“I’m Looking for a Way to Deprogram Homosexuality”

I’m a licensed counselor looking for ways to de-program homosexuality.

I’m afraid we don’t know any formulaic means for de-programming homosexuality. And neither Probe nor Living Hope Ministries (a ministry that helps people with unwanted homosexuality) does “conversion therapy.” In my 20+ years with LHM, the only method I have seen that makes a difference is the time-honored process of Christian discipleship, where we point people to Jesus and walk with them in submitting to Him and His word, cooperating with the Holy Spirit in facing the wounds and hurts of the past and grieving them, forgiving those who hurt us, and obeying God’s commands because they are given to protect and bless us. The fruit of this process is transformation from the inside out (Romans 12:2), because Jesus doesn’t make things better, He makes things new.

What I have personally witnessed over and over is that God helps the person reframe their understanding of their lives, especially the hurts of the past (and there is always pain in the past) and their sinful responses to those hurts. This is true of any believer, not just those dealing with homosexuality. As the person invites Jesus to be Lord over more and more internal real estate, He brings change and understanding. For example, I keep seeing that men reframe their craving to connect with other men sexually as their heart’s cry for healthy attention, affirmation and affection from other men, either (or both) a father figure, or a best-friend kind of relationship. In women, I see that women reframe their craving to intensely connect with another woman, as their heart’s cry for those same 3 As from a mother or a

best friend. When those legitimate needs are met in healthy relationships with other believers, the craving subsides. One of my closest friends, who spent 25 years as a lesbian activist before becoming a Christ follower, says that what used to be screaming in front of her face (her same sex attraction), is now white noise in the background of her life. It's not totally gone, and she can feed it when she's stressed which means additional temptations, but its control over her life has been replaced by intimacy with Jesus and with healthy relationships with women.

I don't know how this happens outside of the grace and power of God in a believer's life and in the context of community, because we need each other.

I'm glad you asked. And by the way, I see from your email address that you utilize EMDR in your therapy. God bless you for that! I am the beneficiary of its effectiveness as I have seen my husband healed of childhood traumas through EMDR. A number of the people at Living Hope—and friends fro church as well—have found EMDR helpful in their counseling, which makes sense because trauma is part of so many people's stories who now deal with same-sex attraction.

Blessing you today,

Sue

Posted Sept. 2022
© 2022 Probe Ministries

"Our Granddaughter is

Severely Confused About Her Gender Identity”

I just read an article by Sue Bohlin on transgender and God’s view on it. We completely believe our granddaughter is severely confused and we believe her gender identity is being greatly influenced by the people she is hanging out with. She is almost 22, we have told we love her unconditionally but do not support her lifestyle as it goes against God’s Word. She understands that we will not compromise our faith and what the Word of God says. But we have been reaching out to pastors and they have offered zero spiritual guidance. In fact they really do not want to discuss it. Our pastor told me to buy a secular book on homosexuality from Amazon. I told him I do not need or want the world’s view on it, I need spiritual guidance. He had nothing. I’m reaching out because I agreed 100% with what Sue said and we still need spiritual guidance. We love our granddaughter and pray for her all the time but we are struggling with how to deal with it.

I am so very, very sorry for the pain you are experiencing in this spiritual battle. The enemy has gone after your beloved granddaughter, deceiving her with lies and demonic schemes about her true identity. You are undoubtedly right about the influence of the people she’s hanging out with, and that would extend to (and may even entirely consist of) the voices she is listening to on social media.

In terms of how to deal with it, let me encourage you that you are already doing the two most important things: loving her and praying for her. Your love will be a beacon for her to find her way out of spiritual darkness back to truth, and your prayers are powerful for the pulling down of strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). This is a battle that has to be fought on your knees, using the supernatural weapon of prayer. Trying to convince her out of her delusion won’t work; it has to be

God’s power.

You will need encouragement from others who are also in the battle for their children and grandchildren. Let me suggest two places to find that. One is the Friends and Family forum at Living Hope Ministries. www.livehope.org. The other is to request access to the private group “CHANGED Movement” on Facebook, where you will find very encouraging testimonies from those who have come out of the LGBTQ community.

Let me close with a story I hope encourages you.

A couple were heartbroken that their daughter had jumped into the LGBT community and identity, and needed to know what to do about it. On the recommendation of a mutual friend the husband called me; as we talked, the Lord dropped an idea into my head, which he followed.

He took her out for a meal and said to her, “Sweetheart, I want to tell you something, and I’m only going to say this once, so pay attention.

“Your mom and I see that because of your choices, it’s like you’re on the Titanic, and we know that eventually it’s going down. But we’re out here in a lifeboat, rowing around the ship, and we will never stop rowing. We’ll be here to love you and pray for you, and we’ll be here to help you when you realize you’ve got to get off a sinking ship.” They were so faithful in daily praying for her.

Ten years later, their daughter showed up on their doorstep. When Dad opened the door, the daughter asked, “Are you still in the rowboat?”

That was *ten years later*.

And many many prayers later, they just celebrated the one-year anniversary of her repentance . . . of her recognizing the ship was sinking and she got in the lifeboat with her parents.

This man said that in all his many years, he has never seen such a full and beautiful repentance as what his daughter exhibited.

Recently, in fact, he and his wife and their daughter stood in front of his Sunday School class to tell their story. For the first time, the daughter told her side; can you imagine what it was like for the parents to watch their beloved daughter give testimony to God's goodness and her parents' faithfulness in praying for her? In fact, she had sent an email at one point that said, "Mom and Dad, thanks for never giving up rowing."

The dad had also told his story to a men's conference, sharing the rowboat part, and said the other men, all fathers who would do anything for their children, were in tears. They all understand how hard it is, especially as men designed to "fix" things, not to be able to fix their children's hurt or destructive choices or the consequences of those choices. But the power of a praying parent can redeem the pain and the choices and the consequences.

So. . . don't give up rowing!

And [please hear my voice being very very gentle here] let go of your expectations for God's timetable. He knows how long it will take for her to see the light, in a way that will bring the most glory to Him and the greatest benefit to your granddaughter.

I'm sending this with a prayer that God does amazing things in your family. Please remember—if it's not good yet, God's not done yet!

Warmly,
Sue Bohlin

Posted Sept. 2022
© 2022 Probe Ministries

“How Do We Respond to the Charge That We’re on the Wrong Side of History?”

When I present my view on the LGBT issue, the Biblical view, people say I’m on “the wrong side of history.” What say you? I know this is an empty PC mantra but how should I answer?

When we’re smack dab in the middle of history-making, from a biblical perspective it’s waaaaay too early to declare what is “the wrong side of history.” We have already received revelation about how things will go toward the end of the world in the book of Revelation and other biblical books, so we can have an idea of where we’re headed. And it’s not pretty.

When Prohibition was enacted in the United States, there might have been people declaring that those objecting to it were on “the wrong side of history.” Except that they weren’t, because things change.

I can tell you personally, as one who has been involved in homosexual ministry (to those with unwanted same-sex attractions) for 18 years, God’s “thou shalt nots” of all sex outside of marriage are given out of love for us and a complete knowledge of how He designed us for male-female complementarity. Those insisting that the LGBT agenda (see the book *After the Ball*, which spells it out) is right and we hopelessly outdated dinosaurs are wrong, will still run into

the fact that God made us male and female to reflect the beauty and glory of unity in diversity. Even if it's un-PC.

Frankly, I think we will have to get used to being misunderstood and judged. And we can take comfort in the fact that Jesus knows a whole lot about that.

Thanks for writing,

Sue Bohlin

Posted Jan. 26, 2017
© 2017 Probe Ministries

"Would You Answer Some Questions About Hate and LGBT?"

I am a high school student writing a paper for English over some hatred issues across America and I was wondering if you would answer some questions about marriage equality, gender issues, etc.

Why do you, personally, dislike homosexual behavior?

For the same reason I dislike heterosexual behavior (like using pornography or unmarried or extramarital sex) that is outside of God's plan and purpose for our bodies and souls: it is harmful to the person(s) engaging in it. Sex is so powerful, like electricity, that it needs to be contained

within the safe confines of marriage between a man and a woman who have committed to each other for life. Outside of that containment, the power of sex is more like lightning, which does damage instead of being channeled into serving us.

But homosexual behavior is not just about sex. There is also a lot of emotional dependency in same-sex relationships, especially between girls and women, when their friendship has overflowed the banks of what is healthy. Emotionally dependent relationships are intense (which becomes exhausting), chaotic (which drains people further), controlling and manipulative (which is hurtful to the people and to the relationship). I dislike this behavior because it is harmful to the people engaging in it as well. I love people and hate to see them get hurt. That's why I dislike the behavior that contributes (eventually) to heartache.

If anyone of your family members became homosexual, how would you react?

That already happened, when one of my relatives was seduced into lesbian relationships and started seeing herself as part of the LGBT community. I continued to love her, encourage her, delight in her . . . even though we don't talk about her relationships or her involvement in LGBT.

I have two grown sons, though, which is the closer kind of family I think you may be thinking of. If either one of them announced they were gay, I would weep that he had been deceived by our spiritual enemy into thinking falsehoods about himself, and I would pray every day for his eyes to be open to the truth, even as I continued to love him like I do now.

Why do you think God doesn't love homosexual people and their behaviors?

I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God dearly and tenderly loves those who struggle with same-sex attraction, those who have embraced a gay identity, and even those who have fully immersed themselves in the LGBT world. I'm thinking of one young man in particular who went on a two-week bender, prostituting himself for gay sex so he could buy drugs and keep himself high. I know that his decisions grieved God's heart deeply (especially when he became HIV+ during that 2 weeks), but He never left the man or stopped loving him, and was there waiting patiently for him to come to his senses . . . which he did. And now their relationship is stronger than ever.

If God loved people, ALL people, enough to send His only Son into the world to be nailed to a cross, taking our place and paying the penalty for our sin and then raising Him from the dead, then I think He continues to love all of us in our messy, sinful rebellion. But He never endorses or accepts our sinful behavior, though He fully accepts US. Acceptance and approval of choices and behaviors are not the same.

You may have noticed I went from talking about homosexuals to US . . . because we are all in the same predicament: messy, sinful, rebellious people who desperately need God. There is no us/them differentiation—we are all alike in our need for God, and we are all alike in the fact that He loves us more than we can imagine.

Do you believe in abortion, and why?

I think it is a heinous thing to murder a baby, whether he or she lives inside the mother or outside the mother. Abortion is taking the life of an innocent child, and it's wrong to murder.

And do you consider Probe Ministries a hate group?

Absolutely not! We were tagged a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center because we don't agree with the LGBT agenda. We align ourselves with the Bible's standards that all sex outside of marriage violates God's commands for human sexuality. Unfortunately, these days mere disagreement is called hate. I have repeatedly invited people to identify the hate-filled words on our website so I can change them, but no one has ever identified any. I believe that is because you won't find words of hate on our website, or our podcasts, or any of our recorded messages. (And I do know what hate sounds like. Westboro Baptist Church makes me sick.)

I'm the primary writer and speaker about homosexuality and gender issues for Probe. It might be helpful for you to know that for 18 years I have also served with Living Hope Ministries, which is a Christian organization that helps people deal with unwanted homosexuality, and the family members of those who have chosen to embrace a gay identity. I have known and grown to love more people than I can count, people who are my heroes as they fight their feelings and instead, pursue intimacy with Jesus Christ. I have watched so many people's hearts change over time, and I have walked with a lot of women as they process the reasons for their attractions and experience a shift in their beliefs and attitudes (and sometimes attractions as well, though not always). They are so very dear to me, and I love being their cheerleader and encourager.

That's the opposite of hate. That's what love looks like, and that's what is the foundation of everything I write and say on this issue.

It might also be helpful for you to know that I have run everything I write and say through the filter of trusted friends who were once part of the LGBT community, asking them to identify anything that is unintentionally hurtful or rude

or even untrue so I can change it before it becomes public.

I'm glad you asked, and I am thankful for the opportunity to provide you with some answers.

Have a good day.

Warmly,
Mrs. Bohlin

Posted Oct. 2016
© 2016 Probe Ministries

"How Do You Respond to Vicky Beeching's Coming Out as Gay and Proud?"

Dear Sue,

Did you happen to see this in the past few days? Vicky Beeching, Star of the Christian Rock Scene: I'm Gay. God Loves Me Just the Way I Am

What am I supposed to make of it? I have searched the scriptures, poured my heart out to God over the years and still struggling. I cannot work out how she came up with this view, but it is really rocking my world view and I am in serious danger of coming unstuck. I am starting to wonder if my understanding of Scripture, of this being wrong and the reasons why for all these years is incorrect and it has made me so depressed since I read this article.

My heart hurts for Vicky.

Yes, she experiences same-sex attraction (SSA) and yes, God loves her just the way she is, but He loves her too much to leave her there. Her SSA is like the red light on the dashboard of a car. It means something is wrong under the hood that needs attention. God loves her just the way she is but He wants to bring healing to her heart. She may identify as gay, but God won't agree to that identity. He would say, "You are My beloved daughter, created in My image and for My glory."

100 years from today, when she is in heaven, she will not be saying she's gay. Sexuality is only for this earth. If something about us is temporary, then it shouldn't be our identity. That's why God, who doesn't make anyone gay (anymore than He makes anyone selfish or bigoted or self-centered), won't agree with her confusion about her identity.

I think it's good to acknowledge when one has a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7). But saying it is good and it's fine and God accepts it as His intention and design is wrong. It would be better to say, "I experience same-sex attraction, and I need help to find out where it came from and what to do about it." And I would say, after fifteen years of helping people deal with unwanted SSA, that the way to deal with the holes in one's heart is intimacy with the Father and the Son and the Spirit. The problem driving SSA is a sense of disconnection, of not belonging or being attached. The way that is resolved is by focusing on Jesus, who said in John 14:23 of His Father, "We will come to him and make Our home with him." Resting in the indwelling Father, Son and Spirit is how that hole is filled.

Blessing you,

Sue Bohlin

Posted Sept. 2014

© 2014 Probe Ministries

“Is Animal Homosexuality Proof that It’s Normal?”

A teenage girl in my church has just been confronted by discussions on homosexuality in her high school classroom. When she told the class that homosexuality was not “normal” behavior because it did not exist among animals, the teacher said that studies have “proven” that homosexuality is prevalent among animals, esp. elephants. While browsing on the web, I have found this to be a widely used “proof.” What would you answer? How can I help this girl?

First of all, I would encourage her to ask with humility and softness (i.e., no edge in her voice) where she can find the studies that “prove” the prevalence of homosexuality in animals. People toss off assertions all the time (such as, “science has proven homosexuality is genetic”) but when we ask where the articles are, they don’t have an answer. They’re just parroting what they’ve heard.

Same-sex behavior DOES exist in the animal kingdom, for a number of reasons. Usually, it’s either playful antics, or dominance behavior to assert hierarchy. For one male to mount, or attempt to mount, another male is a very powerful way to communicate his higher position in the “pecking order” of the community. But if you bring in a female in heat, suddenly the male-male behavior is abandoned in favor of the female. Sometimes males mount other males in a type of practice before the females come into heat.

Secondly, I have read of same-sex attachments in animals, but

the fact that they exist doesn't make it normal any more than the fact that cystic fibrosis or diabetes exists makes those diseases normal. From a Christian perspective, we live in a fallen world, and that falleness extends to the entire creation on the planet. It would make sense that things would go wrong even among the animals. For instance, I understand that a hormonal imbalance can result in homosexual behavior in some animals. (Here are links to a couple of articles concerning that. Note the naturalistic bias underlying them: "What is, is normal and natural and therefore to be embraced." http://www.noglstp.org/bulletin/1997spring.html and http://www.libchrist.com/other/homosexual/sheepandanimals.html)

Even from a godless evolutionary perspective, there is no benefit to homosexual behavior since those who engage in it do not reproduce, and from an evolutionary perspective, the only purpose in life is to make babies (the bottom line for the more scientific-sounding "survive and reproduce").

I recently discovered an excellent article on the "animal homosexuality myth" at the NARTH (National Association for the Research and Treatment of Homosexuality) website. This article points out that we can find occurrences of "homosexuality," cannibalism and infanticide in the animal kingdom, but the fact that these aberrant behaviors exist should not lead us to deduce that they are acceptable and normal HUMAN behaviors to engage in! www.narth.org/docs/animalmyth.html

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

Published Oct. 2002, updated Aug. 2014

“Help Me Change From Gay to Straight”

Hello Sue,

I am from Australia and I read your add about how you can help me to change from being gay to being straight.

Can you help me please?

I’m not sure what you meant about “reading my add” since I don’t have any advertisements of any kind, but I have written about homosexuality on Probe.org and www.livehope.org. My understanding about how true and lasting change can occur in people is all about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who starts the process of setting things right when we put our trust and faith in Him and start the hard work of surrendering to Him. Daily. As a new way of life. Then change happens, all kind of change, because the fruit of the new life we receive from God is Christlikeness in us.

Some people who trust in Jesus discover that as they grow spiritually, receiving His great love and obeying the principles in His word the Bible, old wounds are healed, unmet needs are met through community with God’s people, and they are led into new ways of seeing life, themselves, other people, and God Himself. They discover that they are changing, and they can finish growing up, which includes changing the way they think about people of the same sex and people of the opposite sex. They can develop attractions for the opposite sex. Or even just one person of the opposite sex.

There are no exercises for this kind of change. It is a result of a new orientation of submitting one’s will to Jesus as boss

(or Lord) of one's life, following Him and trusting in Him. The change that comes is the same as learning to move beyond self-centeredness to compassion and a desire to love and serve others. Or learning to move beyond anger to forgiveness. Or learning to move beyond fear and anxiety to the peace of trusting that a loving God is in control. These changes are all reflections of emotional and spiritual maturity and God's work inside us to make us like His Son.

Some people who walk in intimacy with Jesus never develop attractions for the opposite sex. There are several reasons for this, but the important thing is that God's intention for our lives is far bigger and far more important than sexual attractions. Nonetheless, when God sets all things right, that includes rightly relating to both our own gender and the opposite sex—whether that process comes close to completion in this life or the next.

So, to answer your question, I would point you to Jesus. Not to religion—to Jesus Himself, which includes dynamic relationships with His people, those of us who truly know Him and are living in yieldedness and submission to Him. I would also invite you to investigate the free, confidential online support group for those dealing with unwanted homosexuality at Living Hope Ministries, www.livehope.org.

Thanks for writing.

Sue Bohlin

Posted Feb. 2014
© 2014 Probe Ministries

“What’s the Difference Between Lesbian Relationships and Heterosexual Marriage?”

How are the dynamics of lesbian relationships different from a marriage’s? A lot of marriages have issues and “skeletons in the closet” too. So just generally speaking, how are they different? Maybe more drama, more desperation in lesbian relationships? And what is the fundamental reasoning you have reached that may cause the difference?

Ever since you wrote, I have been thinking about your question and talking to people with lots of experience, including a dear friend who was a gay activist for decades and in a long-term relationship with another woman for twelve years.

The core problem is trying to force a same-sex relationship, where the God-designed complementarity is missing, into a marriage-like relationship that is designed for balance. There isn’t any. The strengths and weaknesses of male and female are simply missing, so all you have are the same strengths and same weaknesses.

For example, we women are created to be relational; men are more task-oriented by design. Together, this means that things get done in a context of people’s hearts mattering. In lesbian relationships, it’s ALL about the relationship. And since a part of lesbianism is a deep core of insecurity, women are driven by fear to protect the relationship at all costs, lest the other one even *think* of leaving. This means binding the other to oneself with gifts, favors, music, shared everything including finances, and constant contact throughout the day (and panic when the other doesn’t respond immediately).



I have a ball consisting of magnets that fit and hold together by magnetic attraction. The orientation of the pieces in relation to each other matters because some pieces are drawn to each other, but if you flip one of the pieces, the magnetic polarity causes them to repel each other. You can make them touch, but you have to apply some kind of force to hold them together. God designed males and females to be attracted to each other and to hold together naturally, like the north and south poles of magnets, in large part because of our differences. When same-sex couples try to forge an intimate, romantic/sexual relationship, it's like two north poles or two south poles of a magnet, so they have to use some kind of force to keep them together. This is why manipulation is the glue of emotionally dependent relationships. One long-time lesbian said, "We don't have partners, we have prisoners."

Most lesbian-identifying women are plagued by a yawning "hole" in their hearts, either a mommy-shaped hole or a best-girlfriend shaped hole. Thus, the attraction, unlike with magnets, is the hope of getting an aching emotional need met. A friend of mine who has been walking with same-sex-attracted people for decades calls that aching emotional need "giant sucking funnels." Another friend referred to it as "two ticks, no dog." And one of my friends met a fifty-something woman at a gay bar who actually said, "I want you to be my mommy." They try to stuff other women into that hole, and it never works. That's because once a girl's legitimate developmental needs are not met at their appropriate stage in life, there is no way for another human being to fill such a large hole. But God can, and I have seen Him do it, through His people and through personal intimacy with Jesus.

My friends who came out of the lesbian community tell me that they've never seen healthy lesbian relationships. Women in long-term relationships present a well-crafted façade to the

world. When the women split up, everyone is shocked, because there was one dynamic for public, and then the reality of what went on behind closed doors. Usually that means one person controlling the other, one person caretaking the other, and not a mutuality of equals. It's more a matter of a major power differential. The biblical concept of husband and wife as equals before God, each contributing something intrinsically different to the relationship, is missing in lesbian relationships. This is especially true for those who get into longer-term relationships, where there is usually an age gap because women are hoping to fix the mother-daughter brokenness inside them. One of my friends watched her mother get into what became a long-term relationship with another woman, and over the years has listened to her mother complain bitterly about the way she's treated. She is still saying, decades into the relationship, "I'm miserable but I don't know how to live without her, so I'll just stay."

One day I was looking at a sculpture I have of a circle of friends, arms around each others' shoulders. It reminded me of the dynamic of a husband-wife marriage, where they are face-to-face in a circle of two as they get established as a new family unit in society, and then they enlarge the circle by bringing children into it. By contrast, lesbian relationships are like two lovers face-to-face in their "us only" circle of two, excluding all others, jealous of outside friendships and suspicious of all other relationships as a threat to the circle of two. The relationship is inherently sterile; they cannot bring children into the circle without engaging (one way or another) in God's "one male, one female" requirement for creating new human beings.

Another difference in the dynamics of husband-wife marriages vs. lesbian relationships is that when men and women work on getting emotionally healthier, bringing their marriage into alignment with God's Word, it strengthens the marriage and builds oneness between two very different, very "other"

people. When two lesbian women work on getting emotionally healthier, it means de-tangling and disengaging from the enmeshment that defines their relationship and tries to erase the boundaries of who they are individually. If they bring their relationship into alignment with God's Word (Rom. 1:26), they will no longer be lesbian partners.

I do need to add a disclaimer, that there has been a major age-related sea change. What I've just said is true of women 30-35 and older, but some things are drastically different for younger women who identify as lesbians. Like the other people their age, they grew up in a far more sexualized culture than ever before, and they grew up in a world of ever-increasing approval of lesbian behavior (thanks to the proliferation of pornography, for one big reason). Many girls experimented in lesbian relationships and sex simply because of peer pressure and the messages of the culture: "How will you know if you like it or not unless you try? You owe it to yourself!"

However, just like with their older counterparts, these relationships are still volatile, intense, drama-filled, and very difficult to extricate from. Jealousy and manipulation (especially guilt) are major dynamics. Regardless of the age, same-sex romantic and sexual relationships are not God's intention or design, so they don't work well.

You asked about my fundamental reasoning for my conclusions; simply observing, week after week after week for 14 years, what these girls and women report about their relationships and how hard it is to come out of a lesbian identity, is quite the education. Especially when I compare it to what I know of God's word combined with the experience of enjoying a balanced, healthy marriage for 38 years.

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

Posted April 2013

“I’m 15 and I’m Afraid I’m Gay”

Dear Mrs. Bohlin,

I really need your help, I am 15 and frightened of being homosexual. About one and a half years ago I was at an all-girls summer camp where a girl told me she had decided to become bisexual. I didn’t know why but this upset me a lot. I had two weeks of camp left, and I was terrified that everyone was gay, finally I became scared that I was gay. I hadn’t really thought that I was attracted to girls before, but I used to be a tomboy and envied all the “girly-girls”. Ever since I went to camp and that happened my fear has gotten worse and worse, I haven’t told anyone for fear of being told that I was. I heard about the “ex-gays” and read a few articles of yours. I don’t know what to do. Please help me I’m very scared, all I want is to live again normally. I’ve been raised Christian and my parents are divorced. I’m sorry to bother you, but I need your advice. God bless you.

_____, I’m so glad you wrote to me!

When God made you a female, He made you more emotional than analytical, more intuitive to other people than most males, and very relational. This means you are open to being influenced by other people, especially when you were only 13. For someone to tell you she had decided to label herself as bisexual at the very beginning of puberty, when you both have a LOT of growing, maturing, and learning about yourselves ahead of you, no wonder you were upset! That’s way too much pressure to process information and label oneself at the beginning of adolescence. Which is a time of intense confusion to begin with, totally apart from the whole sexuality issue!

It makes sense you'd be scared that you were gay, for the same reason that when people take health or medical classes that cover different kinds of illnesses, it's typical to think they're experiencing the symptoms of a bunch of them. It's typical to be susceptible to ideas, especially at a time in your life where you "try on" all kinds of identities and values and beliefs to see if they fit.

If you were a tomboy, it's because God loves tomboys and that's why He makes you that way! It's our culture that incorrectly limits femininity to only the "girly-girl" end of the femininity spectrum. Femininity also looks like jeans and t-shirts, tree-climbing, sports- and outdoor-loving girls. It makes sense for you to envy girly-girls because they are a different kind of girl than you are, but they aren't a BETTER kind of girl than you are! It makes sense because of the false message that tomboys are inferior to girly-girls. Nope! If God won't agree with it, it's not true!

Now for another part of the equation: what we know from talking to literally thousands of gay-identifying folks over the years is that envy drives a lot (if not most) of same-sex attraction. Both guys and girls are drawn to whatever they feel they lack. Instead of saying, "This means I'm gay," it would be far wiser, and true to God's design, to say instead, "Hmmm. I see where I need to work on myself so I become the kind of person I admire, or to develop the kind of attributes I admire."

I was teaching at Probe's Mind Games conference for high school juniors and seniors when I said that many people who are afraid they're gay, or who think they might be, need to give themselves grace to finish growing up. Being attracted to same-sex peers is part of normal adolescent development, complete with intense crushes, but all we hear in the culture is, "If you like other girls (or boys), it means you're gay." No, it doesn't. It means you haven't finished growing up yet. One of the students came back the following year as an alumnus

and come up to me in private to tell me, “When you said this last year, it was the first time I’d ever heard it. I was able to relax and just give myself permission to finish growing up. And you know what? In the past year, I have! I find myself attracted to girls now, instead of being so stuck on my attractions to other guys. Thanks for speaking truth to us.”

Let me encourage you to bundle up your fears and your feelings and hand them to Jesus, who loves you more than you can possibly imagine, and He will help you sort through them. In fact, the more you concentrate on your relationship with Him, the better every other part of your life will become. In fact, I respectfully urge you to pray every day, “Jesus, show me how You love me,” and then pay attention to the little intimate ways in which He says, “I sure do love you, _____!” When you know God loves you, that gives you a confidence in yourself that nothing else can even come close to. And it helps you sort out the rest of life, and put people in their proper perspective.

Relax and give yourself time to finish growing up without the unnecessary complication of being paralyzed by fear that you’re gay. God doesn’t make anyone gay; He DOES make people to be relational, and the more we do life in community, with friends who will love and accept just as we are, we can grow into emotionally healthy adults.

So. . . how does this hit your heart? Does it make sense?

Warmly,
Sue

© 2011 Probe Ministries

“Why Doesn’t God Answer Prayers to Take Away Gay Feelings?”

I was reading your article about Gay Teen Suicides and Bullying, about how some people pray and pray for God to take away their gay feelings and there is a reason that he doesn’t that they don’t know about. I’d like to know what that reason is. My best friend committed suicide when we were both 18 because he couldn’t accept that he was gay. I learned to accept it and now I’m 36 and quite happy. Luckily, I have found a church that accepts me for who I am and I know that God loves me as does Jesus but I am always curious to hear the ideas and opinions of Christians on what the supposed cure for this condition might be.

First of all, _____, I am so very sorry to hear of your best friend’s suicide. I’m sure that has left a wound on your soul that troubles you to this day.

I want to VERY respectfully suggest that “accepting one’s gayness” is not the best solution to the grief and sadness that comes bound up in realizing one has same-sex desires. That would be like seeing the “check engine” light on your car and deciding to learn to live with it. I know the culture’s pro-gay message is that there’s nothing wrong with homosexuality so just accept it, but that’s not God’s position. Which leads me to answer your question: why would God not take away someone’s gay feelings?

First, because everyone has an area of weakness that makes it easier for us to recognize our need for God and depend on Him more fully, which is His design and intent for us. Some people have physical trials; others struggle with a weakness for alcohol, drugs, or other forms of self-medication. Some

struggle with same-sex attractions. Whatever our area of weakness, this is the very avenue by which God can reveal Himself to be strong, to be *enough* for us. And it is the best way for God to develop us into the people He made us to be, permeated with Christ like character and maturity.

So often, people pray and ask God to relieve their symptoms and make their lives easier (and this, of course, goes way beyond asking God to take away gay feelings. It's something we all do). Being broken and fallen people, when we pray for that, what we're really asking is, "I want You to make me comfortable so I won't need You." But Jesus doesn't answer this prayer because there is something so much bigger than our comfort at stake; He wants our hearts. He wants our dependent trust. He wants us to repent of the sin and separation from Himself that results in our brokenness. He wants to heal the real brokenness, not just the *symptom* of the brokenness. True brokenness is our broken relationship with God.

The struggle (against same-sex feelings) itself is not an evil. The struggle can be a holy instrument in God's hand if we let it. Please read through to the end of my answer for more on that.

Secondly, it's helpful to understand the bigger picture of why someone has attractions for someone of the same sex in the first place. No one is born gay; we are such complex creatures, being made in the image of God, that feelings, attitudes and beliefs are shaped over time by our life experiences, and filtered through our temperaments. This is complicated by the fact that we live in a fallen world that has been poisoned by sin, which is separation and independence from God. Fallen people love each other in fallen ways, or not at all.

The three-Personed God (One God in Father, Son and Holy Spirit), who have enjoyed love and fellowship with each other for all eternity, created us in Their image (Gen. 1:26). This

means we are created for relationship: to connect and bond with others in ways that would make us feel loved and secure. Living in a fallen world means that sometimes, we don't connect and bond with the people God intends to love and accept us, and there are serious repercussions from that.

After listening to people's stories in literally thousands of intake interviews, my friend Ricky Chelette of Living Hope Ministries has identified several common denominators that provide perspective to same-sex desires:

• Little boys are born at some point on a gender spectrum that ranges from the rough-and-tumble athletic boy to the emotionally sensitive, artistic and/or musical, aesthetically gifted boy. Little girls are born at some point on a feminine gender spectrum that ranges from the girly-girl to the tomboy jockette. Our spot on the gender spectrum is God's choice for His glory and our benefit. Most male same-sex strugglers are on the sensitive end of the spectrum.

• God's intention is for babies to bond first with Mom, then with Dad, then with same-sex peers, then with opposite-sex peers. Learning to exercise our "attachment muscles" is an essential part of becoming emotionally healthy. Most Moms don't have any trouble bonding with their babies. (But when something disrupts the process, it seriously messes people up.)

• When emotionally sensitive little boys are born into a family with a rough-and-tumble, emotionally insensitive Dad, the little boy can find himself more comfortable identifying with Mom and her emotionally sensitive femininity than with his Dad. It's as if Dad speaks Spanish and the little sensitive boy speaks Chinese. They may *want* to communicate with each other, but they don't speak the other's language. Unless the "Spanish-speaking" Dad purposes to learn Chinese to relate to his son on his level, there can be a disconnect between the two.

• There’s a point in a toddler boy’s development where he should realize, “I’m a boy. I’m more like Dad than like Mom.” When Dad involves his son in his world and communicates love and acceptance to his son, he comes to believe that he belongs in the world of males with his Dad.

• The wise author Toni Morrison says that a child knows he’s loved when he walks in a room and his parent’s eyes light up. All children are created with the need to receive “the three A’s”: attention, affection and affirmation. When a Dad pays loving attention to his son, when his eyes light up when his son enters the room, when Dad affirms his son for who he is and not just what he can do, a boy will probably feel secure in his Dad’s love and acceptance. But if there is a disconnect between a Dad and his son, if the Dad thinks it’s too much trouble to try and connect with a son in ways that the son can receive, there will be a father-shaped hole in the little boy’s heart. A rough-and-tumble boy can try and fill that hole with all kinds of activities and risky behaviors to earn his Dad’s attention, affection and affirmation. An emotionally sensitive boy can easily detach himself from Dad and connect himself more strongly with Mom, or detach from everyone. Both kinds of boys are at risk for trying to get a legitimate need met in unwise, illegitimate ways.

• Most little girls don’t have trouble connecting with Mom, but if Mom is not warm and nurturing (or if something happens to disrupt the relationship), they can live with a mother-shaped hole in their heart. A Dad’s role is to support and cherish his daughter’s femininity, regardless of what form it takes. If he remains distant and unsupportive, or if he treats her like a son, she can have serious questions about her feminine identity: “If Dad doesn’t think I’m okay, then I’m not.” Or, if there *is* no Dad, she can be wracked with doubts about herself; a Dad’s attention, affection and affirmation is huge in a little girl’s life as well. Girls can have a father-shaped hole in their heart as well.

• From four to ten years old, the next stage of development is for boys to learn to attach to other boys and girls to attach to other girls. Both sexes usually have intense “BFF” (best friends forever) friendships that are not romantic or erotic, they are just emotionally intense as they learn to exercise their friendship attachment muscles. If a boy doesn’t learn to make these connections with buddies, he will continue to walk around with a “buddy hole” in his heart. If a girl doesn’t learn to make these connections with other girls, she will walk around with a “girlfriend hole” in her heart. And since nature abhors a vacuum, and because we are all fallen creatures, we will try to stuff all kinds of things into the holes in our hearts.

• At puberty, sex hormones flood the body and hit the mother hole or father hole or friend hole in the heart. That aching desire to connect and attach, the painful longing to be nurtured and to bask in attention, affection and affirmation (“the three A’s”), then gets sexualized. If the adolescent boy or girl fantasizes about the object of their affections accompanied by masturbation and orgasm, brain chemicals get released that act like emotional super-glue. Physical (synaptic) connections are made between the object of affection and sexual pleasure, and then strengthened with repetition. When someone buys into the lie that “if I feel it, it must be true,” the end result can be a homosexual identity.

• (This last point is not limited to same-sex strugglers by any means.) When people experience the trauma of abuse or neglect, when they don’t get their God-given emotional needs met, they stop growing emotionally. They shut down inside. Their bodies keep growing but inside, they are still the emotional age of the point when they stopped growing. Although this sounds like an insult, it’s actually a simple descriptor: many people are emotionally four to ten years old. (Ever see road rage?) This is why wounded people tend to live lives driven by drama, self-centeredness, a lack of self-discipline,

and emotional dependency (which is relational idolatry).

Why doesn't God take away homosexual feelings? Because they are not a separate part of the person like a nasal polyp or an infected appendix that can be cut out to restore health. Feelings are a part of us. They are the *product* of beliefs, actions, and the way one sees life and reality. Feelings are like the caboose on a train; they trail along at the end, pulled by the parts that do the work.

God will not "zap" us because to do so would be to eradicate who we are. He will not remove feelings because feelings are part of the *imago Dei,* the image of God. He made us, He loves us just as we are, and He wants to work with us to transform our thinking and our understanding of who He is, who we are, how life works, and what is true. Romans 12:2 says, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." When we change the way we think and the way we do life, our feelings will eventually change. (Not necessarily 180 degrees, but some degree of transformation is part of the power of the Gospel!)

Homosexual feelings come from legitimate, unmet longings for connection, for the "three A's." God wants us to be connected to other people; He created us to function best in community. He wants us to experience His love, and the love of other people, in the context of relationship. God wants us in HIS community of believers, and the church is a second chance to be in a different family. He wants to meet our needs for connection and relationship through healthy God-honoring friendships. Many people testify that their same-sex longings decreased as their security as a man or as a woman grew because of belonging to the world of men or the world of women in God's family. As they took their place in the Body of Christ with their new (church) family and friends, the longings and desires shifted to age- and gender-appropriate feelings. They finished growing up.

But even in those who did not experience a shift in

orientation, they still report having a home with God's people, with relationships that help fill the hole in their hearts.

Let me suggest a related but less emotionally charged illustration. In his excellent book *Changes That Heal,* Dr. Henry Cloud writes,

> *It is not unloving for God to say no, even to our healing. He knows that sometimes we need to work out our healing instead of his doing it for us. For example, if I am depressed because I don't bond with others, for God to "heal" my depression would prohibit me from learning how to bond and becoming loved. He may then say no to my prayer for healing from depression for my benefit. We like Job, must trust God's no and his timing. It does not mean that he doesn't love us. It may mean that he wants something better for us.*

I believe that God says "no" to zapping away homosexual feelings because He has something better. He is passionate about growing us up to maturity (Eph. 4:13-15). There is no shortcut to maturity; it means struggling through to connect, attach and bond with healthy people until we finish growing up.

Some years ago, someone sent this email about the value of struggling:

> *A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared, he sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole.*
>
> *Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and it could go no farther.*
>
> *Then the man decided to help the butterfly, so he took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily, but it had a swollen body*

and small, shriveled wings.

The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time.

Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of his life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings.

It was never able to fly.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening, were God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If God allowed us to go through our life without obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been, and we could never fly.

I hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

© 2011 Probe Ministries