

Media and Discernment

We live in the midst of a media storm, and Christians need to develop discernment in their consumption of various media (TV, movies, music, videos, computer, etc).

Media Exposure

We live in the midst of a media storm. Every day we are confronted by more media messages than a previous generation could even imagine.

For example, more homes have TV sets (98 percent) than have indoor plumbing. In the average home the television set is on for more than six hours a day. Children spend more time watching television than in any other activity except sleep.[\[1\]](#) Nearly half of elementary school children and 60 percent of adolescents have television sets in their bedrooms.[\[2\]](#)

But that is just the beginning of the media exposure we encounter. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* estimates that the average teenager listens to 10,500 hours of music during their teen years.[\[3\]](#) Families are watching more movies than every before since they can now watch them on cable and satellite and rent or buy movies in video and DVD format.

The amount of media exposure continues to increase every year. Recent studies of media usage reveal that people spend more than double the time with media than they think they do. This amounts to nearly twelve hours a day total. And because of media multitasking, summing all media use by medium results in a staggering fifteen hours per day.[\[4\]](#)

Student use of the Internet has been increasing to all-time levels. A study done at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst found the following:[\[5\]](#)

- Nearly 90 percent of the students access the Internet every day.
- Students spent over ten hours per week using IM (instant messaging).
- Those same students spent over twenty-eight hours per week on the Internet.
- Nearly three-fourths spent more time online than they intended.

In addition to concerns about the quantity of media input are even greater concerns about the quality of media input. For example, the average child will witness over 200,000 acts of violence on television, including 16,000 murders before he or she is 18 years old. And consider that the average child views 30,000 commercials each year.

A study of adolescents (ages 12-17) showed that watching sex on TV influences teens to have sex. Youths were more likely to initiate intercourse as well as other sexual activities.[{6}](#)

Over 1000 studies (including reports from the Surgeon General's office and the National Institute of Mental Health) "point overwhelmingly to a causal connection between media violence and aggressive behavior in some children."[{7}](#)

To put it simply, we are awash in media exposure, and there is a critical need for Christians to exercise discernment. Never has a generation been so tempted to conform to this world (Rom. 12:1-2) because of the growing influence of the proliferating forms of media.

Biblical Discernment

Although the Bible does not provide specific instructions about media (you can't find a verse dealing with television, computers, or DVDs), it nevertheless provides broad principles concerning discernment.

For example, the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2:22 instructs us to “Flee from youthful lusts.” We should stay away from anything (including media) that inflames our lust. Paul also goes on to say that in addition to fleeing from these things, we should also “pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace.” We should replace negative influences in our life with those things which are positive.

Paul says in Colossians 3:8, “But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” Now, does that mean you could never read something that has anger or rage or slander in it? No. After all, the Bible has stories of people who manifest those traits in their lives.

What Paul is saying is that we need to rid ourselves of such things. If the input into our lives (such as through media) manifests these traits, then a wise and discerning Christian would re-evaluate what is an influence in his or her life.

Paul tells us in Philippians 4:8, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” We should focus on what is positive and helpful to our Christian walk.

We are also admonished in Romans 13:13 to “behave decently as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.”

As Christians, we should develop discernment in our lives. We can do this in three ways: stop, listen, and look. Stop what you are doing long enough to evaluate the media exposure in your life. Most of us just allow media to wash over us everyday without considering the impact it is having on us.

Second, we should listen. That is, we should give attention to what is being said. Is it true or false? And what is the message various media are bringing into our lives?

Finally, we should look. We need to look at the consequences of media in our lives. We should rid ourselves of influences which are negative and think on those things which are positive.

Worldview of the News Media

Of all the forms of media, the news media have become a primary shaper of our perspective on the world. Also, the rules of journalism have changed in the last few decades. It used to be assumed that reporters or broadcasters would attempt to look at events through the eyes of the average reader or viewer. It was also assumed that they would not use their positions in the media to influence the thinking of the nation but merely to report objectively the facts of an event. Things have changed dramatically in the news business.

The fact that people in the media are out of step with the American people should be a self-evident statement. But for anyone who does not believe it, there is abundant empirical evidence to support it.

Probably the best-known research on media bias was first published in the early 1980s by professors Robert Lichter and Stanley Rothman. Their research, published in the journal *Public Opinion*[\[8\]](#) and later collected in the book *The Media Elite*,[\[9\]](#) demonstrated that reporters and broadcasters in the prestige media differ in significant ways from their audiences.

They surveyed 240 editors and reporters of the media elite—*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, ABC, NBC, and CBS. Their research confirmed what many suspected for a long time: the media elite are liberal, secular, and humanistic.

People have always complained about the liberal bias in the media. But what was so surprising is how liberal members of the media actually were. When asked to describe their own

political persuasion, 54 percent of the media elite described themselves as left of center. Only 19 percent described themselves as conservative. When asked who they voted for in presidential elections, more than 80 percent of them always voted for the Democratic candidate.

Media personnel are also very secular in their outlook. The survey found that 86 percent of the media elite seldom or never attend religious services. In fact, 50 percent of them have no religious affiliation at all.

This bias is especially evident when the secular press tries to cover religious events or religious issues. Most of them do not attend church, nor do they even know people who do. Instead, they live in a secularized world and therefore tend to underestimate the significance of religious values in American lives and to paint anyone with Christian convictions as a “fundamentalist.”

Finally, they also found that the news media was humanistic in their outlook on social issues. Over 90 percent of the media elite support a woman’s so-called “right to abortion” while only 24 percent agreed or strongly agreed that “homosexuality is wrong.”

For a time, members of the media elite argued against these studies. They suggested that the statistical sample was too small. But when Robert Lichter began to enumerate the 240 members of the news media interviewed, that tactic was quickly set aside. Others tried to argue that, though the media might be liberal, secular, and humanistic, it did not affect the way the press covered the news. Later studies by a variety of media watchdogs began to erode the acceptance of that view.

A second significant study on media bias was a 1996 survey conducted by the Freedom Forum and the Roper Center.[\[10\]](#) Their survey of 139 Washington bureau chiefs and congressional correspondents showed a decided preference for liberal

candidates and causes.

The journalists were asked for whom they voted in the 1992 election. The results were these: 89 percent said Bill Clinton, 7 percent George Bush, 2 percent Ross Perot. But in the election, 43 percent of Americans voted for Clinton and 37 percent voted for Bush.

Another question they were asked was, "What is your current political affiliation?" Fifty percent said they were Democrats, 4 percent Republicans. In answer to the question, "How do you characterize your political orientation?" 61 percent said they were liberal or moderately liberal, and 9 percent were conservative or moderately conservative.

The reporters were also asked about their attitudes toward their jobs. They said they see their coverage of news events as a mission. No less than 92 percent agreed with the statement, "Our role is to educate the public." And 62 percent agreed with the statement, "Our role is sometimes to suggest potential solutions to social problems."

A more recent survey by the Pew Research Center further confirms the liberal bias in the media. They interviewed 547 media professionals (print, TV, and radio) and asked them to identify their political perspective. They found that 34 percent were liberal and only 7 percent were conservative. This compares to 20 percent of Americans who identify themselves as liberal and 33 percent who define themselves as conservative.[\[11\]](#)

It is also worth questioning whether a majority of media professionals who labeled themselves as moderate in the survey really deserve that label. John Leo, writing for *U.S. News and World Report*, says that it has been his experience "that liberal journalists tend to think of themselves as representing the mainstream, so in these self-identification polls, moderate usually translates to liberal. On the few

social questions asked in the survey, most of the moderates sounded fairly liberal.”[\[12\]](#)

Once again we see the need for Christians to exercise discernment in their consumption of media.

Dealing with the Media

Christians must address the influence of the media in society. It can be a dangerous influence that can conform us to the world (Rom. 12:2). Therefore we should do all we can to protect against its influence and to use the media for good.

Christians should strive to apply the following two passages to their lives as they seek discernment concerning the media: Philippians 4:8, which we quoted above, and Colossians 3:2–5:

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Here are some suggestions for action.

First, control the quantity and quality of media input. Parents should set down guidelines and help select television programs at the start of the week and watch only those. Parents should also set down guidelines for movies, music, and other forms of media. Families should also evaluate the location of their television set so that it is not so easy to just sit and watch TV for long hours.

Second, watch TV with children. One way to encourage discussion with children is to watch television with them. The plots and actions of the programs provides a natural context for discussion. The discussion could focus on how cartoon

characters or TV characters could solve their problems without resorting to violence. What are the consequences of violence? TV often ignores the consequences. What are the consequences of promiscuous sex in real life?

Third, set a good example. Parents should not be guilty to saying one thing and doing another. Neither adults nor children should spend long periods of time in front of a video display (television, video game, computer). Parents can teach their children by example that there are better ways to spend time.

Fourth, work to establish broadcaster guidelines. No TV or movie producer wants to unilaterally disarm all the actors on their screens for fear that viewers will watch other programs and movies. Yet many of these TV and movie producers would like to tone down the violence, even though they do not want to be the first to do so. National standards would be able to achieve what individuals would not do by themselves in a competitive market.

Fifth, make your opinions known. Writing letters to programs, networks, and advertisers can make a difference over time. A single letter may not make a difference, but large numbers of letters can even change editorial policy. Consider joining with other like-minded people in seeking to make a difference in the media.

While the media has a tremendous potential for good, it can also have some very negative effects. Christians need wisdom and discernment to utilize the positive aspects of media and to guard against its negative effects.

Notes

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2. E.H. Woodard and N. Gridina, *Media in the Home: The Fifth*

Annual Survey of Parents and Children 2000 (Philadelphia, PA: The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, 2000).

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“What’s God’s Plan for Sex in Marriage?”

I’m wondering if the bible addresses the issue of sexuality after marriage. Is sex only for pleasure acceptable once a couple is married? If so are there certain ways married couples can have sex? I.e., different positions that are appropriate and others that are not?

I look forward to the day when I have a wife and can enjoy these gifts, but I want to make sure that I’m doing it in a God honoring way.

It sure does! A whole book about sexuality after marriage! The Song of Solomon is extremely erotic, but it’s written in symbolism so a lot of people miss it if they’re looking for only the literal. For instance, the use of “fruit” usually refers to the husband’s genitals, and “garden” to the wife’s. God’s word on sex after marriage is “Eat, O friends, and drink; drink your fill, O lovers.” (SoS 5:1)

Jody and Linda Dillow have written two excellent books on God’s view of sex; Jody wrote *Solomon on Sex* (which is out of print, but you can find it used online), and Linda co-wrote (along with Lorraine Pintus) the book *Intimate Issues*. They offer three guidelines for discerning what God permits in sexual expression:

1. Is it prohibited in God’s word?
2. Is it beneficial? (In other words, does it harm people or hinder the sexual relationship?)
3. Does it involve anyone else?

Here’s their list of what God prohibits in His Word:

Fornication (immoral sex, which is any sex outside of marriage)
Adultery
Homosexuality
Impurity
Orgies
Prostitution
Lustful passions
Sodomy
Bestiality
Incest
Obscenity and coarse jokes

There is more freedom than there are restrictions for married couples. If God doesn't prohibit something, and it doesn't involve anyone else (whether through video, the internet, print media or in the flesh), and it's acceptable to both people, then God gives a green light and says, "Enjoy!"

The Dillows also provide six reasons God gave the gift of sex:

1. To create life
2. For intimate oneness
3. Knowledge
4. Pleasure
5. Defense against temptation
6. Comfort

As you can see, only one is procreation!

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

Worldview and Truth

Each day Christians are confronted with a bewildering array of choices in ethics, actions, and lifestyles. The only way to make sense of this data is to have a consistent worldview. And Christians should be operating from a biblical worldview. As we will see, that is often not the case.

The Barna Research Group conducted a national survey of adults and concluded that only 4 percent of adults have a biblical worldview as the basis of their decision-making. The survey also discovered that 9 percent of born again Christians have such a perspective on life.[\[1\]](#)

Everyone has a worldview, but relatively few people (even religious people) have a biblical worldview. This explains a great deal about behavior. One reason so few people act like Christians is because they don't think like Christians. Behavior results from our values and beliefs. Thinking biblically about the issues of life should ultimately result in living biblically in society. Conversely, not thinking biblically should result in not living biblically within society.

Nancy Pearcey, in her latest book *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, tells the story of Sarah, a practicing Christian who worked for years as a counselor for Planned Parenthood. She did not try to talk women out of an abortion, but merely was content to make sure they knew what they were doing. She said that after she graduated from college, "My Christianity was reduced to a thin veneer over the core of a secular worldview. It was almost like having a split personality."[\[2\]](#)

Unfortunately, there are millions of Sarahs in the world who willingly live with a split personality. The split is between the sacred and the secular. Or the split is between fact and

value. In their personal lives they try to live as Christians, but in their public world they think and act just like the non-Christians around them. They do not have a Christian worldview even though they are Christians.

Now you might wonder where the pastors are in all of this. After all, shouldn't pastors and church leadership be calling people to think and behave according to Christian principles? It turns out that part of the problem is the lack of sound biblical teaching about a biblical worldview.

The Barna Research Group found in a nationwide survey of senior pastors that only half of the country's Protestant pastors have a biblical worldview. The gap among churches is reflected in the outcomes from the nation's two largest denominations. Southern Baptists had the highest percentage of pastors with a biblical worldview (71 percent), while the Methodists were lowest (27 percent).[\[3\]](#)

Obviously we need to do a better job within the church thinking about the array of issues that confront us from a biblical perspective. Unfortunately, there is growing evidence that we have not been doing this effectively.

Absolute Truth

One of the foundational aspects of a Christian worldview is the matter of absolute truth. The Bible rests upon belief in it. Yet surveys by George Barna show that a minority of born again adults (44 percent) and an even smaller proportion of born again teenagers (9 percent) are certain of the existence of absolute moral truth.[\[4\]](#)

Even more disturbing is the growing evidence that even adults have abandoned their belief in absolute truth. By a three-to-one margin adults say truth is always relative to the person and their situation. This perspective is even more lopsided among teenagers who overwhelmingly believe moral truth depends

on the circumstances.{5}

Social scientists as well as pollsters have been warning that American society is becoming more and more dominated by moral anarchy. Writing in the early 1990s, James Patterson and Peter Kim said in *The Day America Told the Truth* that there was no moral authority in America. "We choose which laws of God we believe in. There is absolutely no moral consensus in this country as there was in the 1950s, when all our institutions commanded more respect."{6}

Researcher George Barna, writing ten years later in his book *Boiling Point*, concludes that moral anarchy has arrived and dominates our culture today.{7} His argument hinges on a substantial amount of attitudinal and behavioral evidence, such as rapid growth of the pornography industry, highway speeding as the norm, income tax cheating, computer hacking, rampant copyright violations (movies, books, and recordings), increasing rates of cohabitation and adultery, Internet-based plagiarism, etc{8}.

When asked the basis on which they form their moral choices, nearly half of all adults cite their desire to do whatever will bring them the most pleasing or satisfying results. Although the Bible should be the basis of our moral decision-making, the survey showed that only four out of every ten born again Christian adults relies on the Bible or church teaching as their primary source of moral guidance.{9}

The survey also found that the younger generation was even more inclined to support behaviors that conflict with traditional Christian morals. "Among the instances in which young adults were substantially more likely than their elders to adopt a nouveau moral view were in supporting homosexuality, cohabitation, the non-medicinal use of marijuana, voluntary exposure to pornography, profane language, drunkenness, speeding and sexual fantasizing."{10}

Clearly, Christians are neither thinking nor behaving as Christians. And a large part of the problem centers on this abandonment of a belief in absolute truth. If Christians believe that morality is relative and determined by the situation, then they have changed biblical moral principles. Today there is a critical need for Christians to think and act biblically in every area of life.

De-conversion

You have no doubt known of young people who go off to college and end up rejecting their faith. The story is more common than we might imagine. Nancy Pearcey, in her book *Total Truth*, tells the story of two such people.[\[11\]](#)

One said, "In my senior year of high school I accepted Jesus as my Savior and became a born-again Christian. I had found the One True Religion, and it was my duty—indeed it was my pleasure—to tell others about it, including my parents, brothers and sisters, friends, and even total strangers."[\[12\]](#)

But his religious convictions waned when he confronted the theory of evolution. The student underwent "a de-conversion in graduate school six years later when I studied evolutionary biology." Who is this person? He is Michael Shermer, the director of the Skeptics Society and publisher of *Skeptic* magazine. He has dedicated his life to debunking Christianity and defending evolution against people who believe in intelligent design.

Another prominent atheist tells a similar story. "I was a born-again Christian. When I was fifteen, I entered the Southern Baptist Church with great fervor and interest in the fundamentalist religion." But he also found that his religious convictions were adversely affected by the theory of evolution. He says that he left the church "at seventeen when I got to the University of Alabama and heard about

evolutionary theory.”[{13}](#)

This person described his encounter with evolution as an “epiphany” and was enthralled with the implications of evolution. Who is this person? He is E.O. Wilson, Harvard professor and founder of sociobiology (which attempts to explain everything in life from an evolutionary process).

Sadly, these stories are repeated year after year at universities throughout this country. The students who go through this de-conversion may not grow up to become famous skeptics or atheists like the ones we just mentioned. But they will grow up without a solid, Christian faith.

Teenagers who are raised in stable Christian homes, educated in Christian schools, all too often go to college and reject their Christian faith. They fall prey to the naturalistic, evolutionary foundation of modern education. Or they adopt one of the current intellectual or cultural fads on campus.

So how are we to better prepare these young people for their college experience? A key element is to teach a Christian worldview. As our secular culture becomes more hostile to Christian ideas, it is more difficult to live out our Christian worldview consistently. When the culture was more hospitable to Christian values, a Sunday school understanding of Christianity could survive. Now we live in a culture hostile to those values. A rudimentary understanding of Christianity in such a hostile culture will soon wilt and die.

Young people, and youth ministry to young people, must be more intentional if Christian beliefs are to survive. Teaching a Christian worldview and training young people in the basics of apologetics are absolutely crucial if their faith is to survive.

Dichotomy of Truth

A Christian worldview should encompass all of reality. But the world today (and even most Christians) has divided truth into two categories. Francis Schaeffer used the concept of a two-story building. Science and reason are found on the lower story. Religion and morality can be found in the upper story.

Nancy Pearcey says that the upper story is the realm of private truth. This is where we hear people say such things as “that may be true for you, but it isn’t true for me.” Or to put it another way, the lower story is modernism, while the upper story is postmodernism.

This dichotomy of truth has served to marginalize Christianity. When Christians attempt to speak to moral issues of the day, their perspective is dismissed because critics believe that it is in the realm of private truth. So when they speak on subjects ranging from bioethics to science to public policy, the world perceives these comments as merely subjective value assumptions.

Unfortunately, Christians have also accepted this dichotomy of truth. They assume that science deals with facts and their faith deals with values. And they also assume that the two can exist simultaneously and independently of each other.

A good illustration of this can be found in a recent article in which a young writer described her first day in a theology class at a Christian high school. “My theology teacher drew a heart on one side of the blackboard and a brain on the other side. He informed us that the two are as divided as the two sides of the blackboard—the *heart* is what we use for religion, and the *brain* is what we use for science.”[\[14\]](#)

Even more disturbing was the fact that in a classroom of some two hundred students, she was the only one who objected to the teacher’s division of truth. Sadly, this is how more and more

Christians have decided to deal with the conflicting and confusing facts of the modern world. And this is how we are supposedly “preparing” young people for college and society.

We need to give young people more than just a “heart” religion which will most certainly fail to equip them for the hostility towards Christianity found in modern society. They need a “brain” religion that includes at least training in worldview and apologetics.

Christian education and youth ministry must be more than opening the session in prayer. It must address this dichotomy of truth that places science and reason on one story of the building and leaves religion and morality on another story of the building. If we don’t address this problem, we will continue to turn out students who are Christians in their private life but essentially secular in their public life. And ultimately, their brains win out over their hearts so they end up living and thinking like non-Christians.

Christian Worldview

There are many elements to a Christian worldview, and the Probe Web site is full of articles that will help you in the development of a Christian worldview. A key verse in this endeavor is Mark 12:30: “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.”

Jesus is telling us that we cannot live with a dichotomy of truth. We are to love God with our heart, soul, and mind. We cannot live our Christian life out on two different floors of a building where science and reason are on one story of the building and religion and morality are on another.

Jesus is also telling us that we must strive to know God intimately. He describes this as a whole-hearted, consuming desire to know God. Christianity isn’t a hobby; it’s a

lifestyle. We are to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Another important verse is 2 Corinthians 10:5: "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." The apostle Paul wrote these words because he knew how important it was for Christians to have a Christian worldview in the midst of the pagan, secular culture of his day.

Notice that he describes the Christian mind in terms of warfare. We are engaged in a battle of worldviews and must be prepared for battle. We are to put all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, he is our commander in this battle of worldviews.

Another key verse is Colossians 2:8: "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." The apostle Paul's words warn all Christians not to be "taken captive" by false philosophy. How true that is especially for young people headed off to college.

When we consider these last two verses, we notice an interesting contrast. Either we take every thought captive (2 Cor. 10:5) or we run the risk of being taken captive (Col. 2:8) by false philosophies.

A final verse is 1 Peter 3:15: "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." The Greek word *apologia* is where we get our word apologetics. It does not mean to apologize. But it does mean to provide reasonable answers to honest questions and to do it with humility, respect, and reverence.

Christianity requires both offense and defense. While 2 Corinthians 10:5 focuses on the “offensive” nature of Christianity, 1 Peter 3:15 focuses on its “defensive” nature. We must always be ready to give an answer for our faith as we engage a world that is often hostile to the Christian worldview.

Notes

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5. “Americans Are Most Likely to Base Truth on Feelings,” *The Barna Update* (Ventura, Calif.), 12 Feb. 2002.
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10. Ibid.
11. Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 223-4.

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"Can You Suggest Reasons Why I Am a Lesbian?"

I just read Kerby Anderson's article on [Homosexual Theology](#). Very well written, although I do disagree on some points. I consider myself homosexual. I am a 36 year-old female. As far back as I can remember, from the age of 2 or 3, I've have "felt" like a boy. This goes beyond just same-sex attractions. It goes into wanting to play army and trucks as a child, rather than play with dolls and, eventually, being sexually attracted to females (even in grade school), rather than males. For me, as I can only speak for myself, it is not all about sex. I would rather share my life with a female, even if we never had sex. I want the same thing I assume most heterosexuals want; a home, family, decent job, vacation time, and hope for a healthy, happy future.

I guess my question for you is, what do you think caused my homosexuality? I grew up in the "All-American Family." Stay at home mom, dad who always worked, middle-class, church on Sundays. I am the youngest of three, and the only girl. I was always encouraged to act and dress like a female by my

parents. I had no doubt about my parents love for me and felt very secure and safe in my environment. I grew up about as “normal” as anyone can in American. So, can you shed any light? Thanks, _____

Dear _____,

Kerby Anderson forwarded your e-mail to me because I am very familiar with the homosexuality issue.

The difficulty in trying to explain the foundations for another person’s same gender attraction is always increased when we are only given selective details. What you wrote to Kerby isn’t your whole story, and you couldn’t possibly be able to GIVE your whole story, especially when the most important parts are what happened inside your head and heart.

One of the things we have discovered over the past several years is that the contributing factors to homosexuality include not only events (such as sexual abuse) and relationships (especially with parents), but how a child PERCEIVES events and relationships. For example, dads can show and tell their love in one way, but if his son or daughter doesn’t hear it or see it, s/he can feel unloved even though the love was there. Parents can feel that they are accepting their children, but sometimes the kids don’t feel that acceptance. And that makes sense, since we are all broken people living in a fallen world, and sometimes our “love receptors” are broken just like a radio can be broken and not receive the radio waves that would translate into sound if it weren’t broken.

There is an intriguing detail you DID include, which was being sexually attracted to females, even in grade school. Emotionally healthy children do not experience sexual attraction until adolescence. (Kids sometimes develop crushes on other kids, but it’s an intense emotional attraction, not a sexual attraction.) Becoming sexual at an early age isn’t

normal; all the examples I ever heard of were the result of sexual exposure (which is actually sexual abuse) at an early age.

So I would suggest there are parts to your story—your true relationship with your parents, possible experiences you don't mention—that are a big part of what you have experienced. Having boy-like interests at an early age, in and of itself, doesn't say that anything was wrong; there is a wide spectrum of what it means to be a female, just as there is a wide spectrum of what it means to be male. And that, I believe, is by divine design, because God is delighted to make people with great variety. But that doesn't mean He gave you same-gender attraction, and it doesn't mean He made you gay. It means something happened, even if you don't know what it is. Homosexuality is really about gender confusion, and something interfered with you embracing your femininity if you have closed yourself off from wanting intimate relationships with men.

I hope this helps.

Most respectfully,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Can I Help My Gay Friend?”

I have a friend who confessed to me that she was gay. I was shocked...but yet...something inside of me knew that there was something different about her. I have been searching of ways

to tell her about the truth. Please understand...it has been so easy for me to lead others to the truth...but with her...I'm baffled. I have been speaking to her over the Internet mostly. She has had close family members that have been diagnosed with cancer, etc. I've been helping her stand on the word by giving her Biblical scriptures on healing. I "gently" tell her in a roundabout way (when given the opportunity) about sins in our lives etc...etc...etc...

I'm trying to tell her that God loves her but not the way she's living her life. As you can tell... I'm even having a hard time explaining it to you. I wish I knew of a book that helps Christians talk to gays to lead them to the truth. She once told me that men were so iffy and that her girlfriends treated her better. I should have caught on then...but I didn't. I don't think she's ready to give up this lifestyle...but I can't go on acting as though it's not a problem. I try to stay away from talking about this issue with her. She has a girlfriend at this time and lives about 3 hours from where I live. I just thought you may know of something that may help me minister to her or help me to understand before I leap out there and push her further away from knowing the truth. She is always sending me thank you notes saying that she knows that there was a reason why we met and that she would not be where she is with God if we didn't meet. Honestly...I couldn't believe her attitude. She started going to a Christian church...joined a Bible study from Genesis to Revelation... stood in faith for a job (when she lost hers). It's like God is doing all He can to show her He's real, but deep down in my heart...I feel she's lost in another way. Before I keep going on...I'll close and ask again... Do you know of anything that will help me to reach her God's way?

I am so glad to hear of your friendship with this dear lady who needs the freedom Jesus offers!! You should know that almost all the people involved in ministries to those with unwanted homosexuality (you can check out [Restored Hope](#)

[Network](#) and [Living Hope Ministries](#)) did so because of friends and family who showed a willingness to BE THERE for them and love them through the process of change.

Yes, there is a book I would recommend for women, *Out of Egypt* by Jeanette Howard. May I suggest that a good way to offer it is to say, “If you ever get to the point where your life isn’t working for you, you might want to read this book.” It’s not threatening, and it leaves the door open to pursue something different when the Lord reveals truth to her. And nothing will change apart from HIM allowing her to see the truth instead of being deceived by the enemy. Which is why your prayers for her are of utmost importance.

If you want to educate yourself to better know how to minister to her, read *Someone I Love Is Gay* by Anita Worthen and Bob Davies. It’s written for friends and family of those in the lifestyle.

I hope this helps; I know these resources have helped many, many other people in exactly your shoes.

In His grip,

Sue

“How Should We Deal With Gay Activist Groups?”

I have been reading your articles on homosexuality. But I still didn’t see anything on how we are to follow Jesus’ commandment about loving your neighbor regarding homosexuality in the “institutionalized” church, and homosexual weddings and pastors. I don’t want to judge others, and I don’t want to see

homosexuality forced into public schools as a “normal” lifestyle. How do I have mercy AND stand up for what I believe in my heart to be wrong according to my interpretation of the Bible? Where does mercy end and judgment begin in dealing with activist groups?

I turned to two friends for help in answering your excellent question. One is the director of an outreach to those wanting to leave homosexuality, a man who is a former gay activist himself. The other is a pastor who was convicted of his judgmental attitude toward homosexuals, and sought the Lord's heart by involving himself in Exodus International and a local ministry to those dealing with unwanted homosexuality. Both of them wrote such great answers that I'm just going to paste them in here.

Sue Bohlin

The director:

Unfortunately for us, because it makes it more difficult, mercy and judgment go hand in hand. The challenge is to know where to apply them both in situations that require both. With judgment, the Bible clearly calls us to judge sinful behavior. Especially if we are judging the behavior of other Christians. It isn't an option according to Matthew 18, and the Lord has blessed us with a model of how to approach one who is in sin. What we cannot judge are the motivations of the heart or a person's worth to God. It is hard for modern Americans to see that calling something sinful is an act of mercy. God was very merciful to us to show us not only the good things of Himself, but also the things He will not accept—which is also good. Others use the same words to condemn, but if we are mindful of our own sin and the mercy extended to us, when we are called to speak the truth in a situation, it will be delivered with such compassion and mercy that it will be an effective witness. Judgment comes in the words; mercy comes in the delivery of the message.

Here's an example of how to communicate:

"According to my spiritual convictions, homosexuality is sinful. I don't know what it is like to be gay or to have the feelings you do but I do know the loving character of my God. If He says, which I believe He does, that a certain sexual activity is sinful, then I believe that He says so because He wants you to have the very best in life and will make a way to meet the deep cries of your heart. I know for myself and my struggles with different issues, that what seems impossible to me is very possible for a holy and loving God."

As far as institutionalized Christianity, I don't know that any institution will change until the hearts of individuals change. Of course we must vote our conscience and speak what the Lord tells us to, but I think the main focus should be the person next to us. When we can look them in the face with love and compassion, nothing but positive change can occur. They may not like it at first, so we must be prepared to receive at least rejection and at most hostility—neither of which should move us past love.

With regard to activist groups, I don't suggest dealing with them as a group is a good idea. To be an activist means you are sold out to whatever you are fighting for, and as a group I think it would take another group to deal with them. If one is dealing with an activist, don't see them as an activist but as a saint of God in the making. Turn the other cheek, love them enough to hurt at the thought of their pain. I have learned that saying a small amount of appropriate truth and being a steadfast witness is the best way to witness to activists.

The Pastor:

I am assuming from the tone that the writer believes homosexual conduct to be sin. S/he also seems to fear that if we aren't strong enough in our denunciation that gays will

take over the public arena. If we show too much love and mercy it will be construed as acceptance. I understand that.

I just read a response J.P. Moreland made to Charles Templeton who was asserting that it is intellectually impossible to believe in God. Moreland pointed out that how the argument is framed is extremely important. If we accept a faulty premise we've already lost. This is what gay activists, with the collusion of much of the media, have done—for example, all those who do not accept homosexuality as normative are “homophobic.” Of course this is linguistically and logically wrong. If you and I were homophobic we would never be around homosexuals willingly. But we also frame the argument incorrectly if we accept that.

So I would begin by saying that God showed me I wasn't responsible for how the world viewed what I do and say as long as it squares with His Word. Of course going by that Word can be dangerous; it can get you crucified. People, even religious people, may misinterpret what you do and say. As a fundamentalist I was always bothered by Jesus telling His disciples that the world would know they belonged to Him by the way they loved each other. I've come to see that I can love people without condoning or approving their actions—or their positions. But if my loving them consists of telling them “I am speaking the truth in love” or something similar it will not ring true. We absolutely must learn to see gays—and all other people—as people whom Jesus loves dearly. He cries out for them to come to Him. He wants them to know that no matter how far they drift, He longs passionately for them to come to Him. So, I began by realizing how much Jesus loved homosexuals—including activists—and then because He was so pained by their sin and the cruelty of others, I found myself wanting to serve Him by helping to show them His love. I had to be Jesus in the flesh. I couldn't do that if my “love” was a veneer or simply putting on an act so I might get them to listen to my arguments. I had to decide if I really believed

what God says about people who are separated from Him. Are they really basically empty spiritually? Can they really find true Joy apart from Him? If I really accept that then I don't have to argue with them that they really are or aren't happy, etc. I can simply proceed with the assurance that it is the task of the Holy Spirit to do that. My job is to love and speak the truth—gently for the most part.

_____ (an outspoken gay activist) has been good for me in that regard. He has even asked me to appear with him at a PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, a pro-gay support and activist group) meeting next year. He wants his side to see that someone can totally disagree with him (and them) and not be harsh or obnoxious. He and I have kind of a running joke that "I love _____ but we disagree totally on homosexuality." I do love him. He is well aware that I oppose gay marriage or adoption and acceptance of what we believe to be sin by the culture at large. I grieve over his views on homosexuality. But I am encouraged that thru lots of conversations and e-mails with some of the ex-gay folks, he has for the most part let go of his anger and bitterness toward the church and indirectly toward God. He now once again identifies himself as a Christian. I still pray that one day he will see the whole truth. But I know he wouldn't even be in a position to consider it if he had not seen God's love in the flesh.

I have heard the same kind of testimony over and over since getting involved with Exodus. Many of the leaders in Exodus ministries came to Christ because some Christian loved them. Most had experienced a lot of anger and rejection from the church and were bitter and antagonistic. It is imperative that we not allow ourselves to put homosexuality into a separate category from other sins. If we slip into that it will show in the way we relate and those to whom we are trying to minister will know it. For instance, do we oppose adultery and adulterers in public life with the same standard we use for

homosexuality? I think we think we do, but I haven't seen consistency there. The bottom line is that we are in the business of reconciling ALL sinners to our Father. We must see ALL people as God sees them.

Student Mind Games Conference (radio transcript)

Conference Overview

There's one thing we do here at Probe that is our favorite part of ministry. Our [Student Mind Games Conference](#) is a week-long, total immersion, give-it-all-we've-got experience for high school and college students that changes minds and hearts forever.

We teach Christian students how to think biblically on a wide range of subjects: worldviews, basic apologetics, creation and evolution, human nature, the differences between guys and girls, the problem of evil, the value of suffering, campus Christianity, and even how to watch a movie without swallowing it whole. They learn about world religions, a compassionate but biblical view of homosexuality, science and Earth-history, feminism, and genetic engineering. We talk about how not to lose their faith in college and give specific, practical help connecting with the campus ministries at whatever college they're headed to.



The Probe teachers don't just give the lectures, though; we continue conversations at meals where we eat and visit with the students instead of each other. We assign readings by

authors who don't have a Christian worldview, and break up into discussion groups to help the students develop their discernment skills and tune up their baloney detectors. There is free time every afternoon for everybody to hike, swim, play basketball or card games, read or nap. They learn how to be discerning in watching movies, and get practice at it by watching several movies during the evenings.

The students are delighted to meet other thinking Christians from all over the country, students eager to think and grow in their faith as they learn to love God with their minds together. They enjoy getting to know us as the instructors, too. We're not only available the whole week; we look for opportunities to engage in conversations that will encourage and affirm what God is doing in the minds and hearts of these precious young people.

In what follows you'll hear a little bit from several lecturers, and also from several of our *Mind Games* alumni.

Sneak Peek of Probe Lectures

Here are snippets from lectures of four of our Probe *Mind Games* instructors, speaking on Apologetics, Origins, The Value of Suffering, and Nietzsche for Beginners:

Dr. Pat Zukeran:

When we begin apologetics, when you engage the non-Christian world, where do we begin? Worldviews. Very good. Now there are three major worldviews; what are they? The first one is. . . ? Theism. Theism teaches what? God made all. The second one is. . . ? Naturalism, or atheism: no God at all. And the third one is Pantheism, God is all. Remember all three of those.

Dr. Ray Bohlin:

That is why many were upset for a long time. Many rejected the Big Bang because of the philosophical implications of a beginning. Where does this particle come from? Here's the problem. See, something must be eternal. Something has to have always been here. Otherwise, something had to come from absolutely nothing.

Sue Bohlin:

Pat explained to you the philosophical aspects of suffering and pain, and now I want to get intensely practical. I want to share with you five of the things that God showed me over a five-year period about the value of suffering. God never wastes our suffering, not a scrap of it. He redeems all of it for His glory and for our benefit. We have a God who scoops us up, and holds us to His chest where we can hear His heart beating, and says, "It's okay. I love you, buddy. Dad knows the way home. It's gonna be okay." And in the midst of our suffering, that's when God is holding us the closest.

Todd Kappelman:

What Nietzsche says is, "Listen, there are smart people, there are strong people, there are the artistically gifted, there are geniuses which comprise one percent or less of the population, and then there's the ninety-nine percent." What Nietzsche as an atheist wants to do is, he wants to look at good art. He wants to make a place in our culture for good art to be produced. The problem with good art being produced is you need a good audience that appreciates good art in order for good art to be produced.

Comments from Alumni, Part 1

Sarah relates how she happened to come:

I'm Sarah, I have an older sister, this is her third year,

and she got me into this. She's, like, "This, is the most awesome thing ever, you gotta go." I'm like, "Whatever." I came because she would always come back saying that she had this awesome time and everything. I was just like, "Okay, I'll go, I've been to other conferences before so I don't think it'll be anything different." This was really amazing because other conferences that I've been to, it's been just lectures, lectures, lectures. But like Sue and Pat and Todd and Heather and Ray, they would talk back to you. They wanted to get to know you, they wanted to know what you thought, they let you ask questions and they would answer it in the best way that they do, and it was just really nice to have someone older and wise that could give their information to where you could understand it, and it's free to ask questions.

Here's Kayla:

I really enjoyed the variety of the workshops, realizing that Christianity does apply to all aspects of life, that we have a worldview that is livable, and that whether it be about homosexuality or abortion or genetic engineering, our worldview applies to that too, and knowing those answers will help me that much more in the secular university.

Austin shares what helped him the most:

It especially helped with the readings, the secular readings. It helped me to point out the flaws in their teachings and to see, okay, he's wrong here, here, here, here; he's kinda right here; this is where he needs to change a little. It helps me interpret what I'm reading better.

And Bekah responds to my question: *Do you feel equipped to handle the anti-Christian, the hostile influences on the college campus?*

Yes, because we had to interact with the “devil’s advocate” so much here, and I think it really just prepared us for situations we’re actually going to face.

We love and enjoy the students who come to *Mind Games*, and they know it.

Comments From Alumni, Part 2

Here are a few more: Jon, Ashli, Jonathan and a returning alumnus, Daniel:

Jon:

It was more than I expected. I thought I was going to come here and learn ways to defeat people’s arguments and destroy what they believe, but that’s not what I learned. I actually learned WHY people believe what they believe, and so because I can understand what they believe better, I can love them better as a person, and that’s really how you witness to them: you love them first and then they’ll ask you, “What’s so special,” and then you can do it. So Mind Games for me was about learning and understanding more of what other people believe so I could understand and love them better.

Ashli:

The lectures—I loved them, because my dad’s always about, he wants you to gain the knowledge, he wants you to know stuff, and I . . . don’t. I learned so much, and I got so much out of it, and I had so many questions that I had answered. I was almost embarrassed by the questions, that I should already know the answer, but I felt comfortable enough to ask them, and they answered them clearly, and it was awesome.

Jonathan:

There's just something amazing about this place where everyone wants to be here. The lectures were really great, there's just so much emotion and information to it. They just tell sides of things you never hear in the culture, it's just so informative. Like Ashli said, you really get just a zeal for learning about this stuff and you realize how little you know about your faith, and how much you want to learn, so I'm definitely going to come back and try and learn some more.

Daniel:

I thought Mind Games was fantastic. It was a great experience, and while I did go to some of the same classes, I took more away from them than I did last year, partly because I stayed awake during different parts but mostly because I was paying better attention and you take different things away every time you go to the same lesson. So that was still valuable even though I'd been here before. And there were definitely talks that I hadn't attended last year that were really, really interesting, downright fascinating actually, which I was very glad to be a part of, some of which I felt pretty strongly about, so I was glad to be able to participate in those discussions.

Why Go to Mind Games?

We now know that three out of four high school seniors who had been part of a church youth group drop out of church within a year.[\[1\]](#) One reason for this is that they don't own their faith; they don't know *that* Christianity is true, and they don't know *why* it's true. They tend to equate faith with a warm fuzzy feeling that doesn't stand up to the challenges of life. Many students are afraid to express their doubts so they never learn that there are good, solid answers to their questions. They are sensitive to the disconnect that happens when those who profess to be Christ-followers act no

differently from unbelievers.

For over fifteen years, Probe's *Mind Games* conferences have been preparing young people for the challenges to their faith. In that time, we have witnessed firsthand the incredible thirst for a reliable trustworthy faith. Again and again we hear that some had despaired of ever finding something like *Mind Games*. The conference consistently exceeds expectations, and students often tell us they wish they had brought their friends.

Alumni from these summer conferences are going on to become leaders on their campuses and beyond. This weeklong immersion truly changes lives, giving them a new confidence in their God, His Word, and in their role as His ambassadors. We know this because some of them come back as alumni a second or third year, and because they contact us from college and let us know how *Mind Games* continues to impact them. Others have gone on to become leaders in ministry and heroes in the military.

Mornings start with an informal devotional by Probe staff and a time of prayer. They receive twenty-five hours of lecture using video clips, role play, Q and A, and other teaching techniques. They build their discernment muscles and sharpen their critical thinking skills by reading and analyzing articles by non-Christians, which we discuss in small groups. They worship together, they play together, and they make dear friends. We instructors share our meals and some of our free time with the students, which allows us to get to know and truly love them.

The Student *Mind Games* Conference is for those who have finished their junior or senior years of high school, and for college freshmen and sophomores. [Note: especially motivated students younger than that are welcome, though!] Please go to our Web site, Probe.org, and check out the [reports and pictures](#) of the last few *Mind Games* conferences. You can look

at a [typical schedule](#), and find out all the details. And then register someone you love. It will make a difference in time and eternity.

Note

1. Steve Cable, Is This the Last Christian Generation?

www.probe.org/last-christian-generation.htm

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Goddess Worship – A Christian View

Pagan, Wiccan, and practitioners of New Age religion are turning to belief in a Goddess to express their God-created desire to worship. Russ Wise examines goddess worship from a Christian perspective.

“The goddess, or Great Mother, has existed since the beginning of time . . . it is out of the primordial depths of her womb that the Universe and all life is born.” –Morwyn, *Secrets of a Witch's Coven*

Reverence for the goddess is becoming prevalent in our day. The goddess is embraced by witchcraft, radical feminism, the occult, and the liberal church. The New Age that is about to dawn upon us will be, according to the occult world, a feminine age. Likewise, those who hold this view believe that this current, masculine age has been an age of destruction and broken relationships among humanity. The New Age with its feminine energies will bring balance to the destructive aspects of the Piscean Age.

Rosemary Radford Ruether, in her book *Womanguides: Readings Toward a Feminist Theology*, states that

It is to the women that we look for salvation in the healing and restorative waters of Aquarius. It is to such a New Age that we look now with hope as the present age of masculism succeeds in destroying itself.

According to Starhawk, a feminist and a practicing witch,

The symbolism of the Goddess is not a parallel structure to the symbolism of God the Father. The goddess does not rule the world; She is the world.(1)

In order for this feminine age to come into full fruition, a shift in consciousness must take place in the world. This shift in thinking and perception of reality will bring forth the goddess.(2)

According to those who believe in the Great Goddess, Europe was once inhabited by a matriarchal, egalitarian society. Europeans, they claim, worshipped a matrifocal, sedentary, peaceful, art-loving goddess 5,000 to 25,000 years before the rise of the first male-oriented religion. They maintain that this egalitarian culture was overrun and destroyed by a semi-nomadic, horse-riding, Indo-European group of invaders who were patrifocal, mobile, warlike, and indifferent to art.(3)

These Indo-European invaders considered themselves to be superior to the peaceful and art-loving goddess worshippers because of their superior military ability. The matriarchal religion of these early settlers was eventually assimilated into the patriarchal religion of the invaders. As these invaders imposed their patriarchal culture on the conquered peoples, rapes(4) and myths about male warriors killing serpents (symbols of the goddess worshippers) appeared for the first time. As the assimilation of cultures continued, the Great Goddess fragmented into many lesser goddesses.

According to Merlin Stone, author of *When God Was a Woman*, the disenthronement of the Great Goddess, begun by the Indo-European invaders, was finally accomplished by the Hebrew, Christian, and Moslem religions that arose later.(5) The male deity took the prominent place. The female goddesses faded into the background, and women in society followed suit.(6)

The Goddess and Witchcraft

In the world of witchcraft the goddess is the giver of life. Jean Shinoda Bolen, M.D., in her book *Goddesses in Everywoman*, has this to say about the goddess:

The Great Goddess was worshipped as the feminine life force deeply connected to nature and fertility, responsible both for creating life and for destroying life.(7)

Bolen goes on to say that "the Great Goddess was regarded as immortal, changeless, and omnipotent" prior to the coming of Christianity. For witches, the goddess is the earth itself. Mother Earth, or Gaia, as the goddess is known in occult circles, is an evolving being, as is all of nature. Starhawk, in her best-selling book *The Spiral Dance*, says that "the model of the Goddess, who is immanent in nature, fosters respect for the sacredness of all living things. Witchcraft can be seen as a religion of ecology. Its goal is harmony with nature, so that life may not just survive, but thrive."(8)

The witch views Gaia, or Mother Earth, as a biosystem. She attributes consciousness to the earth and believes it to be spiritual as well. In other words, Gaia is a living and evolving being that has a spiritual destiny.

The environmental movement of our day is greatly influenced by those who practice witchcraft or hold neo-pagan beliefs. Witchcraft is an attempt to reintroduce the sacred aspect of the earth that was, according to its practitioners, destroyed by the Christian world. The goddess is, therefore, a direct

affront against the male-dominated religion of the Hebrew God.

Christianity teaches that God is transcendent, is separate from nature, and is represented to humankind through masculine imagery. Witchcraft holds a pantheistic view of God. God is nature, therefore God is in all things and all things are a part of God. However, this God is in actuality a goddess.

A fundamental belief in witchcraft is the idea that the goddess predates the male God. The goddess is the giver of all life and is found in all of creation. "The importance of the Goddess symbol for women cannot be overstressed. The image of the Goddess inspires women to see ourselves as divine, our bodies as sacred, the changing phases of our lives as holy, our aggression as healthy, and our anger as purifying. Through the Goddess, we can discover our strength, enlighten our minds, own our bodies, and celebrate our emotions." (9)

For Betty Sue Flowers, a University of Texas English professor, the women's spirituality movement is the answer to the male-oriented religion of Christianity. At the International Conference on Women's Spirituality in Austin, Texas, Flowers stated that

The goddess is a metaphor that reminds us of the female side of spirituality. Metaphors are important. You can't know God directly. You can only know images of God, and each image or metaphor is a door. Some doors are open and others are closed. A door that is only male is only half open. (10)

The Goddess and Feminism

For many in the feminist world, the goddess is an object of worship. Those in the women's spirituality movement "reject what they call the patriarchal Judeo-Christian tradition, deploring sexist language, predominantly masculine imagery and largely male leadership." (11)

According to a *Wall Street Journal* article by Sonia L.

Nazario, "women first wanted to apply feminism to political and economic realms, then to their families. Now, they want it in their spiritual lives."(12)

To understand fully the implications of the women's spirituality movement, one only needs to read the current literature on the subject. The editors of the book *Radical Feminism* state that "political institutions such as religion, because they are based on philosophies of hierarchical orders and reinforce male oppression of females, must be destroyed."

The radical feminist believes that the traditional church must be dismantled. Naomi Goldenberg, in her book *Changing of the Gods*, states that "the feminist movement in Western culture is engaged in the slow execution of Christ and Yahweh. . . . It is likely that as we watch Christ and Yahweh tumble to the ground, we will completely outgrow the need for an external God."(13) The deity that many in the feminist camp are searching for takes on the form of a goddess. Some in the goddess movement, according to a *Wall Street Journal* article, "pray for the time when science will make men unnecessary for procreation."(14) The radical feminist sees the goddess movement as a spiritual outlet for her long-held beliefs. Mark Muesse, an assistant professor of religious studies at Rhodes College, agrees that "some feminist Christians push for changes ranging from the ordination of women and the generic, non-sexual terms for God and humanity to overhauling the very theology."(15)

Perhaps the most descriptive word for the feminist movement is "transformation." Catherine Keller, associate professor of theology at Xavier University says in her essay "Feminism and the New Paradigm" that "the global feminist movement is bringing about the end of patriarchy, the eclipse of the politics of separation, and the beginning of a new era modeled on the dynamic, holistic paradigm. Radical feminists envision that era, and the long process leading toward it, as a comprehensive transformation."

Another aspect of this transformation is the blending of the sexes. The feminist movement seeks a common mold for all of humanity. Jungian psychotherapist John Weir Perry believes that we must find our individuality by discovering androgyny. He states, "To reach a new consensus, we have to avoid falling back into stereotypes, and that requires truly developing our individuality. It is an ongoing work of self-realization and self-actualization. For men it means growing into their native maleness and balancing it with their femaleness. For women, it's the same—growing into their full womanhood, and that includes their masculine side."(16)

This process sounds more like androgyny or sameness than it does individuality.

This paradigm-shift is nothing less than the reordering of man's understanding of God, a shift in thinking of God through predominantly masculine imagery to seeing and experiencing God as a goddess, the mother of life.

The Goddess and the Occult

In the world of the occult, also known as the New Age, the goddess is believed to be resident within the individual and simply needs to be awakened. In other words, the individual is inherently divine. Starhawk, a witch who works with the Catholic priest Matthew Fox at his Institute of Creation Spirituality, says that an individual can awaken the goddess by invoking or inviting her presence. Starhawk tells us that "to invoke the Goddess is to awaken the Goddess within, to become . . . that aspect we invoke. An invocation channels power through a visualized image of Divinity."

Starhawk continues, "We are already one with the Goddess—she has been with us from the beginning, so fulfillment becomes . . . a matter of self-awareness. For women, the Goddess is the symbol of the inmost self. She awakens the mind and spirit and emotions."(17)

Jean Shinoda Bolen, a Jungian analyst and clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of California, answered the question, What ails our society? by saying, "we suffer from the absence of one half of our spiritual potential—the Goddess." (18) Individuals who follow New Age teaching believe that the male-dominated religion of this present age has done an injustice to humanity and the ecosystem. Therefore there must be a balancing of energies. The male energies must diminish and the feminine energies must increase in order for the goddess to empower the individual.

The New Age of occultism promises to be an age of peace, harmony, and tranquility, whereas the present dark age of brokenness and separation continues to bring war, conflict, and disharmony. So it is the goddess with her feminine aspects of unity, love, and peace that will offer a solution for mankind and circumvent his destruction. For many in our society, this appears to be the answer to man's dilemma. However, an occult solution that denies Christ's atonement for sin cannot fully meet a Holy God's requirement for wholeness.

For the pagan, the goddess represents life and all it has to offer. "The Goddess religion is a conscious attempt to reshape culture." (19) This reshaping is nothing less than viewing man and his understanding of reality from a female-centered perspective, the focus of which is on the Divine as female. Therefore considerable emphasis is placed on feminine attributes, ultimately focusing on eroticism and sexuality. "Women are clearly the catalyst for the formation of the new spirituality. It is women above all who are in the process of reversing Genesis . . . by validating and freeing their sexuality." (20)

A major part of this transformative process is the empowerment of women. The rise of the goddess is a direct assault on the foundation of Christianity. This new spirituality affirms bisexuality, lesbianism, homosexuality, and androgyny through the expression of transvestitism.

As this revival of the goddess continues, a growing lack of distinction between male and female will become the norm. Jungian psychotherapist John Weir Perry believes that “both current psychology and ancient history point to an emerging transformation in our sense of both society and self, a transformation that includes redefining the notion of what it means to be men and women.”(21)

The Bible clearly indicates that men and women were created as distinctive beings, male and female. The rising occult influence in our society seeks to undermine the biblical absolute that gives our culture stability. Once again the Bible rings true as it states, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”(22)

The Goddess and the Liberal Church

The message of the goddess has gained a hearing in the church as well. The philosophy of the goddess is currently being taught in the classrooms of many seminaries. Mary Daly, who considers herself to be a Christian feminist, says this about traditional Christianity: “To put it bluntly, I propose that Christianity itself should be castrated.”(23) The primary aim of this kind of “Christian” feminist is to bring an end to what she perceives as male-dominated religion by castrating the male influence from the religion.

Daly continues by saying, “I am suggesting that the idea of salvation uniquely by a male savior perpetuates the problem of patriarchal oppression.”(24)

Rev. Susan Cady, co-author of *Sophia: the Future of Feminist Spirituality* and pastor of Emmanuel United Methodist Church in Philadelphia, is one example of the direction that Daly and others are taking the church. The authors of *Sophia* state that

"Sophia is a female, goddess-like figure appearing clearly in the Scriptures of the Hebrew tradition." *Wisdom Feast*, the authors' latest book, clearly identifies Jesus with Sophia. Sophialogy presents Sophia as a separate goddess and Jesus as her prophet. The book takes liberty with Jesus by replacing Him with the feminine deity Sophia.

Another example of how goddess thealogy (feminist spelling for theology) is making its way into the liberal church is through seminars held on seminary campuses. One such seminar, "Wisdomweaving: Woman Embodied in Faiths," was held at the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in February of 1990. Linda Finnell, a wiccan and one of the speakers, spoke on the subject of "Returning to the Goddess Through Dianic Witchcraft." Two of the keynote speakers were of a New Age persuasion. In fact, one speaker, Sr. Jose Hobday, works with Matthew Fox and Starhawk at the Institute for Creation Spirituality.

A growing number of churches in the United States and around the world are embracing the New Age lie. Many churches have introduced A Course in Miracles, Yoga, Silva Mind Control, Unity teachings, and metaphysics into their teaching material. Some churches have taken a further step into the New Age by hiring individuals who hold a metaphysical world view.

Whether the individual seeks the goddess through witchcraft, the feminist movement, the New Age, or the liberal church, he or she is beginning a quest to understand and discover the "higher self." The higher self, often referred to as the "god self," is believed to be pure truth, deep wisdom. This truth or wisdom embodies the basic lie of deification. As Christians we must learn to discern every spirit lest we become deceived.

Notes

1. Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance* (New York: Harper & Row 1989), 23.

2. Elinor W. Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989), xiv.
3. Ibid., xii-xiii. See also Linnie Levy, *Of a Like Mind* (Madison, Wis.: OALM, 1991), vol. viii, no. 3, pp. 2-3.
4. See also Zsuzsanna Emese Budapest, *The Holy Book of Womwn's Mysteries* (Oakland, Calif.: Susan B. Anthony Coven No. 1, 1986), 12.
5. See also Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, xiii.
6. Jean Shinoda Bolen, *Goddesses in Everywoman* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 21.
7. Ibid., 20.
8. Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, 25.
9. Ibid., 24.
10. Carlos Vidal Greth, "The Spirit of Women," *The Austin-American Statesman*, 5 Mar. 1991, sec. D.
11. Ibid.
12. Sonia L. Nazario, "Is Goddess Worship Finally Going to Put Men in Their Place?" *The Wall Street Journal*, 7 June 1990, sec. A.
13. Naomi Goldenberg, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 4, 25.
14. Nazario, "Goddess Worship."
15. Deirdre Donahue, "Dawn of the Goddesses," *USA Today*, 26 Sept. 1990, sec. D.
16. John Weir Perry, "Myth, Ritual, and the Decline of Patriarchy," *Magical Blend* 33 (January 1992): 103.

17. Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, 99.
 18. Jean Shinoda Bolen, "The Women's Movement in Transition: The Goddess and the Grail," *Magical Blend* 33 (January 1992): 8.
 19. Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, 11.
 20. Donna Steichen, "The Goddess Goes to Washington," *Fidelity Magazine* (December 1986): 42.
 21. Perry, *Decline of Patriarchy*, 62.
 22. 2 Tim. 4:3.
 23. Alice Hageman, *Theology after the Demise of God the Father: a Call for the Castration of Sexist Religion* (New York: Association Press, 1974), 132.
 24. Hageman, *Theology*, 138.
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Grading America's Schools

Introduction

I recently received a phone call from a somewhat frantic radio station producer asking if I would be available for an interview on a noontime call-in program the next day. I'm always a bit amazed when anyone wants to interview me or get my opinion on an important subject, but before I could get too excited about the offer I discovered that the original guest had just cancelled and that they were looking desperately for a last minute fill-in.

The topic of the program was "Who Dumbed-Down American

Education.” I accepted the offer and the next day I called the station just before noon. The program host was a bit surprised when I started the show by voicing my discomfort with the intended topic. I told him that the topic implied that someone or some group is intentionally causing our children to perform poorly in school, and that I didn’t think that anyone was capable or even motivated to dumb-down American education. My experience with both public and private schools tells me that the vast majority of teachers and administrators have the best intentions for their students and community.

The educational enterprise in America is far too complicated for a single person or organization to purposefully undermine its successful operation. Public schools are influenced by a remarkable number of organizations both inside and outside of government. State legislatures, local school boards, the Department of Education, teacher’s unions, textbook publishers and numerous other interest groups take part in shaping both the purpose and practice of schooling in America. Although it might be tempting to reduce the problems of public education to one cause, it is highly unlikely that such is the case.

However, this is not to say that Americans are complacent about the performance of our schools. Evidence continues to suggest that our students do not learn as much as those from other countries. A recent international comparison of fifteen year olds found our students stuck in the middle of thirty-two nations on reading, mathematics, and scientific knowledge.[\[1\]](#) But the public’s dissatisfaction with government-sponsored schools goes back to their inception in the mid 1800’s. After a trip to a local New York school in 1892 Joseph Mayer Rice wrote that it was “the most dehumanizing institution that I have ever laid eyes upon.”[\[2\]](#) But while American’s usually agree that our schools have problems, they often differ as to what those problems are and on how to fix them.

Although there is no perfect schooling environment, we can highlight some of the factors that detract from the successful

educational progress we would like all of our children to experience. Since the educational system in America is complex, the problems are complex. Here we will

consider a host of problems facing education in America and suggest alternatives that might offer the hope of a good education to more of our children.

Progressive Education

First we will consider the consequences of progressive educational philosophy.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century there have been two prevailing educational philosophies that have competed for dominance in our school systems. Traditional educational philosophy, also called the teacher-centered approach, argues that teaching should focus on the accumulated knowledge and values of our culture. Students should learn from teachers who have acquired a significant amount of that knowledge and who can model the habits and discipline necessary to become a learned person. This view assumes that most students are able to learn but that learning can be difficult and that the joy that comes from learning is often delayed until after the fact. The learning process is the responsibility of both the teacher, who breaks topics down into digestible chunks and the learner who must bring a certain amount of self-motivation to the table. The ultimate goal is the production of mature and responsible adults.

The other educational philosophy that has grown in popularity over the last hundred years is known as progressive educational theory or the student-centered approach. The progressive educational view argues that children are by nature both morally good and eager to learn. Learning is a source of pleasure to children and that given the freedom and opportunity all children will learn what they need to know. The teacher's role is mainly that of a facilitator. If too

direct of an approach to learning is forced on the student such as memorization or unnecessary repetition, students will lose interest in the process. Learning is natural and should proceed in a natural organic manner.

These two educational theories begin with conflicting views of human nature. The traditional view would have much in common with the Christian theologian Augustine, who in the fourth century described his own personal sin nature in his *Confessions*. His depiction of human nature is that we are born fallen or marred by sin. Education of the right kind can play a role in ameliorating the effects of sin but never erase it. The progressive view looks back to the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Dewey for their point of view. Rousseau, in his work *Emile*, argues that children are good by nature and only need nature itself to guide their instruction. Dewey believed that children were neither good nor sinful, but rather highly malleable, making the educational process all the more important.

Rousseau and Augustine cannot both be right concerning human nature. Neither can traditional and progressive educational philosophy. Perhaps one problem with our schools is to be found in the most basic assumption of what it means to be human.

Truth

Let's investigate how the changing way that our society views truth has changed both what and how we teach our children.

Just as progressive education philosophy has slowly found a home in our educational institutions so has a new view of truth. Prior to the twentieth century, education focused on helping students to discover and value truth and the good life that resulted from honoring it, a tradition that goes back to Greek philosophers and Judeo-Christian thought. Many educators limited this search for truth to what science alone could

provide and may have valued reason above what is provided by faith and authority. However, the quest was to acquire and teach truth that applied to all people everywhere for all time. Teachers often viewed themselves as dispensers of knowledge, possessors of a grand tradition known as Western Civilization and participants of what is sometimes called the Great Conversation between pagan and Christian thought. These ideas mattered because they were part of a debate over the essence of things. How one viewed human nature, God, ethics, and the natural world were dependent upon which side was favored.

A new view of truth has emerged since the last world war to contest both the purpose of schooling and the role of the teacher. By the end of the twentieth century influential thinkers were arguing that the search for essences or the meaning of life have become useless endeavors. In fact, they argue that language itself is incapable of communicating truth that is true for all people everywhere and for all time. They hold that truth is itself a human invention and that those who possess power in a given culture produce it. In the past teachers might have argued that knowledge is power, today it is often held that power produces knowledge. As a result, all education is viewed more as a political endeavor rather than a quest for universal truth.

Truth is seen as a social construct, something created by a culture that enables people to cope with the world they live in. Since no one can step out of their own culture and evaluate other cultures in an unbiased way, all cultures and their corresponding truths must be treated as equally useful or true. Some cultures are not quite as equal as others. The culture of white males of European descent is almost universally seen as an oppressive one by instructors and textbooks.

The result of this change in our view of truth has been that learning facts about the key events and people of Western

culture are downplayed, and coping mechanisms and self-esteem becomes the primary purpose of the educational enterprise.

Decline of the Family

So far we have considered the impact of progressive education philosophy and the postmodern view of truth on our schools. Now we will turn our attention to changes in the American family and how they have affected our classrooms.

One consistent finding of educational research is that family life matters. Students tend to do better in school, and schools are generally more effective when families mirror certain attributes. The most important indicator is the socioeconomic status of the family represented by the occupation, income, and education of the parents. However, other factors play a role as well, such as the presence of two parents in the home and the amount of encouragement given by fathers to go on to college.

Unfortunately, family in America has changed dramatically over the last few decades. Between 1960 and 1999, the percentage of births out of wedlock increased by 523 percent. In 1999 alone, 68.8 percent of births to black mothers, 42.1 percent of births to Hispanics and 22 percent of births to white mothers were to unmarried women.[\[3\]](#) This trend directly impacts the socioeconomic status of families. In 1998, only 9 percent of children suffered from the effects of poverty if their parents were married. On the other hand 46 percent of children lived in poverty if a female headed the family.

The lack of a stable family influence and the presence of a father can be especially devastating for boys. Recent statistics reveal that starting at the elementary school level, girls get better grades than boys and generally fair better in school.[\[4\]](#) Although girls have all but eliminated the much-discussed math and science gap with boys, boys' scores in reading and writing have been on the decline for

years. At the end of eighth grade, boys are held back 50 percent more often, and girls are twice as likely to say that they want to pursue a professional career.[{5}](#) Boys are twice as likely to be labeled “learning disabled” and in some schools are ten times more likely to be diagnosed with learning disorders such as A.D.D. Boys now make up two thirds of our special education classes and account for 71 percent of all school suspensions.[{6}](#) There is also evidence that boys suffer from low self-esteem and lack confidence as learners.[{7}](#)

Men as mentors for boys are not only missing in our homes but they are missing in our schools. The vast majority of our teachers, close to eighty percent, are women, many of them just out of college and with little experience with young boys. This lack of male leadership is one of the many reasons we are less than pleased with the performance of our schools.

Summary

Let’s conclude by focusing on what changes might help our schools do their job better.

In her recent book on the history of progressive education Diane Ravitch argues that:

Schools must do far more than teach children “how to learn” and “how to look things up”; they must teach them what knowledge has most value, how to use that knowledge, how to organize what they know, how to understand the relationship between past and present, how to tell the difference between accurate information and propaganda, and how to turn information into understanding.[{8}](#)

The reason that this kind of learning does not happen as often as we like is that we agree less and less about what knowledge has the most value and what constitutes accurate information vs. propaganda. The recent battle over multicultural

sensitivities in the curriculum has caused textbook writers to water down history books fearing that some group might be offended. The strident political agenda of teachers' unions on issues ranging from homosexuality to the environment has caused parents to question teachers' objectivity and their suitability as role models for their children.

As our society becomes more and more diverse, the "one model fits all" public school system is causing more and more tension. Administrators respond to critics by adding more and more levels of bureaucracy to schools so that many districts now have more employees outside of the classroom than inside.

The current response of government has been to encourage curriculum standards and high stakes testing for all publicly funded schools, but it has avoided the one reform that might make a significant difference. Private schools, with less bureaucracy, more focused academics, and a traditional approach to learning have proven themselves successful in even the most difficult inner city areas. Giving parents, teachers and students real choice in the kinds of schools they want to learn and teach in, via a voucher or tax credit program would generate true diversity and, I believe greater learning for many more of our children. If we are concerned about the general welfare of our people it makes sense to give our poorest students the benefit of private schooling in our worst districts.

Over the last decade Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Cleveland, Ohio have taken bold steps to offer real school choice. So has the creation of a large and growing private voucher program. Soon we will have enough data to evaluate its impact on students. The question of the constitutionality of voucher programs has reached the Supreme Court. Its decision could destroy school choice or greatly encourage it in the future. I hope they don't miss this opportunity.

1. David J. Hoff, "U.S. Students Rank Among World's Best and Worst Readers," *Education Week*, December 12, 2001, 7.
2. Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms*, (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2000), 21.
3. "The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators 2001" (Empower.org).
4. William Pollack, *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 15.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. xxiii.

8. Ravitch, 17.

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**"Aren't You Embarrassed That
the Most Important Part of
Your Life is Your
Domestication?"**

Sue—

Does it not bother you that your various and vast achievements in both the academic and spiritual realms are completely overshadowed by your domestication and motherhood?

Your website reports:

“Sue Bohlin is an associate speaker with Probe Ministries. She attended the University of Illinois, and has been a Bible teacher and conference speaker for over 25 years. She serves as a Mentoring Mom for MOPS (Mothers of Pre-Schoolers), and on the board of Living Hope Ministries, a Christ-centered outreach to those wanting to leave homosexuality. She is also a professional calligrapher and the webservant for Probe Ministries; but most importantly, she is the wife of Dr. Ray Bohlin and the mother of their two grown sons.”

Does it not hurt to define your life through your involvement with others? Does this proliferation of the values dictated by our patriarchal society not cause you distress?

Hi _____,

Wow, what great questions! I'm so glad you asked!

First of all, what does “domestication” mean? I'm thinking that to you, it may mean something negative and contemptuous. The root word comes from the Latin “domus,” home, which is exactly what is most important to me because home is about family (and not the structure in which we live). But it has taken on a negative connotation as if a woman's true fulfillment is found outside the home, so anything that connects her to home and family is sadly restrictive. (Thank you Betty Friedan *et al.* . . .)

I have been blessed to be able to live a rich and varied life, but all of my “achievements” pale markedly compared to the sweetness of my most important relationships with my husband and sons. For example, my work as a speaker and writer and webservant for Probe Ministries, as wonderful as that is, can't begin to hold a candle to the joy of loving and influencing the men God has given me to love and influence. I believe that God means for women to be most deeply fulfilled

by our relationships, because He made us so relational. My “mark” on the world, I assure you, is far greater in my various relationships compared to the lectures I’ve given or the website I built. You might not ever be able to see the difference I make as Ray’s wife or Curt and Kevin’s mom, but believe me, as they all make their marks on the world, I can see it.

Doesn’t it hurt, you ask, to define my life through my involvement with others? In other words, to define my life through my relationships? I wish you could see the huge smile on my heart as I think about your question. . . because ultimately, I think we were created to define our lives exactly that way. What makes my life worth living is my strong and healthy relationship first of all with my Creator, from whom I find out what I was made for, what I was made to do, and thus find my fulfillment in walking out the sense of “I was made for this!!” My “achievements in the academic and spiritual realms” are only a small part of what God made me for, as His beloved daughter and friend. Since that is how I define myself—as a cherished child of God—then no matter what happens in any other dimension of my life, I do not fear being rocked by the loss of what defines me. Should I lose my family, God forbid, that will not change my identity. Should I lose my vision or my voice or my mobility or my mind, that will not change my identity, since my identity and my definition is not found in those things.

You also ask, “Does this proliferation of the values dictated by our patriarchal society not cause you distress?” Not at all, because I don’t see patriarchy as evil; I see it as a God-ordained chain of authority. Of course, it is complicated by the fact that every single human being on the planet is broken and sinful and infected by a rebellious spirit, but that doesn’t make patriarchy inherently wrong. I’m smiling again because I know that patriarchy is another one of those contempt-filled words in the academy (especially at the

University of Texas! How many women's studies profs have you studied under?). Yet from my understanding of scripture and of feminism, an authority structure that points to God as loving Father makes me feel secure, not subjugated, and beloved, not bitter.

I'm also aware that I may well come off to you as naïve and uneducated in The Ways Of The World, needing to be shown how truly sad and imprisoned by my misbeliefs I am. But that's one of the joys of being over 50 and seeing how incredibly loving and kind and generous God has been to me, personally, in 30+ years of walking with Him and deriving my identity and direction from Him: I know too much about how good life is lived according to His values to be bothered by what feminist thought thinks of my life.

Here's the thing, _____: when I am an old woman, at the end of my life, it really won't matter what I have accomplished in the world's eyes. What will matter is how much I loved and was loved, how much and how deeply I influenced and impacted people's lives. That's ultimately about relationships. My sister is a hospice nurse and she sees people dying every day. They never want to be surrounded by their diplomas or their trophies or their certificates of achievements, but by their family and friends. I think that says something profound about what ultimately matters.

Thank you so much for asking so I could share my heart with you.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

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