’s *wrong* for teenage boys to rob girl athletes of scholarships{8}, not to mention dignity, by unfairly competing against them and demanding to use their restrooms and locker rooms.{9}

Why Have So Many Christians and Entire Churches Become Pro-Gay?

More and more individuals and churches have come out in support of homosexuality and gay marriage. Why is that?

I think there are two big reasons so many confessing believers in Christ have allowed themselves to be more shaped by the culture than by the truth of God’s word, drifting into spiritual compromise and even into apostasy, which means abandoning the truth of one’s faith.

Reason One: Rejecting the Authority of God’s Word

The first reason is that millions of people are rejecting the authority of God’s word.

The bitter fruit of several decades of shallow preaching, teaching and discipleship is that many believers have been especially vulnerable to Satan’s deceptive question to Eve in the Garden of Eden: “Did God really say . . .?” When Christians ignore or flat-out reject the unmistakably clear biblical statements condemning homosexual behavior, they are playing into the enemy’s temptation to justify disobedience by making feelings and perceptions more important than God’s design and standards.

There are now two streams of thought on same-sex relationships and behavior: the Traditional, Biblical View and the Revisionist View.{10} The Revisionist View basically says, “It doesn’t matter what the Bible actually says, it doesn’t mean what 2000 years of church history has said it means, it means what we want it to say.” And we want it to say that God endorses all relationships that invoke love.”

Reason Two: Snagged by the Gay Agenda

When people don’t submit themselves to the truth of the Word of God, they are easily shaped and swayed by the six points of a brilliantly designed “Gay Manifesto” spelled out in a book called *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s*.{11} This gay agenda has been executed perfectly in the United States. (Note: these are the authors’ words, not mine.)

1. *Talk about gays and gayness as loudly and often as possible.*
2. *Portray members of the LGBTQ community as victims.* Indoctrinate mainstream America that members of the LGBTQ community were “born this way.”
3. *Give protectors a just cause: anti-discrimination.*

4. *The use of TV, music, film and social media to desensitize mainstream Americans to their plight as gay people.*

5. *Portray Gays and Lesbians as pillars in society. Make gays look good.*

6. *Once homosexuals have begun to gain acceptance, anti-gay opponents must be vilified, causing them to be viewed as repulsive outcasts of society.*

This is how I see how we got to this place where so many people have been deceived. They didn't anchor themselves to the Truth of the Word of God, and they opened themselves to the cultural brine of Kirk and Madsen's plan to overhaul straight America.

I will close with four personal observations about this situation:

1. Christians have bought into the culture's worship of feelings over God's unchanging revelation
2. People love how making themselves an ally and protector of the underdog makes them feel, despite God's design and standards for sexuality and marriage.
3. Not enough of us Christ-followers are living lives that demonstrate the beauty and satisfaction of abiding in Christ.
4. The church has been dismal at loving those who struggle with their sexuality and showing them the grace that is in God's heart toward them. It's essential to both speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), and seek to show love filled with truth.

Notes

1. www.sciencealert.com/sexual-orientation-continues-to-change-right-through-our-teens-and-into-adulthood
2. www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3356084/I-ve-gone-child-Husband-father-seven-52-leaves-wife-kids-live-transgender-SIX-YEAR-OLD-girl-named-Stefonknee.html
3. unbelievable-facts.com/2016/04/transgender-dragon-lady.html
4. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Emperor%27s_New_Clothes
5. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapid_onset_gender_dysphoria_controversy
6. www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2020-04-10/transgender-teens-have-high-rates-of-depression-suicidal-thoughts
7. www.com/science/article/pii/S1750946719301540
8. www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2020/06/19/transgender-athletes-robbing-girls-chance-win-sports-column/4856486002/
9. www.dailysignal.com/2015/12/21/why-these-high-school-girls-dont-want-transgender-student-a-in-the-ir-locker-room/
10. bible.org/article/reformation-church-doesn-t-need-answering-revisionist-pro-gay-theology-part-i
11. Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen, *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s* (New York: Doubleday, 1989).

Coddling of the American Mind

Drawing on the book The Coddling of the American Mind, Kerby Anderson examines the insanity on college campuses where students cannot handle ideas and people they disagree with.

In this article we will talk about what is happening on college campuses, and even focus on why it is happening. Much of the material is taken from the book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*. {1}



Greg Lukianoff was trying to solve a puzzle and sat down with Jonathan Haidt. Greg was a first amendment lawyer working with the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). He was trying to figure out why students (who used to support free speech on campus) were now working to prevent speakers from coming on campus and triggered by words or phrases used by professors.

Greg also noticed something else. He has suffered from bouts of depression and noticed some striking similarities with some of the comments by students. He found in his treatment that sometimes he and others would engage in “catastrophizing” and assuming the worst outcome. He was seeing these distorted and irrational thought patterns in students.

After a lengthy discussion they decided to write an article about it for *The Atlantic* with the title, “Arguing Towards Misery: How Campuses Teach Cognitive Distortions.” The editor suggested the more provocative title, “The Coddling of the American Mind.” The piece from *The Atlantic* was one of the most viewed articles of all time and was then expanded to this book.

That book used the same title: *The Coddling of the American Mind*. Jonathan was on *Point of View* last year to talk about the book. The authors believe that these significant psychological changes that have taken place in the minds of students explain much of the campus insanity we see on campus today.

They point out that two terms rose from obscurity into common campus parlance. Microaggressions are small actions or word choices that are now thought as a kind of violence. Trigger warnings are an alert the professors now must use if they may be discussing a topic that might generate a strong emotional response.

Before we talk about some of the insight in the book, it is worth mentioning that though there is a psychological component to all of this insanity, there is also an ideological component. When the original article appeared, Heather MacDonald asked if “risk-adverse child-rearing is merely the source of the problem. For example, why aren’t heterosexual white males demanding safe spaces?” {2} They all had the same sort of parents who probably coddled many of them.

It would probably be best to say that the mixture of psychological deficits also with the liberal, progressive ideological ideas promoted on campus have given us the insanity we see today. We have had liberal teaching on campuses for a century, but the problem has become worse in the last

decade because of the psychological issues described in the book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*.

Three Untruths (Part 1)

The book can easily be summarized in three untruths that make up the first three chapters of the book. The first is the “Untruth of Fragility: What Doesn’t Kill You Makes You Weaker.” Nietzsche’s original aphorism was, “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” The younger generation has turned this idea on its head.

It is true that some things are fragile (like china teacups), while other things are resilient (and can withstand shocks). But they also note that some things are *antifragile*. In other words, they actually require stressors and challenges to grow. Our muscles are like that. Our immune system is like that. And university education is supposed to be like that. Students are supposed to be challenged by new ideas, not locked away in “safe spaces.”

Unfortunately, most young people have been protected by a culture that promotes what they refer to as “safetyism.” It has become a cult of safety that is obsessed with eliminating threats (whether real or imagined) to the point where fragility becomes expected and routine. And while this is true for the millennial generation (also called Generation Y), it is even truer for the iGen generation (also called Generation Z) who are even more obsessed with safety.

Part of the problem in these untruths is what they call “concept creep.” Safety used to mean to be safe from physical threats. But that has expanded to the idea that safety must also include emotional comfort. In order to provide that comfort, professors and students a few years ago introduced the idea of creating “safe spaces” for students. And in order to keep those students emotionally safe in the classroom, professors must issue “trigger warnings” so these students don’t experience trauma during a classroom lecture or discussion.

The second untruth is the “Untruth of Emotional Reasoning: Always Trust Your Feelings.” You can get yourself in some difficult circumstances quickly if you always trust your emotions. It is easy in this world to get frustrated, discouraged, and even depressed. Psychologists have found that certain patients can get themselves caught in a feedback loop in which irrational negative beliefs cause powerful negative feelings. We are seeing that on college campuses today.

Psychologists describe “the cognitive triad” of depression. These are: “I’m no good” and “My world is bleak” and “My future is hopeless.” Psychologists have effective ways of helping someone break the disempowering feedback cycle between negative beliefs and negative emotions. But very few adults (parents, professors, administrators) are working to correct mistaken ideas.

Three Untruths (Part 2)

In a college classroom, students are apt to make some sweeping generalization and engage in simplistic labeling of the lecture or reading material. In that case, we would hope that a professor would move the discussion by asking questions or even challenging the assertion.

Instead, many professors and colleges go along with the student comments. In fact, many even argue that any perceived slight adds up to what today are called “microaggressions.” In many cases, slights may be unintentional and actually wholly formed from the listener’s interpretation.

Here is how it develops. First, you prevent certain topics from being discussed in class. Next, you

prevent certain speakers from coming to campus because they might present a perspective that aggrieved students believe should not be discussed. In the book is a chart illustrating how many speakers have been disinvited from universities. Five years ago, the line jumps up significantly.

The third untruth follows from that assumption. It is the “Untruth of Us Versus Them: Life is a Battle Between Good People and Evil People.” The authors argue that “the human mind is prepared for tribalism.” They even provide psychological research demonstrating that. But that doesn’t mean we have to live that way. In fact, conditions in society can turn tribalism up, down, or off. Certain conflicts can turn tribalism up and make them more attentive to signs about which team a person may be on. Peace and prosperity usually turn tribalism down.

Unfortunately, in the university community, distinctions between groups are not downplayed but emphasized. Distinctions defined by race, gender, and sexual preference are given prominence. Mix that with the identity politics we see in society, and you generate the conflict we see almost every day in America.

The authors make an important distinction between two kinds of identity politics. Martin Luther King, Jr. epitomized what could be called “common-humanity identity politics.” He addressed the evil of racism by appealing to the shared morals of Americans using the unifying language of religion.

That is different from what we find on college campuses today that could be called “common-enemy identity politics.” It attempts to identify a common enemy as a way to enlarge and motivate your tribe. Their slogan sounds like this: Our battle for identity and survival is a battle between good people and bad people. We’re the good guys and need to defeat the bad guys.

An Example: Evergreen State College

One good example of how these untruths play out can be found at what happened on a college campus in Olympia, Washington. The entire story is described in chapter five but also is featured prominently in the opening chapter of the book *No Safe Spaces* and in the movie with the same title.

Just a few years ago, Evergreen State College was probably best known as the alma mater for rapper Macklemore and Matt Groening, the creator of *The Simpsons*. That all changed with an email biology professor Bret Weinstein sent.

In the past, the school had a tradition known as the “National Day of Absence.” Usually, minority faculty and students leave the campus for a day to make a statement. But in 2017, the college wanted to change things and wanted white students and faculty to stay away from campus.

Professor Weinstein argued in an email that there is a difference between letting people be absent and telling people “to go away.” And he added that he would show up for work. When he did, he was confronted by a mob of students. When the administration tried to appease the demonstrators, things got worse.

Weinstein has described himself as a political progressive and left-leaning libertarian. But his liberal commitments did not protect him from the student mob. The campus police warned him about a potential danger. The next morning, as he rode his bike into town, he saw protesters poised along his route tapping into their phones. He rode to the campus police department and was abruptly told: “You’re not safe on campus, and you’re not safe anywhere in town on your bicycle.” Weinstein and his wife eventually resigned and finally received a financial settlement from the university.

The Evergreen students and faculty displayed each of the three great untruths. The Untruth of Fragility (What doesn't kill you makes you weaker) came from a faculty member who supported the protesters and addressed some of her faculty colleagues in an angry monologue. She warned, "I am too tired. This [blank] is literally going to kill me." A student at a large town hall meeting verbalized her anxiety and illustrated the Untruth of Emotional Reasoning (Always trust your feelings). She expressed, "I want to cry. I can't tell you how fast my heart is beating. I am shaking in my boots."

And the whole episode illustrates the Untruth of Us Versus Them (Life is a battle between good people and evil people). The students and faculty engaged in common-enemy identity politics by labeling a politically progressive college and liberal professors as examples of white supremacy. One student (who refused to join the protest) later testified to the college trustees, "If you offer any kind of alternative viewpoint, you're the enemy."

What Can We Do?

The book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, identifies many disturbing trends on college campuses that are beginning to spill over into society. What can we do to stem the tide?

Obviously, the long-term solution to the insanity on campus and in society is to pray for revival in the church and spiritual awakening in America. But there are some practical things that must be done immediately.

First, college administrators must get control of their campus. The riots at some of these universities resulted in violence and property destruction. Often the campus police and even the local police failed to take action. Sadly, the university administration rarely took action afterwards.

Some form of deterrence would have prevented future actions on the University of California, Berkeley campus. Instead, the inaction established a precedent that likely allowed the conflict at Middlebury College. Students not only shut down the lecture, but they assaulted one of the campus professors. Once again, no significant action was taken against the students and outside agitators. The problem will get worse if there is no deterrence.

Second, professors must get control of their classrooms. Students cannot be allowed to determine what subjects cannot be taught and what topics cannot be discussed. The authors of this book are concerned about the tendency to encourage students to develop extra-thin skins just before they enter into the real world. Employers aren't going to care too much about their feelings. Students don't have the right not to be offended.

Third, we need to educate this generation about free speech. One poll done by the Brookings Institute discovered that nearly half (44%) of all college students believe that hate speech is NOT protected by the First Amendment. And since many students label just about anything they don't like as hate speech, you can see why we have this behavior on college campuses. More than half (51%) of college students think they have a right to shout down a speaker with whom they disagree. A smaller percentage (19%) of college students think it is acceptable to use violence to prevent a speaker from speaking on campus.

Finally, the adults need to make their voice heard. We pay for public universities through our tax dollars. Parents send their kids off to some of these schools. We should not tolerate the insanity taking place on many college campuses today.

The authors have identified certain concerns that colleges and universities need to address. They

remind us how hostile the academic world has become, not only to traditional Christian values, but also to mere common sense. We need to pray for what is taking place in the college environment.

Notes

1. Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff, et al., *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure*. New York City: Penguin Press, 2018.

2.
www.thecollegefix.com/heres-the-9-best-takeaways-from-heather-mac-donalds-new-diversity-delusion-book/

©2020 Probe Ministries

The Thought Police Are Here

Recently, in the same week, I watched two strikingly polar opposite events unfold on my Facebook feed. One was the long-awaited, long-prayed-for birth of a precious baby girl whose daddy had left homosexuality and repented of a gay identity as he pursued intimacy with Christ. After several years of sexual sobriety and spiritual growth, he was actually quite surprised to find himself starting to be attracted to girls. I remember him saying, "If you think puberty is rough the first time, you should try it at 28!" I was privileged to watch him weep with gratitude through his wedding to a beautiful lady, and pray for him as he became a pastor of an inner city church. And finally, after a failed pregnancy and several failed adoptions, God gave him and his wife the desires of their heart when their little one was born.

This happened the same week that Amazon banned a number of books offering hope for people struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions or gender confusion, people like my friend. A gay activist convinced Amazon that the books by a clinical psychologist who had successfully treated hundreds of men who did not want to be gay, and other books presenting a biblical view of sexuality, are dangerous. He said they cause LGBT people to hate themselves and inflict grave psychological damage. Because no one should be able to say there's anything wrong with same-sex relationships and behavior.

It's really not any different than if a coalition of distilleries, vintners and brewing companies went after Alcoholics Anonymous to shut them down, proclaiming that it's dangerous and even wrong to support people who want to stop drinking. And there's something wrong with people not wanting alcohol to control or even destroy their lives, because drinkers are who they are and they need to embrace this reality.

Critics use the pejorative labels "gay cure" or "conversion therapy" to shut down the voices of those offering help to those who want it. No reputable therapist, counselor, or pastoral care person will attempt to force change on someone who doesn't want it, but what about those who *do* want help? What about another friend of mine, who sought help when he was deep in the weeds of his gay life? When I asked what made him reach out for help over 20 years ago, he answered, "God-induced misery. If the Holy Spirit truly lives within, there is no peace, there is no stability, there is no hiding. As James says, The double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

But technology has allowed “the Thought Police” to shut down the voices they don’t like, like those of my friends. The stewards of high tech hold the power to decide what they want people to hear and see.

- John Stonestreet’s recent Breakpoint commentary{1} relates how Facebook deleted a pro-lifer’s post quoting Saint Augustine, about focusing on the sins of others to avoid examining our own. Facebook says St. Augustine’s comment violated community standards.
- YouTube has restricted a quarter of Dennis Prager’s conservative videos, including one on the Ten Commandments (because it mentions murder).
- Smarter Every Day’s resident engineer (and winsomely outspoken Christ-follower) Destin Sandlin created three powerful videos explaining how YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook are being manipulated to control what we see.{2}
- A single pro-LGBT activist convinced Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, and Google to remove the Living Hope Ministries app, grossly misrepresenting LHM’s mission and activity as dangerous and even “life-threatening.” The app was filled with expository teachings of various books of the Bible, weekly devotions, and personal testimonies of God’s transformational work. The app had happily resided on all platforms for more than three years.

This app was removed for supposedly being life-threatening to LGBTQ youth, yet the same hosts offer more than a dozen pro-gay apps that are designed to encourage sexual exploration and provide a means for individuals to hook-up for anonymous sex—an activity that has proven to be dangerous and even life-threatening.{3}

These are examples of the Thought Police in action.

This is why it is more important than ever before for our thinking to be more shaped, more informed by the truth of the Word of God than by the gatekeepers of Big Tech.

For example, we need to embrace the truth of 1 Corinthians 6, describing the first century church that had former homosexuals in it:

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (vv. 9-11, emphasis mine)

I keep thinking about personal friends of mine, and their families, that the Thought Police don’t want the world to know about: men and women who have turned from a gay identity to finding their identity in Christ, who have reconciled their faith and sexuality to honor and glorify God in it. Some have developed an attraction to their now-spouse, and are happily living faithful lives of service in their churches and in the world. Some report that their same-sex attractions haven’t changed, but instead of a blaring, controlling force, they have retreated to white noise in the background of their lives. Their stories are real, and life-giving, and fulfilling.

But you won’t know about it if the Thought Police have their way.

Notes

1. www.breakpoint.org/2019/07/the-point-saintly-censorship/

2. www.smartereveryday.com/
3. www.livehope.org/2019/04/23/lightintodark/

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/the_thought_police_are_here on July 23, 2019.

“My Daughter Says She’s a Boy-What Do I Do?”

A real question from a real mom: “Sue, my daughter insists she’s a boy. She has rejected all things feminine since she was a toddler. Now as a 15-year-old she says there’s a mismatch between her brain and her body. She wants “top surgery” (a double mastectomy) and testosterone to bring her insides and outsides into alignment. She says God made her this way and He doesn’t make mistakes so she is embracing a transgender identity. What do I do?”

Oh sister. I am so sorry. I can only begin to imagine the pain, the chaos, and the conflict this is causing in your family.

Let’s start with, what do we know is true?

1. God loves her. She is very dear to Him. He made her in His image and likeness. He sent His Son to give His life for her, proving once and for all how infinitely precious she is. And He may just be especially tender toward her, when we consider Isaiah 42:3—“A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;”
2. The Creator God made her a girl. He has plans and purposes for her as a female.
3. She’s only 15, and her pre-frontal cortex won’t finish developing for another 10 years. She’s not in a position to judge accurately the long-term effects of choices she makes today.
4. You are an adult, and you can see the long-term effects. It’s essential that you not cave to pressure.
5. This issue is so rife with conflict and political correctness that everything I’m about to say will make someone furious.

What do you do? Well, first, you **love her well**. You stay focused on the wonderful gifts and talents and personality that you appreciate about her, and you keep affirming her for these aspects of who she is. Her sense of self, her sexuality, is not WHO she is, it’s HOW she is. For right now.

Like any child or teenager (or adult, for that matter), she longs for her parents’ acceptance—but acceptance is not the same as approval. Acceptance means acknowledging their experience, and their perception of reality, without endorsing the conclusions they come to or the choices they make. (Consider that God accepts us, Romans 14:18 and 15:7, but He certainly doesn’t approve of everything we do!)

Loving her well means listening in order to communicate that you are seeking to understand her. It means showing compassion. Believing that one is transgender is *hard*. Those with internal conflicts about their gender are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, a sense of not belonging, and often have thoughts of suicide. She needs your tenderness.

What else do you do? **Educate yourself about this issue**, so you can speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) to your daughter and to friends and family as this comes into the light.

Gender Dysphoria is a thinking disorder, not a body disorder. If your daughter announced she were a cat, or a unicorn, how would you deal with that? Dr. Phil McGraw teaches that the first test that one's thinking is rational is that it has to be grounded in objective fact^{1}. Our sex—male or female—is an objective truth that becomes apparent at birth. God, who knits us together in our mother's womb where we are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:13-14), is the one who chooses and then reveals His plan for our gender. That is objective fact. If someone thinks or feels that they are something other than what God has made them to be, it's their thinking that is skewed, not their body. Unfortunately, our culture is very good at elevating feelings above objective truth, and that is at the core of the transgender issue.

I think that when children and adolescents claim to be the opposite sex, it's really about **not fitting into gender stereotypes**. You said your daughter "rejected all things feminine" since she was very small. That was about pink and purple sparkly princess dresses and bows in her hair, right? And she hated them? I respectfully suggest it wasn't femininity she was rejecting, it was a certain KIND of femininity, the stereotype we as a culture (particularly a culture infected with Disney princess images) label feminine. God also delights to make sporty, athletic, very physical and competitive girls who don't really care for frilly, girly-girl clothes. They can have a hard time playing house because nobody wins! These girls are still sensitive and compassionate, still emotional and verbal, but they'd rather be outside climbing trees and throwing perfect spirals to the neighborhood boys. These are not inferior girls, they're not lesser-than girls, they're just not in the majority. They are girls who love sports and are good at it, or girls who don't care for dresses or nail polish, or girls who just don't get the superficiality of many of their girl peers. They are the kind of girl God made them to be. When they are supported and celebrated for the kind of girl they are, their sense of disconnect with their femininity can decrease as their awareness of God's good creation of femininity increases.

Please see my post [The Gender Spectrum](#) for more information.

Sometimes, **the impact of various kinds of abuse** can make a girl think that it is neither good nor safe to be a girl. They can convince themselves that if they were a boy, they could protect themselves and they wouldn't be at risk because boys don't get abused or molested. (Which, of course, is not true!) The solution is not to impersonate a boy and mutilate her body, but to get help processing the deep soul wounds of abuse and molestation.

Just as depressed people can often take comfort and refuge in the idea of ending their pain through suicide, those who experience a sense of misalignment with their birth sex can put their hopes in transitioning to the opposite sex through cross-hormone therapy and ultimately surgery. But very few are aware of the testimonies of those who regret doing this. Walt Heyer of [sexchangeregret.com](#) has recently released a book, *Trans Life Survivors*, comprised of letters and emails from people who are very sorry for what they did to their bodies: the ongoing medical problems and the deep sense of loss at mutilating their bodies.^{2}

I know you are afraid of your daughter committing suicide because that is the drum that is constantly beaten by the pro-trans side: "If you don't cooperate with your child's plans to transition,

there's a high suicide rate when kids are not supported in their preferred gender identity." That is a bone-chilling fear, one my husband and I personally know in our family. But you should know two things: first, it's not necessarily true. See the article "The Suicide Myth" here: www.transgendertrend.com/the-suicide-myth/ Second, we do know that the suicide rate is 20 times higher in those who DO transition.

In a commentary titled "Sex Reassignment Doesn't Work: Here's the Evidence," Ryan T. Anderson writes,

When 'the tumult and shouting dies,' it proves not easy nor wise to live in a counterfeit sexual garb. The most thorough follow-up of sex-reassigned people—extending over 30 years and conducted in Sweden, where the culture is strongly supportive of the transgendered—documents their lifelong mental unrest. Ten to 15 years after surgical reassignment, the suicide rate of those who had undergone sex-reassignment surgery rose to *20 times that of comparable peers.*"^{3} (Emphasis mine)

This means that the risk of suicide is far greater In those who transition, than those who don't.

Be aware of the power of social media. One of my heroes is Collin Karchner, who is "on a crusade to save teens from social media's potential destruction to their self-esteem and mental health, and empowering parents to reconnect with their kids." (savethekids.us/) I am amazed at the number of young lives he is saving by showing them how destructive social media can be, and the good that happens when teens cut themselves off from the negativity online. The destructive forces of social media certainly manifest in the growing numbers of kids and teens thinking they are transgender.

Recently, my colleague Kerby Anderson had me on his Point of View radio program talking about Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria, which is a part of social contagion. He posted this article on the ministry website: pointofview.net/articles/rapid-onset-gender-dysphoria/

Tumblr is a magnet for young girls, who are extremely vulnerable to the ideas and images on social media, and it is egregiously pro-trans. You should know about this social contagion phenomenon on that platform here: 4thwavenow.com/tag/tumblr-trans-contagion/

As I said above, educate yourself. But know that the pro-trans activists have been extremely successful at shutting down the voices of those concerned about the full-steam-ahead transgender agenda. You'll have to do some digging.

Check out the work and the writings of psychologist Dr. Kenneth Zucker, who counseled over 560 children and teens with gender confusion at his clinic in Toronto over 35-40 years. He found that when kids were able to go through puberty naturally, Gender Identity Disorder (a phrase he coined) resolved in 98% of boys and 80% of girls. This is profound! Apparently, there is something about the rush of the correct hormones during puberty that resets things internally in the vast majority of adolescents. The best treatment for those who feel at odds in their body is to wait and watch.

You should also know about Dr. Paul McHugh, for many years the Psychiatrist-in-Chief at Johns Hopkins University, who shut down the sex change clinic when he found that post-surgically, the patients still had their neuroses. In the article "Surgical Sex," he wrote,

"When I became psychiatrist-in-chief at Johns Hopkins, I realized that by doing sex-change operations the hospital was fundamentally cooperating with a mental illness. We would do better for these patients, I thought, by concentrating on trying to fix their minds and not their genitalia."^{4}

Be very skeptical of anything from WPATH, World Professional Association for Transgender Health. They are completely uninterested in providing any balance to their reports or articles, and their poorly designed studies have no control groups. (For more information, watch this video from pediatric endocrinologist Dr, Quentin Van Meter, "The Terrible Fraud of "Transgender Medicine'" at youtu.be/6mtQ1geeD_c)

My last suggestion is the most important. **PRAY.** This is a spiritual warfare battle. The enemy prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8), and he is coming after our kids like nothing we've ever seen before. I have seen numerous people snatched from the enemy's claws as God does "spiritual cataract surgery," allowing them to see what they were blind to before, because of the faithful prayers of faithful parents and family members. Pray that the Lord will strengthen and protect your daughter from the evil one (2 Thessalonians 3:3). Pray for the eyes of her heart to be enlightened so she can see the truth about herself (Ephesians 1:18).

Pray and don't give up.

Notes

1. drphilintheblanks.com, Living by Design Worksheets.
2. sexchangeregret.com/bookstore/
3. www.heritage.org/gender/commentary/sex-reassignment-doesnt-work-here-the-evidence
4. www.firstthings.com/article/2004/11/surgical-sex

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/my_daughter_says_shes_a_boy-what_do_i_do
on June 11, 2019.

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.

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/princess_warrior_first_responder
on March 5, 2019.

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/

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/how_bad_is_this_conversion_therapy_thing
on February 19, 2019.