

# Trusting God in the Bizarre

I have tongue cancer. Bizarre, right? I'm not male, nor do I engage in the particularly bad combination of both smoking and drinking, which are the big markers for this nasty invasion. In two weeks I am scheduled for surgery to remove the cancer by cutting out a big chunk of my tongue—which is a particular challenge and sadness for a professional speaker.

One of the things I have discovered is that, even without any drugs, the weight of this diagnosis and the upcoming difficult surgery and recovery has consumed a lot of my mental and emotional energy. Everything in my life has taken a back seat to this crisis.

Let me share some observations from my "Cancer Journey" journal, in no thought-through order because . . . see the above paragraph.

The oral surgeon who biopsied my tongue is a dear believer from church. When he delivered the bad news to me with amazing tenderness and gentleness, he was "Jesus with skin on" to me. I truly sensed the Lord was telling me through my doctor-now-friend that He was allowing this challenge that was going to be hard, and a lot of work, but He is with me. I was so blessed to be able to freely respond by asking, "Would you please pray for me?" And he did. The first of many, many prayers I have received.

Years ago, when an older friend got breast cancer, I asked her if she struggled with anger at God for letting this bad thing happen to her. She said, "Oh no! God has been so faithful and so good to me all these years of walking with Him, I know that He is allowing this for a reason. I trust Him." And that's why she didn't ask the "Why me?" question, either: living in a fallen world, why NOT her? At that time, I prayed, "Lord, I will continue to ask that You spare me from cancer, but if You

don't, I am pre-deciding to respond the way Delores did." So I didn't have to work out my response when the diagnosis came.

My primary care doctor told me a long time ago to stop diagnosing myself; I'm never right. (And not to consult with Dr. Google either.) But that's what I had done concerning the soreness on the side of my tongue that has lingered for months. Two dentists advised me to see an oral surgeon and possibly get it biopsied, but I was so *sure* it couldn't be cancer that I dragged my feet following through. I am fully repenting of "leaning on my own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5) and diagnosing myself. And I now have a fuller understanding of why [self-sufficiency](#) is a sin . . . and I'm repenting of that too.

Early in this cancer journey, Jesus spoke to my heart through Revelation 2:10—"Do not fear what you are about to suffer." I know He was addressing the church in Smyrna with that verse, but He pretty much burned it into MY heart when I read it one morning. He knew that, being a pain weenie, I was going to struggle with fear. I have to keep reminding myself of what to do with my fear: Psalm 53:6 says, "When I am afraid, I will trust in You." And in these days of Advent, I get to be reminded frequently through Christmas music that Jesus is Immanuel, "God with us." I need to trust Him; I need to trust IN Him; I need to recall Isaiah 43:1-5, where He says, "Don't be afraid, for I am with you." Just like I used to soothe my frightened children when they were small with, "It's OK, it's OK, Mommy's with you."

One night as I prepared for bed and took my evening medication and supplements, I realized that taking oral pain meds post-surgery is going to be a challenge with a crippled tongue. Then I realized that I am going to be losing a body part, and I need to grieve that. The next morning, on the phone with our church's women's pastor who was checking on me, I shared about this realization. As she prayed for me, choked up with compassion, my tears started to fall. The moment I hung up,

great heaving sobs overtook me. And I grieved.

(As hard as it was on me, losing a body part because of disease, I also cried out of anger that the enemy has deceived so many people, especially young people, into thinking that they would be happy if they would just have perfectly healthy body parts amputated. I cried out of compassion for their inevitable double grief of not only losing a *healthy* body part, but the eventual realization that they were lied to about what would fix everything in their thoughts and feelings. And that evil spirits laugh at their pain.)

Instead of a women's Christmas Coffee at church, we were blessed to have 25 hostesses open their homes in multiple cities and multiple zip codes for 25 teachers to share the same basic message that each of us made our own. In my final point, about abiding in Christ, I was able to hold up an IV bag and tubing to illustrate what abiding is like: Jesus said He is the vine, we are the branches. Our job as branches is to stay connected so His "supernatural sap" can flow into us. Just like when we're hooked up to an IV, our job is to stay connected. I asked my hostess's husband to record that part of my message as well as my application about abiding in Christ as I wrestle with this cancer. I was able to edit it down to 6 minutes and post it on Facebook with a request for prayer.

<https://www.facebook.com/559034244/videos/703017111419005/>

Now on my own Facebook feed, I see a very limited number of people's posts. But somehow (cue God to show up) my post made it to hundreds of people's feeds, and 400+ comments and over 3600 views of the video later, I am being prayed for—a LOT! Thank You Lord!

And I need the prayers. I think the cancer is spiritual warfare that God is allowing for His glory and my good. And for other people's good as well, though I may never see it on this side of eternity. One of my friends said, "You are

outspoken and the enemy wants to silence you. What better way than to go after your tongue?" On top of the attack on my body, I've also wrestled at times with fear about the pain. I think it's a spirit of fear. (I've been here before: see my blog post "[I'm Scared, Lord.](#)")

But God . . . because He loves me . . . just gave me a connection on Facebook with a young lady who is not only recovering from the same tongue cancer surgery, it was done by the same surgeon as mine! She has encouraged and reassured me about the pain management. We look forward to meeting face to face soon. That is a Christmas gift from the Lord, and it's part of His answer to the prayers of many people.

I have been in this place of experiencing peace from the prayers of God's people before. My last trip to Belarus, before I lost the ability to walk, I posted a request for people to pray daily for me for "stair grace." There are few elevators in Belarus, and the building where we were staying and teaching had two flights of stairs I had to climb several times a day. I asked for 10 people to pray, and 70 promised they would support me through prayer. And boy did they ever. It was amazing how easy it was to go up and down stairs for almost two weeks.

Until the last day, on my last stair climb, when I sensed the Lord telling me, "I have been answering your friends' prayers for stair grace all this trip. Now I'm going to remove the grace so you can experience what it would have been like without the enabling grace." And. It. Was. HARD!!! I was sore, I was out of breath, my polio leg yelled at me. So I know the huge difference prayer makes, and I am so grateful for the prayer support I've already received. I am desperate for the prayers of God's people!

The story continues . . . in God's loving hands. . . as I continue to trust Him in the bizarre.

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## Learning to Lean Hard—AGAIN

Walking with God. The scriptures talk a lot about how we walk, which is biblical language for how we live. But walking itself, beyond the analogies, has a special meaning to me.

As an infant, polio paralyzed me from the waist down, but little baby helper nerve cells sprouted up and gave me some use of my leg back. I needed a full-length brace to be able to stand and walk at all for my first years. And every step of my life has been a rather noticeable limp. So to me, walking = limping.

So when I hear words of wisdom like, “Don’t trust any leader who doesn’t walk with a limp” (meaning, a leader who hides their brokenness and need for Jesus), I’m all over that. I’ve got that “walk with a limp” thing DOWN!

My limp was the cause of great shame for decades. I have always avoided looking in mirrors and plate-glass windows, anything that would remind me of what I look like when I walk. I didn’t need reflective surfaces, though, to be reminded of my limp; the stares of people, especially children, did that, making my soul burn with embarrassment. Every single day.

And when I was 35, a physical therapist instructed me to start using a cane. It helped with stability and relieving some of the stress on my polio leg. As long as I was going to use a

cane, I thought, I may as well *enjoy* it by using fun and pretty canes (thanks to [FashionableCanes.com!](https://www.fashionablecanes.com))

And then bad arthritis hit both my hips, and the pain escalated to the point where I literally could not walk or stand for a year and a half. My mobility scooter became my legs 24/7.

I wasn't limping anymore. Because I wasn't walking anymore, with or without a cane.

By God's grace, particularly through Medicare, once I hit 65 I was able to have both hips replaced. The arthritis went into the medical waste bin along with my natural hip joints. I have had no pain since 2018, a daily source of gratitude for me.

And the ability to walk and stand was restored to me. What a blessing!

One day I realized that yes, I was limping again, because *I was walking again!* That put a whole new spin on seeing limping as a *privilege!*

God has used this journey to teach me a number of lessons. (Such as ["Lessons From a Hospital Bed"](#)) I recently learned a new one.

I often advise people to "lean hard on Jesus" regardless of the reason, but especially in times of trial and crisis. Sometimes they wonder, What does that look like? Legit question!

And one day as I was walking across my kitchen, leaning hard onto my cane, the Holy Spirit nudged me. As usual, without thinking about it, I was depending on my cane to provide stability and assistance and relieve some of the weight and pressure on my increasingly-weak leg. Then, when my cane struck some water on the floor I didn't see, it slid as if I had been walking on ice. By God's grace I did not fall, though

I could easily have done so—and falling is baaaaaad for people with artificial hips. I suddenly had a new appreciation for how much I need my cane. And I need it to be firmly planted on non-slippery surfaces.

Just like I need Jesus, who is far more secure than my cane on a dry surface.

I need to lean hard on Him in grateful dependence, trusting Him to empower me, lead me, grow me, change me, provide for me. Just like I do my cane, a physical reminder of what “leaning hard” looks like.

But there was another lesson coming.

I don't need my cane to walk like I used to need my scooter to move. But when I walk without it, my wonky polio limp is not only there, it's even wonkier than it was before because my new hips changed my gait. Sometimes when I need to carry two items from one room into another, I hook my cane into the crook of my elbow so I have both hands free to carry stuff. When I do that, my walk—my limp—is almost bizarre.

It is not lost on me that when I hook my cane onto my arm like a fashion accessory instead of leaning hard on it, my walk is wonky. And unnatural. And when I depend on myself, walking in self-sufficiency instead of leaning hard on Jesus, the walk of my life is at least equally wonky. And unnatural. And unattractive.

So yes, my cane is like Jesus. He wants us to lean hard on Him, to depend on Him, instead of treating Him like a fashion accessory. He actually said, “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for ***apart from Me you can do nothing.***” (John 15:5, emphasis mine)

The other day, as I entered the living room with both hands full, my husband said, “I would have been happy to help; you

don't need to wear Jesus on your arm."

I laughed . . . and then the next time, instead of leaning on self-sufficiency I asked for help. Because leaning on Jesus means, among many other things, that He helps me spurn self-sufficiency and ask for help.

The lessons continue.

(I wrote a 2016 blog post ([Leaning Hard](#)) about my first set of lessons in learning to lean hard, which I had forgotten about until I went to upload this one. I will clearly need to keep learning the lesson.)

This blog post originally appeared at [blogs.bible.org/learning-to-lean-hard-again/](https://blogs.bible.org/learning-to-lean-hard-again/) on November 16, 2022.

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## Vaccination Hate

Many of us are familiar with the destructive effects of the Covid pandemic: besides death and long-term weaknesses, we have seen irrecoverable economic disasters, especially to small businesses; children who will never recover from gaps in their academic and social development; and the fear-crippled churchgoers who have yet to set foot in a church building since March 2020—just to name a few.

But recently I was horrified to hear my friend Dr. John West, Vice President of the Seattle-based Discovery Institute and Managing Director of the Institute's Center for Science and Culture, deliver one of the most disturbingly chilling messages I've yet heard on the effects of Covid. He walked



through examples of insult after indignity after contemptuous phrase directed at people who chose not to receive the Covid vaccine.

Pre-pandemic, the right to make one's own medical decisions was considered a basic human right. Within just a few months of March 2020 that right evaporated, and the culture quickly divided into emotion-laden "us vs. them" positions.

"The issue here," John has written\*, "is not whether you favor the COVID vaccines or think they are effective or moral. The issue is how we treat sincere and decent people who make different medical choices than we would."

*[W]e are witnessing a mass campaign to dehumanize an entire class of people because of their medical choices. Fellow citizens who choose not to be vaccinated are being branded ["narcissists," "child abusers" and "parasites."](#) They are accused of ["killing off their fellow citizens."](#) They are denounced as ["dangerous"](#) people "from poorer or less educated parts of society." They are described as ["a leech on everyone else's participation in making America healthy and safe."](#) A sitting federal judge has declared that "the vast majority of unvaccinated adults" are either (take your pick) "uninformed and irrational" or ["selfish and unpatriotic."](#) A member of a famous rock band has labeled them ["an enemy"](#) of society with a "delusional, evil idea." The Prime Minister of Canada has called them ["misogynistic and racist."](#) A New York newspaper derides them as [low in IQ](#). The Republican governor of Alabama urges that ["it's time to start blaming the unvaccinated folks,"](#) accusing them of embracing "a horrible lifestyle." A former speechwriter for George W. Bush has compared the unvaccinated to cancer, calling them ["the malignant minority."](#) The president of France claims the unvaccinated [are not even citizens](#).*

The insults go both ways. Those suspicious of the vaccine and

vaccine mandates have contemptuously castigated the vaxxed as “sheep” and “sheeple,” “murderers,” and even “delusional unfit brainwashed parents” of those who had their children vaccinated.

I am struck—feeling almost like a literal slap across the face—by how this situation is the 2022 iteration of Romans 14, where Paul addressed the mutual judging and condemning of people taking opposing positions concerning eating and drinking. Swapping out details from the daily news feed, we might paraphrase Romans 14:3 as

*The one who [receives the vaccine] must not despise the one who does not, and the one who [chooses not to get the vaccine] must not judge the one who [has been vaccinated], for God has accepted him.*

In verse 5, Paul gives room for people to come to different positions on the subject of “debatable things”:

*Each must be fully convinced in his own mind.*

What was missing in the church at Rome is what’s missing in much of our culture concerning the vaccine issue: love.

A grace-filled spirit that puts the value of people above being right.

A willingness to allow others to believe differently than we do because they are precious image-bearers who deserve respect and dignity, even in the midst of disagreement.

*15 For if your brother or sister is distressed because of [your beliefs about vaccines], you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy by your [vaccination position] someone for whom Christ died.*

But it’s not just about what people believe. John continues:

*This kind of rhetoric against others has cruel real-world consequences. Unvaccinated people are losing their jobs and their livelihoods, often by government decree. They are being denied unemployment benefits – benefits they paid for through their payroll taxes. Doctors have announced that they will not serve unvaccinated people, and unvaccinated patients are being denied life-saving organ transplants. Unvaccinated people are being denied access to marriage licenses. Judges have tried to deny child visitation rights to parents who are not vaccinated. In many jurisdictions, healthy unvaccinated people are now banned from stores, theaters, and sporting events. In Canada, one province even authorized grocery stores to ban the unvaccinated, only relenting after a massive backlash. Just ponder for a moment the type of mindset someone must have to authorize the denial of access to food.*

These policies, driven by unveiled contempt, are the essence of what is unloving. Unkind. Mean. Hateful! And completely ignoring God.

It's not just love that is missing—it is awareness that God is sovereign. He is in control. And both policy-makers and individuals posting comments on social media will answer to Him for how we treated people He loves, people He made, people Jesus died for.

Regardless of anyone's beliefs or practices about vaccination, He is still God and we are not. He is bigger than Covid and vaccines. Maybe some reminders of His blessed sovereignty will help . . .

Who announces the end from the beginning and reveals beforehand what has not yet occurred; who says, 'My plan will be realized, I will accomplish what I desire.' [Isaiah 46:10]

All the inhabitants of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he wishes with the army of heaven and with those who

inhabit the earth. No one slaps his hand and says to him, 'What have you done?' [Daniel 4:35]

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. [Genesis 50:20]

Indeed, the Lord of Heaven's Armies has a plan, and who can possibly frustrate it? His hand is ready to strike, and who can possibly stop it? [Isaiah 14:27]

The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it. [Psalm 24:1]

\*<https://evolutionnews.org/2022/01/the-rise-of-totalitarian-science-2022-edition/>

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## Salt and Light Online

*During the pandemic, I was honored to be asked to address a student leadership conference for a Christian school in the Philippines via Zoom. Looking over my notes, there isn't much here that doesn't apply to ALL of us with any kind of online connection.*

In order to follow Jesus' call to be salt and light, and applying it to online life, I'd like to take a look at several dangers of the dark side of online life, as well as suggest ways to be wise in the use of this technology.

**The Comparison Trap**

I don't think anything has fueled the temptation to compare ourselves to others as much as social media. There is a wise saying that "Comparison is the thief of joy."

This is where our feelings go when we're caught in the comparison trap: to envy. To depression and anxiety.

A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot. (Proverbs 14:30)

Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad. (Proverbs 12:25)

The opposite of comparing is choosing contentment.

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. (1 Timothy 6:6-8)

And one of the best ways to choose contentment is to train yourself to practice gratitude. Give thanks for what the Lord has allowed for you.

Whatever happens, give thanks, because it is God's will in Christ Jesus that you do this. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

## **Dangers of Social Media Apps**

One of the worst is Tiktok.

A 17 year old girl wrote: "The only thing worse that happened to me besides Tiktok was my family members dying . . . . I would spend countless hours crying in my bedroom repeatedly watching Tiktok, telling myself I wasn't good enough."

Another girl told of starving herself to look like the people

Tiktok decides are acceptable.

Tiktok destroys people's self-esteem. Millions of kids try to learn the dances to fit in or feel accepted.

There is a strong pro-anorexia and pro-bulimia presence, causing lots of girls to develop eating disorders because adolescents are particularly vulnerable to peer pressure.

The message on so many of the apps for girls is: If you want to be seen, heard, loved—show off your body. No one is valuing you for your heart or your mind or your passions, just your appearance. Just your body.

This is so dangerous! It's a lie that a girl's worth is in how pretty she is or how thin she is or how sexy she is.

A person's worth is set by Jesus, who was willing to pay for each one of us with His life. He says, "I made you in My image, and that makes you infinitely valuable to begin with. Then I died for you, which proves you are infinitely valuable." THAT is true worth. It's set by Jesus Himself.

Many of the apps are also dangerous because sexual predators use them to trick kids and lure them into meeting, where bad things happen. So many victims of sex trafficking are drawn in on social media.

Another way social media is dangerous is because there's where so much cyber-bullying happens.

If you see someone being bullied, ask the Lord for help and be brave. Speak up and say, "That's not okay." There is power in just one voice! And report it—to whatever authorities have to do with how you know the person, such as school, or church, or the neighborhood. Keep inviting Jesus into the situation and ask for supernatural help.

Another problem with Tiktok in particular is a different kind of danger, concerning privacy and security.

One expert said, "Anytime Amazon, major banks, and the Department of Defense ban employees from using an app for security issues, it's time for everyone to uninstall the app."

You need to know that NOTHING you put on social media is private.

### **Other Emotional Dangers**

The more time you spend online, the greater your risk of feeling isolated and taken to a dark place emotionally. Because of the pandemic's lockdown, depression and loneliness are at an all-time high.

Scrolling your social media feeds contributes to feeling left out.

Too much social media leads to disconnection and loneliness, and feelings of social isolation. Too much social media makes us feel inadequate because of the comparison thing.

A 2018 study published in the Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology revealed that those who limited their social media exposure to 30 minutes a day, reported that their depression lifted and their loneliness improved. Social media activist [Collin Karchner](#), founder of the "Save the Kids" movement, kept hearing from U.S. students that they reported feeling better immediately after deleting their social media apps!

Another aspect of spending too much time online is that it can cause difficulty engaging in conversations in real life. Which of course fuels the loneliness further.

### **Purity**

Probably the MAJOR pitfall of the Internet is pornography.

The fastest growing consumer of porn is girls 15-30. I found one statistic that 70% of guys and 50% of girls struggle with a porn problem. I think it's higher than that.

I understand that when apologist and speaker Josh McDowell offered a one-month discipleship program for Christian student leader, he learned that 100% of both guys and girls confessed to problems with porn.

Brain chemicals are released when viewing pornography and during sexual experiences. These brain chemicals are intended to bond husband and wife like emotional superglue, but when people use porn, they bond to the porn instead of an actual person.

This is a matter of spiritual warfare. The enemy of our souls is taking captive millions of Christians through pornography, then beating them up with shame and guilt.

I plead with you, install a filter or an accountability program on your phone to help you stand against this attack on your purity.

And please, don't take pictures of your bodies. And most certainly do not send any pictures of body parts to other people!

**You were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:20)**

**The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. (1 Corinthians 7:4)**

Your body was bought by Jesus and it belongs to Him. It's not okay to give it away, even in pictures, to anyone except the person you have married.

**What would being WISE look like, then?**

First, recognize that this is a huge issue, especially in the Philippines. People in your country spend more time online than any other country in the world-almost 11 hours a day. You



also spend more time on social media, over four hours, than any other country-twice the worldwide average.

It would be wise to choose to unplug yourselves so you can replenish your mental, emotional, and spiritual resources.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:24, "If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me."

There has to be a choice to deny ourselves and say NO to the phone as a way of saying YES to Jesus.

Think about all the ways you stay tethered to your phone so it controls you.

Get a real alarm clock and watch so you're not dependent on your phone to tell you what time it is.

At night, recharge your phone in another room so your sleep won't be disturbed by the sound and light of incoming messages and notifications.

Don't post on social media when you're emotional. Don't treat social media like a diary. Then you won't regret emotional posting that embarrasses you later.

If you're already feeling down, don't scroll social media. It will make you feel even worse.

To be emotionally healthy, let yourself feel your feelings instead of distracting yourself by scrolling.

Put your phone down and be 100% mindful of what's happening in your life at that moment.

The blue light from screens decreases your melatonin levels, which leads to sleep problems. Turn off your screen an hour before bed to help yourself sleep better.

**Love One Another**

Before you post anything, ask:

- Is it true?
- Is it helpful?
- Is it kind?
- Will it cause drama?
- Am I posting this for the right reason?
- Would my grandmother want to see this?
- Is it mine to share?
- Would I say this or share this in real life?
- Does this glorify God?

Can you see how passing your post through the filter of these insightful questions would be loving?

### **The Big Picture**

There are two verses that strike me as especially appropriate to this issue:

**Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves. (Philippians 2:3)**

**So then, whether you eat or drink OR WHATEVER YOU DO, do it all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)**

If that is the question we ask: “Will this bring glory to God?” we will find ourselves being loving, kind, respectful Christ-followers who are bringing salt and light into the dark and corrupt world of the internet.

And we will earn the Lord’s accolade: “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

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# Why I Love to Learn I'm Wrong

*Years ago Sue Bohlin decided to embrace correction without defensiveness. Here's why.*

As the webmistress for [Probe.org](http://Probe.org), I love getting emails alerting me to typos, either in the content of our articles or the coding that keeps people from seeing or hearing what they are looking for. I love being able to fix mistakes; there's a deeply satisfying sense of, "Ohhhh *that's* better!"

I want to get things right. I want to set things right. I want to BE right.

That could certainly be about sinful pride, but there's another side to it. I love truth, that which corresponds to reality. If I am mistaken—or worse, misled—about something, I love learning about it so I can shift, bringing my beliefs or my position into alignment with what is true and right.

Originally I titled this post "Why I Love to Be Wrong," but that's not really correct. What I love is "the a-ha moment" of discovering I had been believing something other than what's true, and welcoming correction, so I can adjust and pivot.

One of the major reasons my church's Women's Bible Study teaching is so good, by the grace of God, is that the teaching team gathers on Mondays for the run-through of that week's teacher. Each teacher commits to check her ego at the door and choose to gratefully receive input and advice about how to improve an explanation or illustration, or correct what is off-base or potentially confusing. It takes humility to receive constructive criticism, which runs the gamut from "you can make that better" to "you are wrong here." But being willing to receive that kind of feedback fueled by love and mutual respect makes the whole teaching team improve.

Years ago I heard a word of wisdom: *all defensiveness is*

*fleshly*. Defensiveness is the instant desire to protect oneself from the shame of feeling criticized or dishonored. It can look like deflecting the comment with something like, "You do it too!" It can look like denying whatever is said: "No, you're wrong. I didn't do/say/intend that." It can look like shutting down emotionally. Defensiveness is a reaction to the message of "you're wrong" or "you're not okay." But we can choose to lay down our impulse to defend ourselves and trust God with it. Wise and godly people have counseled others on how to respond to criticism: ask if it's true; if it's valid, admit it and change your ways. If it's not valid, recognize that sometimes you'll be misunderstood, so let it go and trust God.

I loved discovering Proverbs 12:1 in the NIV: "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid." That means that our attitude toward correction—being told or shown we are wrong—is completely our choice, and *we can choose to love correction*.

So I do. Years ago I pre-decided to welcome being shown where I'm wrong.

Which is why I consider disillusionment a gift.

If we discover we have been buying an illusion, embracing disillusionment means moving beyond illusion into reality, which is always a good thing, right?

In the video series "The Truth Project," Dr. Del Tackett teaches what he calls the Cosmic Battle: "The battle between God's Truth and the lies and illusions of the world, the flesh and the devil. The arguments and pretensions that set themselves up against the knowledge of God, against His nature and His word." Ever since Genesis 3, earth has been a battleground for truth vs. lies and illusions.

Illusions are the air we breathe, the water we swim in, here on Battleground Earth.

So when we discover yet another illusion we have unthinkingly embraced, it is a gift to be able to reject the illusion and embrace the truth.

I have rejected a number of illusions ranging from the almost ridiculous to the eternally important.

*Almost ridiculous:* I had been under the illusion that camping was the only way to enjoy a budget vacation. I *hate* sleeping in tents or even a camper. Even more, I especially hate having to walk a block to get to a bathroom. But then I discovered the delightful truth that cruising is a way to experience luxury on a budget, with my own bathroom, and other people cooking and cleaning and entertaining me for less than \$100 a day. Such a marvelous disillusionment!

*Eternally important:* As a college student, I realized that I had believed the lie that the vibrant religion of first-century Christianity was long dead and unavailable, having been replaced by empty ritual and repetition. The TRUTH was that biblical Christianity—being indwelled by God Himself because I have trusted in Christ—was very much alive and supernatural, becoming the source of unimaginable joy that just keeps getting better and better the longer I walk with Him. Such a wonderful disillusionment!

*The most recent big disillusionment:* At the beginning of the pandemic, I embraced the messaging that age 65+ people like me were at grave risk and needed to stay home. I was pretty much terrified, equating this new virus to the horrors of the Bubonic Plague. When I told my nurse friend, whom I had promised I would visit in her home, that I needed to protect myself inside my own home, she asked, “What about the Christians in the Middle Ages who were the hands and feet of Jesus to the people with the plague? What if they had stayed inside and hid? Who’s going to take care of the first responders and the others who don’t have a choice to stay home if not the Christians?”

Whoa. In a moment, the cloud of fear that had enveloped me—which I came to realize was an illusion meant to hold me hostage—dissipated. I remembered Psalm 139, “All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be.” I would not, and will not, die before the day God has ordained. One of our elders reminded me that Jesus had asked, ““And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life’s span?” (Matthew 6:27)

I started visiting my friend on Saturdays for over a year, and she told me that I was the only person other than her patients who would touch her. Emotionally, like millions of others, she was *dying* from isolation and rejection. It was such a joy for me to live in the freedom that disillusionment had brought.

Because I was really, really glad to learn I was wrong.

This blog post originally appeared at [blogs.bible.org/why-i-love-to-learn-im-wrong/](https://blogs.bible.org/why-i-love-to-learn-im-wrong/) on April 19, 2022.

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## Is God Still Doing Miracles?

*I asked Cara Polsley, author of the forthcoming book The Bible and the Holographic Universe, to share her faith-building story that encourages me to ask big, bold prayers of a God who is still willing to do the miraculous.*



*Dr. Cynthia "Cara" Polsley is a writer, researcher, teacher, and speaker. An alumna of the University of Kansas (Classics), she received her Ph.D. in Classics (Classical Philology) from Yale University, with a background in Greek and Latin languages and linguistics, ancient civilization and history, and literature. Her work emphasizes social commentary, narratology, and the inerrancy and intricacy of the Bible.*

*A spinal cord injury survivor and blogger at [www.cpolsley.com](http://www.cpolsley.com), she is author of the science fiction series *Ifscapes* and manager/co-founder of the tech start-up *Cordical LC*.*

"He is your praise, and He is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen" (Deut. 10:21, NKJV).

Moses spoke these words to Israel over 3,000 years ago. Fast-forwarding to today, I understand what he means. We don't always notice God moving. After all, not everyone crosses a sea on dry land or drinks water from a rock. But God is the same God, still doing miracles. When He does, it's a praise to share them.

That's why it's a praise to give you a glimpse of what the Lord has done for my family since a car accident almost killed us and left me paralyzed in 2013.

It was a beautiful summer day with barely a cloud in the sky, a perfect day for a family gathering. Seven of us were driving home on the highway. We'd had car trouble and were being followed miles behind by my father in a tow truck, but otherwise, it had been a happy morning.

The accident happened in an instant. A distracted driver began

speeding. "That guy's going to hit us," my brother remembers thinking. The car rammed our bumper and sent our SUV flipping. We flipped about eight times before landing upside-down nearby. My oldest brother rolled onto the pavement. He was on his feet immediately, running after us. Even though he had been thrown out at fifty-five miles an hour, he was only scratched and bruised. Responding officers were incredulous. "Really, how'd you get here?" one asked. Today, my brother has a small scar on his arm.

Our youngest brother was also tossed out on impact. Fully aware, he stood up and walked around shakily until he felt dizzy. At the hospital, doctors found that his lower back had been broken and had then fused together on the spot. After a brief stint in ICU, he was released. He's now a thriving researcher, teacher, and graduate student, always on the go.

Our niece and nephew, five and three, were still fastened in their seats beside the broken windows. Neither child was admitted to the hospital or had any substantial injuries, even though my nephew spent several months blaming every bug bite and bruise on the accident.

God wasn't done. My father observed that photographs revealed a "bubble of protection" around my mother's place in the driver's seat. The glass and steering wheel in front of her was intact. Her neck and wrist were broken, and she had sustained a severe concussion. After some time in ICU and months of occupational therapy, Mom returned to a busy life working and being an exceptional wife, mother, and grandmother. Her hands dance across the piano keyboard without a trace of injury, much less of a shattered wrist.

My sister-in-law, riding in the passenger seat, had four breaks in her arm. She was told that she would require surgery and that the arm would never be normal again. Four days later, she was in such terrible pain that she went to the local hospital. Her doctor "happened" to be leaving as she entered



the ER, and was able to arrange rapid X-rays.

The orthopedic specialist soon came into the room and began unwrapping her arm. "What are you doing?" she exclaimed. "This arm has never been broken," he said. "And I want to ask you, who grabbed your arm in the accident?" Her elbow bore a bruise shaped like a handprint with thumb and fingers from the outside, as if someone had clasped her elbow. No human had. We'd all been conscious; her window had been unbroken, and she'd crawled out without help.

I was thrown from the car and landed face-down in the grass. My lungs had collapsed. I couldn't breathe and couldn't feel my legs. There was an obvious spinal cord injury. An EMS worker named Luke—like the doctor in the Bible—"happened" to be driving home from work and stopped to help. He had special training in spinal injuries and called for a LifeFlight. I can honestly say that I had no fear in the accident or its aftermath. Jesus was with us every step of the way. "God, be with me," I prayed, knowing He was.

Doctors said that if I survived 6+-hour surgery, I'd never walk again. My spinal cord had been severed. On a respirator, I couldn't communicate until my sister-in-law interpreted my clumsy letters in sign language. Thankfully, my hands were uninjured, but my neck, back, and ribs had been crushed. Taking a breath, lifting a cup of water, sitting up—everything took effort.

At the end of in-patient rehabilitation, with a lot of assistance, I took six small steps at the parallel bars. Those steps justified out-patient therapy. However, therapists soon determined that the progress was insufficient. "You'll grow old in a wheelchair," a well-meaning physical therapist said. "You may see small changes, but they won't be significant." Without significant changes, we had a problem. My Ph.D.'s first year had ended with a literal bang. Within the year, I had to resume studies or forfeit my fellowship at an Ivy

League program halfway across the country. Additionally, every day off my feet threatened blood pressure issues, worse osteoporosis, and reduced function. How could school happen?

On January 1, 2014, God gave the idea of standing leaning against the kitchen sink (not recommended here). The first day, I stood propped against the counter for four minutes. Three months later, I'd worked up to fourteen hours a day, and was approved for knee-locking leg braces like those used by Franklin D. Roosevelt. Reviewers initially denied the request, but our clinician insisted on letting us try. While waiting, I practiced inching backward with full-length ACL braces and a rolling walker built by my father. A month later, I could go forward with actual braces.

In August 2014, living on prayer and family collaboration, Dad and I made the three-day drive back to school. I couldn't get up or down from a chair, shuffle to campus in less than an hour, lift a laptop, or carry a book. However, the disabilities office and my academic department were part of God's provision through countless obstacles. What they could not do, we innovated and prayed to accomplish. They provided a mobility scooter for transportation, placed a podium in each classroom so that I could stand during class, and arranged additional scanning on request through the library. Using a lightweight backpack with safety straps, I managed to carry a computer tablet that weighed about three pounds.

By spring, I was living independently with morning and evening support. One day, bringing home coursework that included a paper facsimile of a certain Egyptian artifact, I texted a photo to my parents: "I just carried the Rosetta Stone!" The rigorous schedule combined teaching, classes, Ph.D. exams, and lectures—academic life—with demands of self-therapy at the gym, sleepless nights, health struggles, and, unwittingly, a broken ankle. But I was singing, loving how God was making things possible. "You believe in God," a puzzled unbelieving friend observed, "and He is healing you."

Two examples of His provision. On a high-nutrition diet, I prayed for fish and eggs. The cafeteria, open for select meals on weekdays, served more fish and eggs than usual that week. Later, realizing that the fridge held extra supplies, I randomly opened my Bible to Luke 11:11-13, reading, “[I]f (a son shall) ask a fish, will (his father) for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?” Another time, I fell at 3 a.m. No one was nearby. Pulling the wall-mounted emergency cord would summon noisy firetrucks. I asked the Lord to preserve the testimony by helping me onto my feet. To this day, it’s a mystery how I got up from the floor.

Christmas 2015 brought a devastating setback. We discovered that my leg was, as doctors said, “impressively” broken due to SCI-induced osteoporosis. After extensive surgery, I wrote my dissertation prospectus lying in bed with an external metal fixator bolted to the bones of my right leg. The leg recovered better than expected.

On the day that I was preparing to travel back to school, I fell. My left leg was now clearly broken. While God hadn’t prevented surgery on the right leg, we prayed. This was it. If He didn’t intervene, there wasn’t enough medical leave left in the Ph.D. program. If God wanted me to finish, He had to make a way.

We prayed for five minutes. At the end, my knee was completely healed, as if nothing had happened. After an hour, we got in the car and were on the road.

Ultimately, the Lord guided through the remainder of the Ph.D. Although officials were too nervous to have me walk across the stage during graduation ceremonies, I walked across it before the diploma ceremony began. It was all Jesus.

I still do hours of walking with braces each day, and am still paralyzed. Nothing is what you would call normal. I believe

more is coming, and pray and work toward it, as God wills. Meanwhile, He's opened doors for writing, teaching, speaking, and more. He continues to do miracles. Though they are not always as expected, His glory and His mercy are everywhere. Sometimes He makes our dependency plainer than others. In those times, it's especially humbling. Still, isn't salvation the greatest miracle, and isn't abundant Christian life meant to testify to God's glory (Col. 3:23-24)?

As Moses said, God is all about "great and awesome things." I praise Him for the opportunity to share some wonders that these eyes have seen, and pray that my story, His story, encourages you to watch for Him actively every day—and to realize that He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.

This blog post originally appeared at [blogs.bible.org/is-god-still-doing-miracles/](https://blogs.bible.org/is-god-still-doing-miracles/) on March 15, 2022.

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## Who Told You That You Were Naked?

*Sue Bohlin reflects on God's question to Adam after he fell and broke the creation.*

There is a most interesting interaction in Genesis 3 between Adam and God after the Fall, when Adam and Eve sinned by rebelling against God's command not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God calls to Adam, who is hiding among the trees of the Garden of Eden, "Where are you?" Adam explains, ". . . I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

And the Lord God said, "Who told you that you were naked?"

(3:11)

Hmmmm. Interesting question, one that Adam doesn't answer.

The first thing the newly fallen man tells his Creator is that he was afraid, and he was naked. Up to this point, in a literally perfect world, there was no fear, and there were no clothes. How did he know to identify this new feeling of being afraid? And "naked" is the opposite of "clothed." In a world without clothes, "naked" has no meaning, right?

When Adam says he was afraid because he was naked, my guess is that this was how he described the new, unwelcome feeling of *shame*: the horrible awareness of being very not-okay, of being vulnerable and embarrassed and exposed.

But I've been munching for days on the next question: "*Who told you that you were naked?*"

In Genesis 3:7, we read that as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, "Then the eyes of both of them opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." Apparently there was an immediate and awful awareness of a change, of something very very wrong.

(I personally think they might have been previously enveloped with light and glory. Psalm 104:2 tells us that God, who made them in His image, "covers himself with light as if it were a garment." The moment they sinned, I think they lost their light.)

But God didn't ask, "How did you know you were naked?" He asked, "*Who told you that you were naked?*"

There are only four characters in the garden: God, Adam, Eve . . . and the serpent, who we find out later is "the devil who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

So, although Adam doesn't answer God's question, it sure sounds to me like it was the nasty serpent.

And I wonder if that question is in the scriptures to direct us to pay attention to the voices that speak to us:

- Who told you that you were too much?
- Who told you that you were not enough?
- Who told you that you were fat?
- Who told you that you were ugly?
- Who told you that you were dumb?
- Who told you that you were incompetent?
- Who told you that you were a loser?
- Who told you that you were too old?
- Who told you that you were too young?

And now I'm seeing the pattern extend to the broken sexuality in our culture:

- Who told you that you were a boy in a girl's body?
- Who told you that you were gay or lesbian or bisexual?
- Who told you that you were asexual or polyamorous?

Social media has given the enemy of our souls a megaphone for his devious, destructive lies.

I thank God for His clarifying question that is just as salient today as it was the day the creation broke at the Fall: "Who told you that you were \_\_\_\_\_?" We need to look beyond the message to the WHO behind it, the source of the voice planting doubt and lies in our souls.

And instead of listening to the voice of the one whose native tongue is lies (John 8:44), we should listen to the One who speaks loving truth to us about ourselves:

- You are the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13)
- You are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14)
- You are blessed of the Father (Matthew 25:34)
- You are more valuable than many sparrows (Luke 12:7)
- You are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you (John 15:3)

- You are the branches (John 15:5)
- You are My friends (John 15:14)
- You are the called of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:6)
- You are beloved of God (Romans 1:7)
- You are a temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you (1 Corinthians 3:16)
- You are Christ's body, and individually members of it (1 Corinthians 12:27)
- You are a letter of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:3)
- You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26)
- You are sons of light and sons of day (1 Thessalonians 5:5)
- You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9)

Now when we hear, "Who told you that you are \_\_\_\_\_?" we can say, "YOU did, Lord! You told me in Your word!"

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on November 16, 2021.

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## Living With a Sense of Urgency

*"Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Psalm 90:12*

*I asked my dear friend Caren Austen to write about the life-upending diagnosis that, in a single moment of time, changed absolutely everything about her life.*

Cerebral atrophy.

That was the diagnosis resulting from a recent MRI. Deterioration of the brain.

After judiciously researching the diagnosis, a consultation with a friend in the medical field confirmed the most likely cause that my brain is shrinking: Alzheimer's. A singular moment with horrific implications.



At 66, I was stung as the future I had anticipated seemed to be snatched away. The time I likely would not have with my children and grandchildren. I didn't feel frightened as much as sad. I know that God is Lord of my past, present, and future, so I was secure in His will and His care.

Still, I had looked forward to more time on playgrounds, more snuggles with my youngest grandchild, my only grandson, Liam, who is, at eight, now my only snuggle bug. I had anticipated more time. Time reading books by flashlight in tents made of blankets strung over tables. More tea parties with Katrin, my tomboy who, at 11, still loves to set up fancy teas for her "Glamma." I longed to continue sending and receiving just-home-from-school and late-night texts about their days. I wanted to cook again with my budding chef, Brigid, and see how she, now a teenager, grows – where her talents and interests take her. I wanted to hang out again with Murren, riding around in the old rusty farm truck she loves. I wanted to hear more of her music video analyses. I wanted to see this young woman on the cusp of adulthood mature and launch into the



world on her own. I wanted to be fully present for proms, graduations, weddings, and more babies.

I had begun two books and had fallen into the writers' bane of procrastination. Now, I wondered if I would have time, if I would still remember all I needed to complete them. Suddenly, I craved time. I wanted more. I was frustrated by the mundane necessities that took me away from the activities that screamed for my time *now*.

I had only recently experienced God's miraculous healing after decades of dealing with a debilitating mental illness that had stolen so much time. Now, with my newfound peace, freedom, and joy, I wanted to live. I wanted to walk in that freedom. I longed to wake up with delight at each new morning. I wanted to share my freedom and my healing. Now, I wondered: would there be time?

I began to live with a sense of urgency. My life became laser focused. Not on a bucket list of places to go or experiences to enjoy. Instead, I felt driven to create a legacy for my children, my grandchildren, and for my friends and others who had lived through some of the same struggles I had. Thoughts and ideas of just how to do that occupied my mind during the day when I was not at work, in the evening when I sat alone at home, and at night when I lay in bed and sleep would not come.

My priorities changed. I didn't want to spend my money or my time on material objects or activity that would not have a lasting impact for the people I loved. I wanted to conserve my time, energy, and resources for those activities that would leave an eternal imprint on those I cared for. I began to spend even more time in prayer for those I love, especially my children and grandchildren. I began to formulate in my mind the letters I would write to each one. I began to search the Scriptures for the verses that would offer them guidance, as well as those that were precious to me, so they could get to know me better even when my mind could no longer communicate

my heart.

I spent time rededicating my two daughters to God and praying my own dedication of my children's children to Him. I told God over and over, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," longing for assurance that even when my mind was gone, I had done all I could to leave behind a legacy that would point them to the Lord I love. A legacy that would ensure we would all be reunited one day in a world that shines with the light of the glory of God when my renewed mind would know and recognize them.

I didn't worry too much about what my own surroundings would be as I declined. I thought I would most likely be squirreled away in a nursing home that took in those with few resources. Separated by hundreds of miles from my family, I knew my local friends would come to check on me. I felt sorrow at the thought of loneliness, isolation, and limited activities, and I wondered how it would feel to live the confusion of time and place I had witnessed with my mother. I reflected on the occasions she talked to me about me, as though I were a stranger. I grieved for the time that would come when I would not recognize my own daughters whom I love, the precious gifts of God I had carried, given birth to, and reared. I wept at the thought of losing the sweet memories of mothering them and the joys that were shared only between the three of us.

As I grieved the future I thought I would not see, I began to concentrate more on what I could leave behind. As I only shared this preliminary diagnosis with a few of my closest confidants, they helped me brainstorm ideas on how to share my legacy: passages of Scripture, poetry, music, videos, letters, photo albums, etc. would be the means I would use to reach out into the future to continue influencing those God had entrusted me with and whom I would leave behind. I experienced relief, pleasure, and even hope at each new idea that would allow me to continue to have influence and share my love and myself even when the part of me that is "me" was gone.

That was how I began living a life of urgency. I awoke daily with a purpose of doing something specific to leave a legacy, a trail those I loved could follow behind me to a growing and loving relationship with God.

Then, in another singularly memorable moment, my life shifted again.

A knowledgeable neurologist examined my MRI. In view of my heart-wrenching diagnosis he seemed crazily nonplussed. But he said that, while the MRI did show evidence of mild cerebral atrophy, it was exactly what he would expect of someone who was 66 years old, and it was certainly nothing of concern. *What??!!!* In one moment he erased my fears and sent me into near spasms of joy.

Since that sweet reprieve, I must admit, I have slipped a bit in my sense of urgency. The desire to sort through stacks of books that clutter my new apartment, the necessity of making a living, the need for rest after a day of work, and countless everyday nuisances crowd my life and scream for attention. However, the experience has changed me. I no longer take my days, my hours for granted. My desire to leave a legacy of worth has changed the way I pray and spend my time. I continue to plan ways to ensure that my faith will live beyond me. I pray that God will show Himself through me in my little sphere of influence. I have not lessened the prayers for my family, especially my daughters, sons-in-law, and grandchildren. God put *me*, with all my flaws, talents, life experiences, joys, sorrows, and foibles onto this earth for a reason—a purpose that He designed *me* to fulfill. I seek to savor each moment God gives me to love and live for Him. That is my sense of urgency. It is my prayer every morning before my feet hit the floor that this day my life will not be spent in my own pursuits but will be only a conduit for Him to touch those He places in my path.

This blog post originally appeared at [blogs.bible.org/living-with-a-sense-of-urgency/](https://blogs.bible.org/living-with-a-sense-of-urgency/) on August 17, 2021.

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# 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

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# The Commencement Address I Actually Got to Give

In 2014, I wrote a blog post [The Commencement Address I'll Never Get to Give](#).

*Then I was deeply honored to be asked to address the eight graduating seniors of the Richardson Home School Association, where my husband and I have been teaching. He's the high school science teacher and I am his admin, I teach cursive handwriting to younger kids, and together we teach "Building Confident Christians," a faith-building year of worldview and apologetics.*

*I had already written my address as a blog post, but I tweaked it some, coming in at a very-short-for-me nine minutes (because ain't nobody goes to graduation for the commencement address, right?):*

We've taught all eight of you, and I love you! Congratulations! You made it to the cap-and-gown stage. Not without a lot of help and prodding and prayers and frustration from your parents though, right? Thank them. There's not a single thing you are or do or have that they didn't have a part in. Thank them! I mean, right now! Stand up, wave and say thank you! (I'll wait . . .!)

You've just finished many years of schooling, and along the way you may have picked up some hoey from the surrounding culture about how wonderful and special you are because of some well-meaning self-esteem messaging. You may have thrown away dozens of ribbons or trophies you received just for showing up.[1](#)

Those days are over, because that was never real life. Self-esteem and self-confidence are only gained one way, the hard way: working hard to meet a challenge and not give up until



you succeed. You earn self-confidence by doing, not by reciting platitudes in a mirror.

I'd like to put on a life-coach hat for a minute and make some suggestions for your post-high-school life.

Most of you just finished Dr. Bohlin's and my class, *Building Confident Christians*. We had you do a lot of reading for that class. I want to encourage you to read something else.

If you haven't read Dale Carnegie's book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, read it. It's a classic of how to understand people and how they like to be treated. The reason it's so true is that the book fleshes out the second great commandment, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."

For example, when you see a service person, like a waitstaff or toll booth attendant, call him or her by name. One's name is the sweetest sound on earth to each person, and service personnel are often treated as if they were invisible. Using someone's name says, "You are not invisible to me, and I honor you for your service." Prospective employees and spouses have been known to disqualify themselves because of the way they treated people with disrespect or contempt when out in public.

Everyone has an invisible tattoo on their forehead that says, "Please encourage me." And most people have an invisible speech bubble over their heads that says, "Do I matter? Please show me I matter." Every single person you will ever meet is infinitely valuable as the handcrafted masterpiece of the Creator God, and they deserve to be honored and respected simply because God made them and He loves them.

Some final pithy words to the wise. . .

Listen to your body. You are fearfully and wonderfully made, and it will tell you what it needs. Especially listen to your body when it tells you it needs sleep, and green vegetables.

Learn to recognize the nudges of the Holy Spirit, and follow them.

Pray for your future spouse. Assume that you don't know who they are right now, statistically speaking. He or she is out there somewhere. Your prayers WILL make a difference. (Afterwards, you can ask Dr. Bohlin and me about what that means. [{2}](#))

Don't believe everything you think. You swim in the polluted waters of a culture that has rejected God and biblical values, and some of those ideas and thoughts have crept into your mind, even though you weren't aware of it.

Plus, Satan and the demons are real, and you live on the battlefield of unrelenting spiritual warfare. You shouldn't believe everything you think because one of the enemy's favorite tactics is to whisper in our ears in first person, so we think these ideas are our own. Such as,

- "It's okay, I can do this, no one will know."
- "I deserve to get my way."
- "I am such a loser."
- "Well, I'm better than HER/HIM."

Whether we're talking about the cultural water you swim in, or the thoughts in your head that come from spiritual warfare, pass everything through the filter of God's word. Which means you need to read and study it! Every day!

If you wonder if you should be doing something, you probably shouldn't. If the thought, 'Should I be doing this?' even enters your head, it's an alarm. Invite the Lord into that question!

A few minutes ago I asked you to stand up and thank your parents. One of the most important habits you can ever form is gratitude. Especially toward God. He is continually blessing you with everything from the ability to draw your next breath,

to your ability to remember your name, to your ability to walk or drive or think or talk or get a job or more education.

Get in the habit of thanking Him for all those things. Regularly stop and ask yourself, "What would I really miss tomorrow if I didn't give thanks for it today?"-and then thank the Lord for it. Right where you're sitting-"Oh Lord! Thank You for cushioned seats! Thank You for 24/7 electricity! Thank You for air conditioning! Thank You for clean drinking water! Thank You for paved roads, and garbage pickup! There are so many things we would really miss tomorrow if we didn't give thanks for them today.

A grateful heart is not a complaining heart.

A grateful heart is not a critical heart.

A grateful heart is not an entitled heart.

Believe me, it will make you a much better person to live with, or work with, or play with, or just be with.



One of the best ways to get in the habit of saying "Thank You, Lord" is a gratitude journal. It's a wonderful discipline to record three things every day (or night) where you saw God being gracious and loving and kind to you, or to someone else. I want to make that easy for

you, so I have a gift for each of you, a personalized gratitude journal. I challenge you, over the next few years, fill it up, one day at a time. What a magnificent form of worship that would be!

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and give you peace. Your real education is about to begin.

1. After the graduation, I was humbled and grateful for the comments of the mother of an intellectual disabled child who pointed out that her daughter loves receiving ribbons and trophies for just showing up. It makes her feel valued and loved. I'm thankful for this perspective and I regret that my words caused needless pain.

2. Soon after I trusted Christ in college, I started praying every day for my future husband. Once I met Ray and realized he was the one God had chosen for me, we discovered that he had started having a daily quiet time of Bible study and prayer the same week I started to pray.