

“Is It Right for Churches to Require Formal Membership?”

Is it right for churches to require a formal membership, with membership vows? I don't see this present in the N.T. I am committed to my local church but am not sure about coming into membership.

You are correct in observing that the New Testament does not mention this issue. For what it's worth, my own opinion is that there's nothing wrong (in the sense of sinful or immoral) with a local body requiring formal membership. Many churches do require a formal membership before allowing people to participate in voting on matters affecting the church, or serving in positions of church leadership, etc. Oftentimes, the reasoning here is that only people committed to this local body of believers and in agreement with the church's doctrinal statement, etc., should be allowed to share in the leadership decisions of the church. Since most local churches have some unbelievers, or uncommitted attenders, membership requirements help prevent those who might not be qualified to share in church leadership decisions from helping to make such decisions. Thus, for many churches, membership requirements may serve a sort of safeguard for doctrinal purity and godly decision-making.

Of course, a church should never refuse to minister to those who decline becoming members. And there may be some (like yourself) who are deeply committed to the church, but do not wish to embrace formal membership. The NT does not require one to take formal membership vows to a local church, etc. All who put their faith in the person and work of Christ are members of the universal church, even if they don't want to become formal members of a local church. And I don't think there's

anything wrong with such a decision.

Thus, as long as the motives for doing so are good and pure, I don't think it's wrong for a church to have a formal membership procedure. However, I also don't think it's wrong for a true believer in Christ to freely choose not to become a formal member of a particular local body.

This, at any rate, is my opinion. I hope it's a little helpful.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“My Son Thinks He's Gay”

I heard this week on WMBI radio something from your group about gay issues... I have a teenage son who thinks he's gay...a high-schooler. I don't believe he is yet entrenched in any sort of gay lifestyle. . . What's a mom to do with a loved one who is beginning to believe he's gay?!

My heart goes out to you in dealing with your precious son who has been lied to about being gay. It's one thing to have same-gender feelings, but quite another to put the “gay” label on oneself when it doesn't have to be that way.

I have two suggestions for you. First, a book was written for EXACTLY young men like him, which I strongly suggest you get, read, and give to him. It's called [*You Don't Have to Be Gay: Hope and Freedom for Males Struggling With Homosexuality or for Those Who Know of Someone Who Is*](#) by Jeff Konrad. Amazon.com carries it. This book is a series of letters

written by a man who discovered that through the power of Christ he could leave his homosexual identity behind, to a young man just beginning to consider that option. The wonderful thing is, the young man who received the letters is Mike Haley, who has since resolved his faith and sexuality and worked for a time at Focus on the Family as a youth and gender specialist. Mike has put together some awesome materials for kids in exactly your son's position, and I suggest you contact Focus (1-800-A-FAMILY) and ask for [the literature on youth and homosexuality](#). (That's my second suggestion.)

In the meantime, we have several articles on homosexuality on the Probe Ministries website that may be of help to you:

[Helping Teens Understand Homosexuality](#)

[Homosexual Myths](#)

[Homosexuality: Questions and Answers](#)

[Homosexual Theology](#)

[Can Homosexuals Change?](#)

I also point you to the excellent resources at Living Hope Ministries, which has support and information for parents as well as strugglers. The Executive Director, Ricky Chelette, wrote this article called [Help! My Son is Gay](#). You may also be interested in Living Hope's video and audio resources: livehope.org/resource-type/products/

I hope this helps. The Lord bless you and keep you in these difficult days.

In His grip,

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

“Is It Safe For an Older Homosexual Man to Spend Time with Teenage Boys?”

There is a man in our church in his mid forties. I believe he really loves the Lord and is always a blessing to those who need him. We used to often have him to our home, but I noticed that he was often physical with our teen boys (rough-housing, etc.) I felt uncomfortable with this but thought perhaps he just wanted to be an uncle-type image. He has always enjoyed spending time with the young adult and teen men in our church, and, to my knowledge, has never behaved inappropriately with any of them.

We later learned, however, that he struggles with homosexual feelings. This is not common knowledge to others in our church, and we have decided it is not for us to say anything as we love this person and would not want to see him hurt. We told our boys that if they spent time with him it should be in a group or meet at a restaurant for dinner. This has worked well and there have been no problems, especially since our boys know the situation. Our dilemma is this. There is another teen in our church that he sometimes helps and spends time with. He is an 18 year old and I'm sure would say something if a problem occurred (he is also very close to our family). I truly believe nothing has happened. We don't want to say anything to him or his family, but worry that if something should happen it would be our fault. It seems if someone is struggling with this type of thing, it would be best if he not spend time alone with young men. Am I correct? Just need any advice you might be able to give.

P.S. He does not spend time with younger children...(that I know of) mostly just older teens and young adults. He may just want friendship as a single man.

I asked my friend Ricky Chelette, a pastor and Executive Director of Living Hope Ministries, for help in answering your question. I loved his answer! I hope it helps.

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

As someone who has worked with male strugglers for a long time I appreciate your concerns and your cautions as a mother and friend. I think your concerns are real and I would too have some cautions if this gentleman is spending one on one time with an 18-year-old.

I really think that the best thing to do, as he is your friend, would be to sit down and talk to him. You obviously know that he struggles with homosexuality, yet you love him. He needs to know that. It will be terribly helpful for him to have you in the know and help him in his accountability.

I would suggest that you sit down with him and in a very loving manner state to him. "John, you have been a part of our church and family for a long time and we know that you struggle with homosexuality. We also know that you are a godly man, and we love you so very much. Because we do love you we want to know how we can walk with you on this difficult road. I am sure there are times that it is very difficult for you, and we want to be of help and support to you. How can we help?" He may or may not give you some answers. Depends. But at some point I would also say, "I know you wouldn't want to engage anyone in our church in this activity, but I do want to caution you about being with some of the younger adults and older youth alone. These are crazy days we live in, and I wouldn't want someone to falsely accuse you of something you never intended to do (i.e. Catholic Church scandal, etc.). You know we trust you with our boys and they love you greatly. But I do want you to be careful for your own good and theirs." Something to that effect.

I realize this is a VERY touchy subject, but I think that the cautions are real. I doubt that anything has happened, but at the same time, that age of young adult/older youth 18-26 are prime candidates for someone that is struggling. That is the "ideal" age of our masculinity and those that struggle tend to "idealize" that age and desire that they were the people toward whom they experience same-gender attraction.

I pray that all this has been completely harmless and it probably has. However, you cannot ignore this. It needs to be addressed and you are responsible to him and to the young adults for your knowledge. To say nothing would be a disservice to all.

Many of the folks who struggle with this are very sensitive to younger guys. They feel as though they can give them some of what they didn't get from their own fathers – touch, affirmation, attention, and love. They are most genuine and pure in that regard and do it with a deep sense of passion for God and for the folks they help. So it well might be that this is the case for the man you speak of. I pray that it is, but the fact that he does struggle should still put some more serious boundaries in his life.

Even if he were a married man, I would say the same thing. I don't think that a married man should be spending one on one time with a youth or young adult on a regular basis. There is just too much room for misinterpretation. He (your friend) should know that. It is NOT just about his struggle, it is about being smart and safe for everyone involved.

I pray that this will be of help to you. Should I be of further help, please let me know. I pray that God will give you wisdom and grace as you share with him. You are a brave and good friend for addressing this issue with him.

Blessings.

Ricky Chelette
Executive Director, Living Hope Ministries
www.livehope.org

“Is It Fair to Ask Homosexuals to Try to Be Straight?”

Mrs. Bohlin,

I just finished reading your well written and informative article “[Homosexuality Q&A](#).” Your approach to the issue is refreshing and very new to me.

Your explanation of pre-conditions is solid, but the issue is still frustrating to me. The gay man has stronger sexual feelings toward men than I, thus it is much easier for me to ignore these feelings (which really don't exist at all for many such as myself). On top of that, I (and many others) have a VERY strong sexual feeling toward females. My assumption is that (bi-sexuals excluded) these sexual tendencies do not coexist for the homosexual. So, is the homosexual to fight off the gay temptation as well as manufacture a false sexual desire for the opposite sex? And if so, do you think this is fair? God presents individuals with many challenges, but why that one?

I have a sinking feeling about this issue: As long as Christians regard homosexual acts as sins, we can never be accepted by some. Every time I attempt to be a Christian witness to my fiancée, this issue arises. She (like many gay supporters) struggles to see our God as a just God and

Christianity as the true way, as long as we are defining gays as sinners. Is it possible to be a Christian witness to someone who will never concede that homosexual acts are sins? If so, how? If not, is my relationship doomed?

Additional questions: Is the gay Christian's claim that the Bible is NOT clear about the issue completely unfounded? Have you heard of a compelling argument for this point of view? Also, I like your humble approach to dealing with gays (a bit different than Dr. Laura's). But, suppose you are questioned by a homosexual about your true feelings about gay marriage, the act itself, etc.? What then? Take the risk that honesty may end the friendship? Lie to gain more understanding and display compassion? So many questions.

And you may never answer them or even read this email. That is completely acceptable being that you have no idea who I am. If you do decide to reply, thank you. I am having many difficulties with this issue and regard you as someone who is enlightened both by this issue and by the word of God.

Thank you for your kind words about my article. I am so glad I am able to provide a different perspective on homosexuality, because this issue is far more than an intellectual issue for me; I am very involved in a discipleship ministry to those dealing with unwanted same-sex attractions, and I see with my own eyes, on a weekly basis, how God can change lives.

Your explanation of pre-conditions is solid, but the issue is still frustrating to me. The gay man has stronger sexual feelings toward men than I, thus it is much easier for me to ignore these feelings (which really don't exist at all for many such as myself). On top of that, I (and many others) have a VERY strong sexual feeling toward females. My assumption is that (bi-sexuals excluded) these sexual tendencies do not coexist for the homosexual.

People experience varying levels of attraction for the

opposite sex. Homosexuality is really “gender identity confusion.” In terms of male homosexuals, they usually don’t experience sexual attraction to women because something happened that prevented them from learning what it means to be a boy, then later a man, and being comfortable with their masculinity. Men remained a mystery to them, and we are attracted to the “other,” to the mysterious. Homosexual men don’t generally experience sexual attraction to women because they’re stuck with unmet needs for close, bonding relationships with other males. Interestingly, once they learn to have healthy, non-erotic relationships with other men, some men can start to experience attraction to women. Or at least one woman. I know one man in his 30’s who is going through what he’s calling his “junior-high stage,” and absolutely marveling at what it feels like to find women attractive for the first time! (He’s having a great time of it, too! ::::smile::::)

So, is the homosexual to fight off the gay temptation as well as manufacture a false sexual desire for the opposite sex?

To answer, let me draw a parallel to something in the physical realm. Let’s say someone has a broken arm. All the indications are that it’s broken because there’s a lot of pain, swelling—and the end of the bone has pierced the skin! Would we ever counsel them to tell themselves, “I’m not hurt, I don’t have a broken arm, I’m whole and well,” and suggest they conjure up feelings of painlessness? I hope you’re smiling because I mean it to be ludicrous and not judgmental. □

When someone has erotic and romantic feelings for a person of the same sex, that’s a sign that something is broken—inside. Unfortunately, there is no x-ray machine for the heart that gives undeniable proof of a brokenness like we see with a broken bone. The pro-gay voices that seek to identify homosexuality as normal and good have deceived many people into denying that a homosexual orientation is “brokenness.”

But it IS relational brokenness, and trying to tell someone not to feel same-gender attraction is like telling someone with a broken arm not to feel the pain.

Fighting off homosexual temptations means not participating in homosexual behavior (DOING), and choosing not to lust and sin in the mind (THINKING). It can't mean not feeling the feelings, because that's impossible to do. Trying to manufacture a false sense of attraction to the opposite sex won't work either, any more than manufacturing a false sense of health and wholeness when your arm is broken. The important thing is to realize that having homosexual attractions in the first place is a sign that something is wrong, and then doing the hard work that addresses the emotional and relational brokenness that caused those feelings in the first place.

And if so, do you think this is fair? God presents individuals with many challenges, but why that one?

I hope you can see that I believe in being honest with the situation, acknowledging that there is a problem, that something is wrong, not pretending things are other than the way they are. I believe God honors us being truthful that way; Psalm 51 says, "I know that You desire truth in my inmost part." Instead of saying "Pretend you're not broken, and act like you're something you're not," I believe God says to those dealing with same-gender attraction, "Acknowledge that something is truly wrong, and come to Me to bring healing and hope to you. Don't rely on your own strength, because you don't have what it takes to bring healing to your inmost wounds, or health to those unmet needs, those empty places, that only I can meet now."

I have a sinking feeling about this issue: As long as Christians regard homosexual acts as sins, we can never be accepted by some.

Regrettably, you are right. As long as we insist on agreeing

with what God has said, there will always be people who will call us narrow-minded, intolerant bigots. Let me put things in a little different perspective. When we say it's wrong for a husband to cheat on his wife, that it's sin, do people have a problem with that? Do they turn on God and call Him unjust and unloving? Not usually. How about those who have sex BEFORE marriage? When we call *that* sin, because it defiles the holiness of the marriage bed, do people use that as an excuse to turn on God? Some might, those who are committed to what they want regardless of what God says, but not with the same fervor as their reaction to the pronouncement of homosexual behavior as sin. Something is different, and it's the result of what Romans 12 warns about in letting the world squeeze you into its mold. People who object to calling homosexuality sin have allowed the world to squeeze them into its mold.

ANY sexual activity outside of marriage is sin; God is not singling out homosexuals. But people lose sight of that, and a big reason is that they don't understand the importance and significance of sex. They put it in the same category as scratching an itch or feeding a hungry stomach. But those are not moral areas as sex is, because sex has a spiritual dimension to it, where two become one and there is a mystical unity of husband and wife that reflects the mystical unity of Christ and the Church. (See Ephesians 5.) Homosexual sex (or premarital or extramarital heterosexual sex, for that matter) can NEVER even come close to the transcendent experience that intimacy between two committed people in a covenantal marriage relationship provides. This is not some philosophical pie-in-the-sky absolute I made up; this is the experience of people, some of whom I know personally, who have left homosexuality behind and are now enjoying what God intended in heterosexual marriage.

Every time I attempt to be a Christian witness to my fiancée, this issue arises. She (like many gay supporters) struggles to see our God as a just God and Christianity as

the true way, as long as we are defining gays as sinners. Is it possible to be a Christian witness to someone who will never concede that homosexual acts are sins? If so, how? If not, is my relationship doomed?

Yes, it's possible to be a Christian witness, because you have truth on your side. We know what is true because God said it in His word. But you have a larger problem on your hands that your fiancée's refusal to see homosexual acts as sin, I fear; she apparently has no respect for the authority of the Bible. That is what underlies the insistence that what God calls sin, isn't—because people don't want it to be, and loud voices have assured them that it isn't. _____, it sounds to me like you are unequally yoked (2 Corinthians 6:14). If you have trusted Christ and she hasn't, if you believe that God has given us absolute truth and she denies it, how do you walk together with such diametrically opposed world views?

Additional questions: Is the gay Christian's claim that the Bible is NOT clear about the issue completely unfounded? Have you heard of a compelling argument for this point of view?

Yes. They have taken verses that are explicitly clear and twisted them around, creating new explanations that don't hold up to scrutiny. Joe Dallas has done an excellent job of refuting gay theology in his book [A Strong Delusion](#). And he comes with outstanding credentials; for several years he was very involved in the gay church, learning the arguments inside out and backwards, before realizing they were lies and repenting of his wrong beliefs.

Also, I like your humble approach to dealing with gays (a bit different than Dr. Laura's). But, suppose you are questioned by a homosexual about your true feelings about gay marriage, the act itself, etc.? What then? Take the risk that honesty may end the friendship? Lie to gain more understanding and display compassion? So many questions.

It becomes a lot clearer when you see how the Lord Jesus handled this sticky kind of situation. He never compromised on what was true and holy, but He also looked right through the shame and guilt that clung to those caught in various sins and loved the person underneath. ("Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."—John 8) When someone KNOWS they are accepted and loved right as they are, it's easier for them to accept the truth about themselves and repent. I would never lie, but "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:12) puts me in a position to offer hope and help in pointing the way out. If the person chooses not to go through that door, that's his decision. Some friendships cannot take the strain of one person walking in the light and the other walking in the darkness, and that's part of the cost of following Christ.

I am having many difficulties with this issue and regard you as someone who is enlightened both by this issue and by the word of God.

There are plenty of good reasons to have difficulties with this issue, ____! It's a hard one, but the wisdom and love of God are deeper still. I am thrilled to have learned so much about what often causes a homosexual orientation in the first place, and why that means there is a way out. Actually, there is hope in the truth that homosexual behavior is sin, because sin can be repented of and the broken heart healed; if homosexuality were an unredeemable, unchangeable condition, how tragic it would be for God to call it an abomination and not provide a way to escape it! It is a long, hard process to recognize how deeply the roots of homosexuality go, and invite Him to tear them out and replace them with His love and acceptance and truth. Glorious things happen when people do that—but it all starts with acknowledging the sin. The most grievous sin isn't the sex act; it's the idolatry and lusting and coveting underneath the desire to want what God has said is wrong to have. It's really a heart issue, not a sexual issue.

Are you still awake? ☐

Thank you for writing. I pray, as I send this, that God will bring comfort to you and maybe some answers to a difficult question; my heart hurts as I think about the tensions you must experience with your fiancée's very different set of values and beliefs. I suspect this issue of homosexuality is painful for you because of the way it is exposing some major fissures in your relationship, and that's scary and hurtful. I pray God's rich wisdom for you and His blessings to overtake you and make you feel loved.

In His grip,

Sue

“I Am Deeply Hurt and Offended by Your Homosexual Myths Article”

This is in regards to the outrageous essay “[Homosexual Myths](#)” by Sue Bohlin that is displayed on your web page. I realize that this woman is entitled to her opinion, but I am ashamed that (pardon my French) c**p such as this is allowed to be published. I am homosexual, and I come from a Christian family, and I have tried to come to terms with both my sexuality and my religion, all the way through my teen years, and I considered suicide many times. Also she says it's a myth that you aren't born homosexual. My family is completely anti homosexuality, and I cannot remember a time when I haven't been attracted to women, so I wasn't “made” to be homosexual, it wasn't a choice.

She also says that 2 people in love can't get married if they are of the same sex, and once again excuse my French, but b*lls**t, absolute b*lls**t. If two people are in love they should have the same rights as any other couple.

I am deeply hurt by what she has said. And the fact that someone would publish it hurts more.

_____, 15

Dear _____,

I am SO GLAD you wrote to reply to my essay on homosexual myths, since it made you so angry. I am glad to have a chance to respond to you and hopefully to clarify some things.

First of all, I hear your anger and I wonder if perhaps, under your anger, is a great deal of pain. I wonder if maybe you are one of the many, many young women who were abused and hurt as a child? In one study, 85-90% of the women who called a ministry helping people dealing with unwanted homosexuality report having been abused, usually sexually. If you grew up in a homophobic family (if that's what you mean by "completely anti-homosexuality"), then I can see how that alone would plant all sorts of mixed and hurtful messages in your head and make you feel confused and hurt. If you considered suicide many times, you must be under a horrible load of pain. That breaks my heart for you. I am so sorry.

You say you cannot remember a time when you haven't been attracted to women, but I wonder if—and very gently suggest—that's not a line you heard somewhere and you adopted it as yours, maybe? Because little girls aren't supposed to be sexually attracted to women—or men, or boys, or anybody else for that matter—until adolescence. But little girls often DO have crushes on other girls, and on female teachers. There's a big difference between having strong feelings for someone you like and admire, and being sexually attracted to her. (For one thing, the sex hormones aren't supposed to be running in young

girls.) However, when little girls become sexual beings at an early age, that usually means someone has violated them by introducing them to sexual acts and feelings long before they were intended to experience those things.

I wonder, _____, did any of these things happen to you? Because you're very angry, and underneath your anger is either pain or fear, and I don't sense you're too afraid here. Just really, really angry.

You said you were raised in a Christian family, but I don't know if that means just a church-going family, or if you all truly know and love Jesus. Your statement about the family being "completely anti-homosexual" makes me think that maybe you heard a lot of judgmental, condemning comments that are very un-Christlike. It's because I have seen for myself how Jesus tenderly loves and can heal women caught in same-sex attraction that I know that the ideas in my essay are true and they offer hope for change.

You said you were deeply hurt by what I said, but I promise, I didn't say anything to hurt you or anyone else. Nonetheless, I believe that you ARE deeply hurt, and I want to say I am so very, very sorry for whatever brought you to this place. I wonder if you are one of those young ladies who has never felt comfortable in her femininity, because being a female means being weak and being victimized and being vulnerable. . . and being hurt. If your feelings of being "different" go way back as far as you can remember, then something happened to interfere with the normal development that God intended for you to enjoy. You were supposed to feel comfortable being a girl, regardless of what part of the [spectrum of femininity](#) you fall in. That was His intent. If that's not where you ended up, I'm sorry for whatever caused that.

Please feel free to write back. My heart goes out to you. You seem to have more on your plate than a 15-year-old young lady should have to bear. I hurt for you, _____, and I am sending

this e-mail back with a prayer that the Lord Jesus will wrap His arms around you and let you feel loved and protected and cherished and adored...because that's His heart for you. He really does feel that way about you.

Your friend, I hope,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Should We Answer Charges of Discrimination in Same-Sex Issues?”

I'm wondering if you can point me to some good resources to help deal with the charge of “discrimination” often leveled at Christians over a stance against homosexuality and same-sex marriage (or against anyone who considers these things to be wrong). How do you answer that?

I'm not sure what resources to point you to, but I brought up your question to a number of fellow workers in the [ministry](#) to those with unwanted homosexuality with which I serve. The best response to this charge, I believe, is that those making the claim don't understand discrimination. It is wrong to make people suffer based on unchangeable characteristics such as the color of one's skin or gender. Homosexuality, however, is a lifestyle choice, and those demanding the “right” to marry do so based NOT on an unchangeable characteristic but on the basis of a chosen behaviors. (Which, of course, is eminently changeable.) It's “apples and oranges.”

Homosexuality is defined by one's behavior (acting out), but civil rights are defined by who/what you ARE, not what you DO. (Incidentally, I would argue that there is a difference between experiencing same-sex attractions, which are not chosen and which constitute temptation, and *choosing* to follow through on those attractions in ways God calls sin. I like what musician Dennis Jernigan says: "We are not defined by our temptations!")

And although this argument doesn't hold any water with those rebelling against God, I still think it's worth saying: If God says something is wrong, it's going to be harmful regardless of what the world says. That's another good reason to prevent people from getting "married," because their activity is going to be harmful, and it is in society's best interests to prevent harm. (This doesn't really have to do with your discrimination question, but I was struck by the wisdom of it when my friend mentioned it.)

So. . . there you have it. I hope it helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Is It OK for Christians to Drink in Moderation? Didn't Jesus Drink?"

Is all alcohol "bad," so to speak? I thought at a point in my studies that if someone imbibed alcohol at any point that it was a sin, but recently I've begun to read scripture that might be interpreted differently.

I know that any form of drunkenness is a sin. However, there are illusions to a possible use of alcohol as a healing agent in "a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23). The question I have, is that the gospel of Matthew speaks about John, and how he ate sparingly and drank nothing (indicating alcohol, unless by divine favor he could exist without fluid whatsoever). Then it says that the Son of Man, which I have been told is how Jesus referred to himself, ate and drank, even going so far as to say that people called him a "winebibber" (Matt. 11:12-20). Does this mean that Jesus drank wine, meaning that it is not a sin to drink wine? For we know that Jesus did not commit sin while here on earth, therefore if he did drink wine, it is not a sin to do so, unless you cross the boundaries of gluttony or alcoholism. Or is Jesus repeating one of those slanderous terms to refer to the way that people intended to demean his name?

Then we come to another verse that states that we as Christians should not do anything that could be perceived as wrong, that we may not lead another to do the same (1 Cor. 10). Would buying and drinking alcohol fall under this category of sin? Drinking beer or wine may appear sinful to those who believe it to be so, therefore would it not be a sin for me as a Christian to go purchasing a bottle of wine or brandy, even if for cooking or celebrating a special occasion?

Your reasoning appears quite sound from my perspective. I believe that Jesus did drink wine based on the accusation you mentioned and the fact that he turned water into "good" wine at Cana. Even if this wine was of a lesser alcohol content than our current choices, the fact remains he wouldn't have made wine that he didn't expect people to drink with his approval.

Your concern about choices we make that concern a weaker brother or sister are valid. This is also a personal choice. However, many Christians I know who do drink alcohol, only do

so in the privacy of their home or at a restaurant where they do not expect to see someone who might be offended. This may seem risky but it also has a lot to do with the church you fellowship at. If the vast majority of your fellowship believe any drinking of alcohol is sin, this would seem a large risk not worth taking. Other churches are more tolerant and there may be little risk at all. This does explain why many pastors choose not to drink alcohol and many seminaries and Bible colleges require students, faculty and staff to sign statements promising not to drink while associated with the institution. Many of their constituents would not understand.

Using alcohol in food preparation is a different issue. If there is to be cooking involved, the alcohol from the beer, brandy or wine is boiled off by the time it gets to the dinner table (alcohol boils at a lower temperature than water). It's the flavor you're after. Various kinds of alcohol, depending on the recipe, add just the right flavor and no alcohol is consumed.

I see nothing in Scripture which forbids the drinking of any alcohol. There are plenty of warnings for over-indulging. Sometimes the decision of whether to drink at all needs to be based on the ability to resist the temptation to drink too much. Some people never really learn to just enjoy a glass of wine or a beer without adding two or three more. Such an individual is better off not drinking at all. (If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off, Matt. 5:30.) And I do know of Christians who drink a little wine with certain meals because it actually does aid their digestion! This is not a myth. Some people have trouble digesting beef (a real uncomfortable feeling results) without some red wine. But the decision regarding a weaker brother or sister is one of individual conscience and the particular fellowship in which you reside.

I hope this helps.

Respectfully,

“Help—Our Son is Gay”

Dear Sue,

I am a father with a heavy heart. . . .our son is living a homosexual lifestyle. He is nearly 40 years of age. We have known and lived with this for over 10 years. At first we were devastated. He was raised in a Christian home and he made a profession of faith while a teenager, but after college he moved to _____ to work.

He did seek some counseling at first, but for whatever reason he did not find the quality of help that he was seeking, and so began a drift away from church and the Lord. For several years following, we as parents tried to make suggestions and made comments to encourage him to seek professional help and trust the Lord again. He was very resentful of any comments concerning anything religious or concerning his lifestyle. So not to drive him away from us, we have just resorted to prayer that the Holy Spirit will bring about a renewing and transformation and that the scales that Satan has put over his eyes would be removed.

And of course we have made extra efforts to let him know that we love him very much. His plans are now to move across the country, and I know that being that far away will make communication even more difficult. Now to my question. . . How do I approach him again after all these years that will not cause the wall of resentment to be built again? How and what do you recommend that would be a positive approach since he is a grown man and does not appear to want to change or seek the

Lord in making a transition?

Sue, I have faith and have been faithful in my prayer life for him and I know that since he give his life to the Lord and was saved, the Lord holds on to him even though he is not holding on the the Lord now. Looking forward to your response.

I am so sorry for the heartbreak you are experiencing over your son. I'm sure you realize it is even magnified in the Father's heartache over him.

I do have several suggestions. First, get a copy of the excellent books [Someone I Love is Gay](#) by Anita Worthen and Bob Davies and [When Homosexuality Hits Home: What to Do When a Loved One Says They're Gay](#) by Joe Dallas. That's for you.

Secondly, keep praying. That is the most effective thing you can do, and the Lord honors it. I have heard, personally, several testimonies of those who have repented of a gay identity who say that their parents loved them and wouldn't stop praying, and that's why they left "the life."

Third, I suggest you say something to him, very simply, without emotion, and you only need to say it once: "Son, I just want you to know that if you get to the point where your life isn't working for you, I do know where to find resources to help, and I'll be here to walk through it with you." Then you leave the ball in his court. I promise he won't ever forget it, but it takes awhile to move past the denial and spiritual deception that is part of the "gay is OK" mindset. In the meantime, go to the Living Hope Ministries website (www.livehope.org) and [sign up for their newsletter](#), which will be an encouragement to you and educational too. When and if your son gets to the point of saying, "OK, Dad, what about the way out?" then give him Joe Dallas's book [Desires in Conflict: Hope for Men Who Struggle with Sexual Identity](#). (After that book, I would recommend [Coming Out of Homosexuality](#) by Bob Davies and Lori Rentzel.)

I hope this helps.

Sue

“Is it Christian to Celebrate Birthdays?”

Is it Christian to celebrate birthdays?

Sure! Celebrating birthdays is really celebrating the person who was born on that day, and that is a way to fulfill the second greatest commandment, “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” Loving and honoring people because they are important takes many forms, and celebrating birthdays is a legitimate way to do that.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Is It Always Wrong to Lie? Even During War?”

Our pastor claims it's always wrong to lie. Is this true? What about during war?

It's one of the 10 Commandments: “thou shalt not bear false witness” (Ex. 20:16). In the New Testament, Jesus claimed to BE the truth (Jn. 14:6). Yes, it's always wrong to lie, because God's nature is truth, and lying is acting

contradictory to His nature.

It's always wrong to lie; it's never wrong to tell the truth and trust God to work it out.

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries