

Mothering Little Men from Mars

One of the greatest privileges of my life—right after saying “yes” to Jesus and “I do” to my husband—has been mothering my two sons, now 20 and 22.

Several years ago, my husband Ray and I started researching gender differences and discovered the truths in John Gray’s mega-bestseller, [*Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus*](#). It didn’t take long for us to realize that we didn’t have gender-free *children*; we had little men from Mars! And then I started realizing why I sometimes unnecessarily frustrated my kids and why we didn’t connect all the time—because I’m from Venus and they’re from Mars, and there is a HUGE gender gap between masculine and feminine! John Gray didn’t discover it; God created it, with great delight and a big smile on His face.

For example, boys, being male, are wired to be **self-reliant**. They act like they get extra brownie points for doing something on their own. One of my son Curt’s first whole sentences was, “**I** do it!” For boys, accepting help is perceived as weakness. For us relationally-oriented ladies, offering and accepting help is a way to make a heart-connection with another person. So when I would say, “Let Mommy help you,” they would be offended and I never knew why. If I could do it over again, I would tell them, “Let’s see if you can do it on your own. If it doesn’t work, I’ll be glad to help.”

One of the most powerful lessons I’ve learned about mothering boys is that the male mind is linear, life is handled only one piece at a time. This impacts both their thinking and activity.

Males tend to think on one thing at a time. I now know that

when my husband or sons are reading, it's not safe to start a conversation until I get their attention and they're looking at me. I used to frustrate the dickens out of my sons on soccer game days when they were dressed in their soccer uniforms, their soccer bags were packed, they had their game face on, and there were 15 minutes left before we had to leave. And I, being the ever-efficient one, would try to get them to use that time wisely to clean up the living room or fold laundry. They never, ever, cooperated willingly! And now I know why. I'd love to go back and change that part of mothering.

This linear approach also has a major impact on their activity. They are created to **do one thing at a time** before moving on to the next event. If I wanted their attention while they were watching TV, I would have to physically stand in front of the screen to break their attention and have them look at me. I, on the other hand, am a natural multi-tasker, because if mothers couldn't do more than one thing at a time, humanity wouldn't last more than one generation. So I would have conversations with my boys or direct homework while doing the dishes or cooking or a multitude of other things. I finally realized that because my kids can't multi-task, they never believed that I was actually paying attention to them if my hands were busy.

Knowing this, I have learned that when they start to tell me something, I put down whatever I'm doing, turn my body to face them squarely, and give them my full physical attention. It's been wonderful to see the difference; they now *feel* I am truly listening. I've shared this insight with several of my friends, who report that it's made a major difference with the boys in their homes as well. Their girls never gave it a thought, because girls intuitively know you can wash dishes and talk at the same time!

Where girls are more verbal, boys are usually **more physical**. I have a friend who wanted her boys to always move quietly and

slowly like girls, and had a “no rough-housing” rule in the house. This is the fast track to killing a boy’s heart, because boys were made to wrestle and tumble and be loud. This isn’t a design defect. It’s the way God was pleased to make them. While it’s not good to break lamps, of course, boys need to be able to MOVE while their moms smile and let them be who they were made to be.

Another thing I’d go back and change is trying to pry conversations out of my sons. I didn’t understand that females naturally generate three times as many words as males, and we talk to build community and knit hearts together. Boys and **men talk for one reason: to convey facts and information**. If they don’t have anything to convey, they don’t talk. A wise counselor finally explained to me that if I waited for my sons to initiate conversations on their timetable, I would get what my heart longed for. I also learned that one of my son’s love languages is physical touch, and if I would go in at the beginning or the end of the day and silently rub his back, he would often start talking. It’s amazing what meaningful conversations can happen at bedtime when the kids are trying to forestall sleep!

John Gray says, and it’s my experience as well, that a **man’s primary need is to be respected**. It starts when they’re very small boys. When a boy’s mother shows him respect, especially when it’s backed by a father’s respect, that fills boys’ “respect buckets.” Because they are made in the image of God, that alone makes them infinitely valuable and precious and worthy of great respect and dignity. I showed them respect by giving them significant choices, and honoring those choices. It started with choosing their clothes and making various school-related choices, and grew into choices like room colors and what sports they would pursue. I showed them respect by listening to them and not interrupting, by not being sarcastic, and by not saying shaming and condemning things. My son has commented that it’s important to remember that kids

are “little MEN from Mars,” and not talk down to them as inferior beings simply because they are not adults. He is glad we didn’t do it, but it really bothers him when he sees grown-ups do it to kids.

One last thing I’ve learned lately is the importance of supporting and cherishing our children’s gender to help them grow into healthy adults. Little **boys need to know that being a boy is a good thing**, and of course the same holds true for girls. After sharing this with a group of mothers of preschoolers, one friend took her little boy for a walk down to the lake. Along the way she said, “Parker, let’s look for frogs and toads. Mommy is so glad God made you a little boy so you could like yucky things like frogs and toads.” When they got back to the house, his grandmother asked, “So how was your walk?” and Parker said, “Mommy’s glad that I’m a boy because I like yucky things like frogs and toads.”

When my first son was born, my mother told me that mothers and sons, and fathers and daughters, have a very special relationship. She was so very right, and I thank the Lord for His good, so very good, gift of my sons.

Copyright 2002 Sue Bohlin

This blog post was originally published on February 26, 2002.

“Recalculating Route”

When a friend visited from another state, she used the GPS function of her phone to help her get around. I was in the car with her on one trip where we had to go to downtown Dallas and weren’t sure how to get where we were going. At one point, the friendly little GPS lady instructed her to turn right and she

demurred, saying, "I don't think that's right." And she continued on through the intersection.

Just as I was starting to smile at the craziness of a visitor unfamiliar with the city disagreeing with the directions to a place she'd never been to, the GPS lady announced, "Recalculating route. . ." and then, seconds later, she instructed us to make turns that would get us back on track.

There was no shame or condemnation in her voice. She didn't pout or yell. She didn't accuse, "You stupid idiot! I told you to turn! Why didn't you turn? You never listen to me. How are you going to get where you want to go if you don't listen to me?"

She simply said, "Recalculating route."

How like our heavenly Father! He directs us in the way we should go. When we deviate from the path, He doesn't yell at us, because there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). He recalculates the route and redeems the detour for His glory and our good. It will still cost us, because actions have consequences and disobedience comes with a price tag, but the discipline is always delivered with the hand of love.

As my friend now heeded "the lady," following her instructions to make several turns to get back on the right route, I thought about the time we were losing because of her independence and wrong belief that she knew better, even though she didn't know the city. We eventually got to where we needed to go, but not without the cost of time. God tells us that He who began a good work in us will continue to perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6). He's running the GPS of our lives; He knows perfectly the map of the terrain and knows the best way to get where He wants us to go. It may not be the route we would have chosen since we don't know enough to choose the best for ourselves, but He

knows what He's doing and it pays to trust Him.

When my friend got back home, she commented that her trusty GPS always got her where she needed to go, and every single time she thought she knew better, she was wrong. She heard "recalculating route" more times than she cared to admit.

But the GPS lady's voice was always friendly, non-judgmental, non-condemning. And my friend learned something about God's heart in the process: He loves her and knows she's a work in progress. He doesn't get angry when it takes her multiple times to learn what He is teaching her. He recalculates the route, patiently and with love, because He knows where He's taking her and exactly how and when they'll get there. His omniscience and sovereignty mean that she can't mess up His plans. It may cost her something to get to the final destination, but in love He will redeem the time and use it all to build character and Christlikeness into her.

Leave it God to teach a heart lesson in grace from a mechanical voice!

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/recalculating-route/ on October 21, 2008.

Are You a Pickle?

A pickle used to be a cucumber, but when it sits in a brine solution of vinegar and spices, it absorbs the flavors of the brine and turns into a pickle. That's fine for cucumbers, but it's terrible for people. When we live immersed in the "brine" of our culture, we can easily absorb its values and philosophies. Instead of thinking and living like Jesus, we look and sound and live just like the rest of the surrounding

culture.

Alarmingly, this is true of the church as well. The divorce rate of evangelicals is no different from that of our culture. The number of our men struggling with a secret pornography addiction is astronomical (one pastor told me he thought it was upward of 70%). The vast majority of our high school students have [mentally disconnected from the church, and often their faith](#), before they've graduated.

Paul exhorts us in Colossians 2:8-9,

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Translation: Don't be a pickle.

What does a culturally captive pickle look like? Particularly a "pink pickle"?

One of the highest values in our culture is sex. If you think of sex as a right or a need like eating or sleeping, and you're not getting any (or as much as you want), you might be angry. If you think God's antiquated policy of keeping sex within marriage means He's holding out on you (see Psalm 84:11), you've been pickled. If you dress to make guys look twice at you (your body, not your face), buying into the "if you've got it, flaunt it" philosophy, you're a pickle.

Some mothers will do anything to keep her children from being angry or unhappy with them. They believe their job is to make and keep their children happy, especially if they feel guilty because of working or being a single mom. Some mothers will do anything to insure their children's popularity. Instead of seeing our children as belonging to God, and over whom He has made us stewards, children's approval and popularity can become idols. There are lots of pickle-flavored mothers.

What's your perspective on entertainment? If you sit in front of TV or movies, watching and listening without thinking, "How does this compare to what God says in His word?", then you are absorbing the world's brine and you're a pickle. Are you one of the women secretly addicted to the [Twilight](#) books or to romance novels that are actually emotional pornography? The purpose of porn is to arouse desire for something that God has not given: sexual pornography arouses physical feelings for someone other than a spouse, and emotional pornography arouses emotional feelings of longing for a relationship other than one's spouse.

Speaking of other kinds of pornography, how much time do you pore over catalogs and ads in magazines and newspapers, arousing the lust for materialism? American culture highly values "stuff" because 1) we deserve it and 2) it will make us happy. Meanwhile, storage rental facilities keep popping up because we don't have enough room for all the stuff we already have that apparently didn't make us happy because we keep buying more.

So. . . are you a pickle?

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/are_you_a_pickle
on February 2, 2010.

The Mother Heart of God

Two days ago we observed Mother's Day in the US. I think Mother's Day matters to God because mothers matter to God. And I think mothers matter to God beyond their necessity for bringing new life into the world, but because women reflect an aspect of God's heart in ways men cannot.

Every aspect of our femininity, it seems to me, comes from God originally. He made females in His image with the feminine attributes and strengths that come straight from the Father heart of God.

The essence of our femininity is expressed in two main ways: responding and nurturing.

One of the most wonderful promises in God's word says, "Call to Me, and I will answer." He says this multiple times, and multiple ways! God is a responsive God. And it honors and glorifies Him when WE respond—to Him, and to others.

Nurture shares the same root word as nurse. I am fascinated by one of the Old Testament names for God, El Shaddai. El means "strong one," and Shaddai is a form of the word for the breast. El Shaddai means "The strong breasted one. "

El Shaddai is the mother heart . . . of God the Father. It's from the Father we receive a mother's heart.

I acknowledge that Mother's Day is painful for some women, especially those who long to be mothers and aren't. But the heart of a mother isn't about having given birth. It's an attitude of the heart, a desire and willingness to nurture others.

El Shaddai longs to nurture and nurse us, if we'll let Him, and He longs to draw us into an intimate embrace with Him.

I have seen Him bring healing to the hearts of many people as they pressed hard into His breast to receive nurture and comfort. . . and identity. His love is powerful enough to transform a heart that is so riddled with holes that it's like a spaghetti strainer, and when His love functions like Super Glue to plug up the holes, people's hearts are transformed into vessels that can hold His love—as well as people's—instead of draining out. As they receive nursing and nurturing from The Strong Breasted One, He loves and provides

for them. I've watched it happen multiple times.

I am so grateful for the responsive, nurturing "Mother heart of God"!

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/the_mother_heart_of_god

[Listen to Sue's message on this topic given at a Dallas-area church](#)

When God Does Nothing About Injustice

"If God is so good and loving, why does He allow pain and suffering?"

This one question is probably the biggest obstacle to faith in Christ for most people. There are [good answers](#), but since we are very limited in our perspective, many people continue to stumble over the problem of evil.

Because we are made in the image of a just God, our souls long for justice in the wake of injustice. We want *someone to pay* for hurting us or hurting others. We want to exact our pound of flesh. We wonder why God doesn't *do something* about bad people doing bad things, especially when it invades our personal space.

For years, when addressing this issue, my husband has cautioned his listeners that immediate justice may sound good when we think about dishing it out, but we wouldn't like to be

on the receiving end of it.

Recently we had the privilege of teaching at a couple of church leadership conferences in Burundi, Africa. Ray asked his audience to consider what it would be like if God zapped us with an electric shock every time we thought or said or did a bad, or even uncharitable, thing. He said, "You're probably sitting there thinking, 'I wish that speaker would just be quiet and sit down. It's been a long day and I'm tired of listening.' But that's not very nice, and let's say you got buzzed with a shock for your thoughts."

Then he got off the platform and stood before one of the men. "I don't like your shirt. I don't like your jacket. I don't like your FACE!" And then he pretended to get a gigantic electric shock, flailing his arms and head, and fell down on the floor. The men roared with laughter. Ray stood up and said, "*Now* aren't you glad God is patient? We need to be careful, thinking that justice in the moment would be a good thing. None of us would survive!"

Lots of smiles and nodding heads. They got it.

But we also experienced a terrifying example of why immediate justice would not be good.

On our two-hour drive from the capital city to the city where the conference was held, it had grown dark. Ray was in a taxi carrying him and one of the interpreters, along with some of our luggage. As our convoy made its way through one of the villages where a lot of people were gathered along the road, a man that the driver thinks was drunk ran out in front of the speeding car, and the driver hit him. He was thrown onto the hood of the car and smashed into the windshield. As the driver slammed on the brakes, the injured man fell off the car and lay motionless on the pavement.

Horrorified, Ray could say or do nothing as the driver backed up and then drove around the man, leaving the scene—and a man who

was either seriously injured or dead. The onlookers swarmed the taxi, and that of the car behind them, also containing our people, and started banging on the doors and windows. To the amazement of us Americans, all the drivers just kept on going, leaving the crumpled man and the angry crowd behind.

When we got to our destination, the horror was explained to us. If the taxi driver had gotten out of his car to check on the man he'd hit, the crowd would have killed him on the spot, and possibly Ray and our interpreter as well. In that culture they practice immediate justice—"mob justice," it was called. Our Burundi host said that in that culture, the drivers did the right thing to protect the visitors by not stopping and not opening the door to check on the man.

This experience was deeply disturbing to my husband (who was thankful that I was in another taxi ahead of him and didn't see anything). We prayed together about the awful images burned into his memory and asked the Lord for peace.

And we can both appreciate, at a whole new level, why God's patience in not dealing with evil and pain when it occurs is a measure of His grace and mercy. He *will* bring resolution one day, and we can rest in that. That He is patient beyond our understanding is a good, good thing.

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/when_god_does_nothing_about_injustice

on March 2, 2010.

Why I'm the Lady in the Hat

It's pretty easy to find me at our church; I'm the one always in a hat. Someone always makes an affirming comment like "Love the hat!"—and probably the biggest reason is that I'm the only one wearing one. Even in a church of 5,000 people. Most people assume it's a fashion statement, but I wear a hat after wrestling with God over the issue of headcoverings for six years.



For years, I dismissed 1 Corinthians 11 as culturally bound and obsolete: women don't cover their heads in worship anymore because. . . well, because we just don't. Slam dunk.

Then I discovered that it had been a worldwide practice in the church for almost 2,000 years until just a few decades ago. As the result of an inaccurate reporting of the proceedings of Vatican II (as I understand it), it was like a rumor swept through Christianity: "no more covering." And since the fashion of wearing hats in public had changed, it was nothing more than a pointless relic to most churchgoers, gladly dropped.

Then I came across an argument for 1 Corinthians 11 that I couldn't counter. In this passage, there are three glories: man, who is God's glory; woman, who is man's glory, and the woman's long hair, which is her glory. When a woman covers, she is covering two glories—her own, and the man's. This leaves only God's glory—the man—uncovered during worship.

That was pretty powerful, but it wasn't enough to get me to cover my head. It was, however, enough to get me to feel increasingly uncomfortable worshiping. With the sense of missing something. For six years.

Finally, there was one verse in that chapter that clinched it

for me: 10 *For this reason a woman should have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.* Ohhh. . . the angels. The beings present when we worship, who “long to look into these things” (1 Peter 1:12) like forgiveness and reconciliation and grace and redemption.



My son walking me up the aisle at his wedding

So I looked for someone to tell me what that symbol of authority should be, if not a physical symbol. A wedding ring? Doesn't work for unmarried women. Hair? That's already standard issue for women, even unsubmitive rebellious ones. I asked my husband what he thought, and he gently replied, “I can't see any other conclusion from the text. I've always thought wearing a covering is what is commanded.”

So I gave in, and started wearing a hat because of the angels. I don't understand what difference it makes to them, but they know why I'm the lady in the hat.

I was not prepared for the personal blessing that came as a result: I love feeling so feminine! I've also been blessed by the way men seem to have a visceral, positive reaction to the sight of a woman in a hat.

It's all good.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/why_i_am_the_lady_in_the_hat on Oct. 13, 2009

Leaving Christianity

Last week (August 3, 2010), writer Anne Rice—author of *The Vampire Chronicles*—publicly renounced Christianity, but not Christ, on her Facebook page. In 2004 she had come back to her Roman Catholic roots after a foray in atheism, during which time she wrote her vampire books. She later identified these books as reflecting her quest for meaning in a world without God. Embracing Jesus as her Savior, Anne announced that she would henceforth “write only for the Lord.” Her next two books were *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt* and *Christ the Lord: Road to Cana*, chronicling the life of Jesus.

But now she’s had enough of the church:

“For those who care, and I understand if you don’t: Today I quit being a Christian. I’m out. I remain committed to Christ as always but not to being ‘Christian’ or to being part of Christianity. It’s simply impossible for me to ‘belong’ to this quarrelsome, hostile, disputatious, and deservedly infamous group. For ten years, I’ve tried. I’ve failed. I’m an outsider. My conscience will allow nothing else.”

A few hours later, she followed up her post with this:

“As I said below, I quit being a Christian. I’m out. In the name of Christ, I refuse to be anti-gay. I refuse to be anti-feminist. I refuse to be anti-artificial birth control. I refuse to be anti-Democrat. I refuse to be anti-secular humanism. I refuse to be anti-science. I refuse to be anti-life. In the name of Christ, I quit Christianity and being Christian. Amen.”

She reaffirmed her faith in Christ with a lack of faith in Christianity an hour or so later with the following post:

“My faith in Christ is central to my life. My conversion

from a pessimistic atheist lost in a world I didn't understand, to an optimistic believer in a universe created and sustained by a loving God is crucial to me. But following Christ does not mean following His followers. Christ is infinitely more important than Christianity and always will be, no matter what Christianity is, has been, or might become."

This breaks my heart, for several reasons.

First, she has a valid point about what "Christianity" has been shaped to look like in many churches and in many individuals: that it's more what we're *against* than what we're *for*. See the book [*unChristian: What a New Generations Really Thinks About Christianity. . . And Why it Matters*](#). Shallow discipleship has created an ugly characterization of what the Church, and Christians, are supposed to look like.

Second, she doesn't understand that while Christ is the Head, the Church is His Body. No one can take themselves out of the Body of Christ without harm, just as a physical body is harmed if one hand chops off the other. Christianity is about Jesus, not the unfortunate misunderstandings of what it means to follow Him. But God calls us to do life in community, not on our own. Maybe Anne needs to find a different faith community than the one she's been in.

Third, in a battle between her cherished beliefs and values and the Bible's, hers are winning. Spiritual maturity means we submit ourselves to the authority and power of the Scriptures and of the Holy Spirit, resulting in our transformation. And that includes changing the way we think when our thoughts and desires collide with what God has revealed as truth. No one wins, in the end, when we refuse to be informed and formed by what God says, but Anne Rice cherishes her beliefs more than those of the Jesus she wants to follow. That is tragic.

I'm praying for her eyes to be open on several levels. I

invite you to pray for her as well.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/leaving_christianity on August 3, 2010.

A Media Filter for the Glory of God

I've spent the last several days preparing a Powerpoint with extensive video and image illustrations for high school students. The hope is to get them to install an internal media filter that will stay in place whether they are watching TV or YouTube, Twittering or uploading photos to their Facebooks, playing video games, or texting on their phones. We are called to glorify God in everything we do (1 Cor. 10:31), and that certainly extends to processing media messages.

It was most enlightening me for to find illustrations for this presentation. The naturalistic worldview that characterizes our society runs from the merely godless (most of the *Harry Potter* books, up to the shock of the Christian elements at the end of the last book) to the openly hostile (*House, M.D.*'s contempt for all things and people of faith). When I read the lyrics of the top iTunes songs, I couldn't help but wince at the potty-mouth sexism of "Boom Boom Pow," the glorification of "Waking Up in Vegas" (hungover and married???), and the total insipidity of the "No Boundaries" song our brother Kris Allen was forced to sing on *American Idol*.

Finding illustrations for the way the media desensitize us

wasn't hard. Consider that most high school students have a "ho-hum, yawn" apathy about same-sex marriage; they've been desensitized to the whole issue. And there is more blood and gore in the opening credits of *CSI*: than most people would have seen in a lifetime a generation ago, but we munch on chips through it all while not blinking an eye.

Nor was it hard to think of ways in which the media present an unreal view of our world. Girls are still in love with [Edward, the vampire hero](#) of the *Twilight* series. And back to *CSI*: the last time I was called to jury duty, during the *voir dire* process we were told of the "CSI Effect" that now leads juries to have unrealistic expectations about how crime evidence is harvested. Solving real-life crimes is harder than it appears to be in a 60-minute show. (I mean, c'mon, don't we all just know that every partial print is going to show up in CODIS?)

We will be calling students to glorify God in their media consumption by engaging a filter comprised of questions through which they view and experience images and messages:

- * What is their view of life? Where do they say life is found?
- * Can you discern the philosophy of those pumping out images, information, or music?
- * Are they telling the truth in what they're saying?
- * Is there hostility to certain values and beliefs, especially Christianity?
- * How does this compare to what God tells us to keep in mind? (What is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy)

Come to think of it, maybe that's not such a bad thing for all of us to do!

Note: I zipped up the Powerpoint and all the videos (plus an audio clip) in a folder which can be downloaded here: <http://www.box.net/shared/muz26dhvch>

Ray and I are providing the curriculum for Super Summer Arkansas, a youth ministry of the Southern Baptist Convention of Arkansas, and several other people will be teaching the messages we compiled. So each slide has information in the Notes view for other people to teach the material.

We just ask that if anyone ever uses this presentation, that Probe Ministries receives credit. ☐

Warning: it's 72 MB! Hope you have broadband!

Addendum: here's a link to just the Powerpoint:
<http://www.box.net/shared/lc1nbc4m1j>

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/a_media_filter_for_the_glory_of_god
on May 26, 2009.

Blowing Past Greatness

I recently went to a wedding of some friends in Fort Worth. The pianist was a good looking young man who provided lovely music as we came into the church, and accompanied the vocalists during the ceremony. At the end of the wedding, as people got up to leave the sanctuary to get to the reception, he played an incredible piece that was ignored by everyone around me. Only a very small handful of us knew that he had recently earned his masters in piano performance from Julliard, and is a concert pianist of the highest caliber. But as an unknown friend of the groom, he was playing in a nondescript church in Fort Worth, Texas, and hundreds of people blew right past the greatness of what he was doing to get to iced tea and punch and cheese and crackers and cake

that wouldn't be cut for another hour.

It reminded me of a similar story that received much more attention. Three years ago, the *Washington Post* arranged for Joshua Bell, arguably the best violist in the world, to stand in a Metro station playing a priceless Stradivarius for 45 minutes. The point of the experiment was to see if people would recognize greatness, or hurry right past yet another "street musician."

They didn't.

Over a thousand people hurried past this master musician as if he weren't there at all. Seven stood for any length of time to listen and watch. The *Post* article says,

"A onetime child prodigy, at 39 Joshua Bell has arrived as an internationally acclaimed virtuoso. Three days before he appeared at the Metro station, Bell had filled the house at Boston's stately Symphony Hall, where merely pretty good seats went for \$100. Two weeks later, at the Music Center at Strathmore, in North Bethesda, he would play to a standing-room-only audience so respectful of his artistry that they stifled their coughs until the silence between movements. But on that Friday in January, Joshua Bell was just another mendicant, competing for the attention of busy people on their way to work."

(www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/04/AR2007040401721.html)

Watch the *Post's* YouTube video:

A senior curator at the National Gallery offers an interesting perspective on why Joshua Bell's genius went ignored: if you were to take a piece of great art out of its "this is significant" frame and hang it in a restaurant instead of a museum, all the cues that announce "This is extraordinary; pay attention!" aren't there.

I think we may be just like those Washington commuters, oblivious to evidences around us of genius, of gifting, of extraordinary, supernatural touches of grace—because the cues aren't there. God doesn't give us nametags—frames around the art, if you will—that proclaim:

- World class teacher
- A meal as finely cooked and presented as the best restaurants offer
- Best-ever school crossing guard
- Excellent factory worker
- Supernaturally cheerful and faithful mail delivery person
- Soul-shaping youth pastor
- Greatness in mothering

What greatness in others might you be blowing right by today, unless you ask for God to open your eyes to see it?

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/blowing_past_greatness on July 20, 2010.

Ellen and Her “Wife”

Yesterday's (November 10, 2009) Oprah featured Ellen DeGeneres and her “wife,” actress Portia di Rossi. I watched the show with the perspective of one who, for a decade, has helped women come out of the bondage of lesbian relationships. Let me share with you the meaning of what I saw and heard.

Oprah is enthusiastically pro-gay, so I was not surprised that she oohed and aahed over her guests' romance and wedding, which we saw in video and gorgeous photography. And I wasn't surprised that Ellen and Portia said they were glad to be

“married” because it gave validity and legitimacy to their relationship. That perspective is part of an agenda about normalizing homosexuality, not the one-flesh union of male and female God intends marriage to be.

In her excitement to embrace the unreality these two women have formed, Oprah could not see the threads of commonality that tie most lesbian relationships together:

Hearts looking for their home. Both Ellen and Portia spoke of how they had found their home in each other: a place of rest, of sensing that the search was over. Many women who long for same-sex relationships speak of the sense of a gaping hole in their hearts, looking for someone to make them complete. They are looking for continual reassurance and safety, the security of being loved forever. God’s plan for baby girls is that they find this nurturing and reassurance in their mother’s love and attention, with a strong connection with Mom that grounds them as human beings. All the lesbian women I know have sustained a life-altering “mother wound.” Either their mothers weren’t there for them, or something was broken in receiving their mothers’ love. They are longing for the unconditional and all-consuming mother love they never felt when they were babies, and they try to find it in the hearts of other women (or girls: growing numbers of teens are struggling as well).

Connection. Both of Oprah’s guests reported an immediate, electric connection to each other, even though it took some time for them to become a couple. (Interestingly, neither of them revealed during the interview that they were both in relationships with other women at the time, and they both dumped their respective relationships and moved in together. Abruptly leaving one girlfriend to hook up with a new one is typical.) In our [online discussions](#) of women dealing with their unwanted homosexuality, the word *connection* probably shows up more often than any other. *Connection* defines life for them. God created women to be relational, so it’s not surprising that connection would be so important, but there is

an element of desperation to the connection that characterizes lesbian relationships.

Intensity. Intensity is a substitute for intimacy. Lesbian relationships are marked by intensity; one counselor calls it “emotional crack cocaine.” Intensity plus connection feels so overwhelming, so powerful, so intoxicating, that it is like a life-controlling drug. But God never intended for us to have that kind of human relationship, because it is idolatrous. People can never fill a heart-hole that God designed to be filled by Himself. So the cycle of lesbian relationships is: *infatuation* (reveling in the intensity of connection), *disappointment* (realizing the relationship does not satisfy, because idols never do), *breakup* (since God never intended same-sex coupling, it can’t work), and *heartache*. . . leading to looking for someone new to be infatuated with.

Lesbian relationship usually last only 3-4 years. (There are long-term relationships, but that’s usually because the women don’t know how to live without each other. It’s not the same as a stable heterosexual marriage relationship.) And when the breakup comes, it’s horrifically painful. I pray for Rosie O’Donnell and Kelli Carpenter, who have separated with 5 kids between them, to turn to the Lord for comfort and truth and peace.

And I pray for Ellen and Portia, when their ride is over as well. I pray for grace, and peace, for them to know Jesus. . . and for their eyes to be opened to why we use quotation marks for the word “wife.”

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/ellen_and_her_wife