

Vanguard November 2017



Vanguard: Fall 2017 News for Our Donors

He Followed the Evidence

Paul Rutherford



Selfie taken by Van this Summer

Van was born in Vietnam. He's an atheist who always told himself he'd follow the truth wherever it led. But when he discovered a wealth of evidence this Spring for the resurrection of Jesus, would his resolve be enough to forsake

the only life he'd ever known?

Meet Van. He recently graduated from the University of Texas at Dallas with a degree in finance. He's a quiet and studious young man who grew up in a good family just outside Dallas. His parents immigrated to the States from Vietnam when he was young to live the American dream. Van thought of himself an atheist even though his background was Buddhist.

Van considered himself a student of truth from a young age. Early on he determined to follow the evidence even if it led to a completely different life. In high school he debated a friend and fellow classmate on the existence of God. And through it he gained a respect for the voice of Christians in conversations about our origins and where everything came from. He decided to read the Bible for himself.

This past year Van's best friend (a Christian) began displaying symptoms of a mental illness. Van felt bad for his friend. Sadly his friend's condition worsened until he withdrew from school. Van was disheartened. He witnessed first-hand a Christian struggle in his soul, while depending on Christ. It was different. Van knew Christ could be the only way his friend was getting through such an impossible situation.

Van's friend was suffering. And he knew that Jesus also suffered. Suddenly Van began to see his friend as looking like Jesus. Van was very shaken up – spiritually speaking.

The week before this Easter, Van ran into Probe staffer Byron Barlowe at a booth on campus having conversations about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Byron and Van discussed the resurrection and some alternate theories as well. Van was overwhelmed. He thought the resurrection made sense. But he told Byron, "There's something missing."

Byron answered. "What's missing is answered by the question, 'Does Christ dying on the cross and rising again have anything

to do with you and paying for your sins?’” Van took Byron’s number. Then he walked away thoughtfully.

Later that week Van texted Byron. “I now believe.”

They’ve been meeting since then to study the Bible, so Van can grow in his new found faith.

That could NOT have happened without you. Van is in the Kingdom of God because you gave. Thank you. Your support is essential to writing incredible stories like Van’s. Thank you for giving. Thank you for praying. Thank you for making this ministry happen. You are the secret to ministry success! Thank you.

Is Probe Ministries a Hate Group? A Response to the SPLC

Sue Bohlin

CNN recently released a map of the US showing the hate groups identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Probe has been on that list as an “anti-LGBT hate group” for two years. The reasons the SPLC gave a reporter for including us were patently untrue, accusing us of saying things we don’t say and don’t believe. It is mainly my writings on LGBT issues they object to. But they wouldn’t even talk to me.



We were tagged an “anti-LGBT” hate group because we don’t agree with the LGBT agenda. We align ourselves with the Bible’s standards. We believe God designed marriage between one man and one woman, and that all sex outside of marriage

violates God's good design for human sexuality. Unfortunately, these days mere disagreement is called hate. I have repeatedly invited people to identify the hate-filled words on our website so I can change them, but no one has ever identified any. I believe that is because you won't find words of hate on our website or in any of our recorded messages.

I'm the primary writer and speaker about homosexuality and gender issues for Probe. It might be helpful for you to know that for 18 years I have also served with Living Hope Ministries, which helps people deal with unwanted homosexuality, and also serves the family members of those who have chosen to embrace a gay identity. I have walked with a lot of women as they process the reasons for their attractions and experience a shift in their beliefs and attitudes (and sometimes attractions as well, though not always). They are so very dear to me, and I love being their cheerleader and encourager.

As my pastor says, "Truth sounds like hate to those who hate the truth." There are so many cultural lies about God's design for sex and identity that when we proclaim God's truth in a culture that embraces lies, we get called hateful and discriminatory.

Probe is all about helping people think biblically about a wide range of topics. We offer biblical truth – even when it's unpopular.

We are grateful for how your support of Probe allows us to continue to proclaim God's truth about gender, marriage and sexuality in an increasingly dark and hostile world.

So no, we're not a hate group. We're a *truth* group, seeking to speak the truth in love. And truth haters are gonna hate.

[Editor's note: Just this month the Department of Defense dropped citations to the SPLC's hate group listings in its training manual – a big win!]

Culturally Captive No More: Kei'Aysha's Story

Paul Rutherford



Kei'Aysha, *Mind Games*
participant 2017

DENTON, Texas. I sat down with *Mind Games* 2017 camper Kei'Aysha to ask about her experience that week. Her story is incredible. Let me share it with you in her own words. Here's an edited transcript.

Paul: Tell me about your experience at *Mind Games*.

Kei'Aysha: Well I've come here from Georgia hoping to learn and grow. And I have. It's been very encouraging. I've loved it. Before I came here I didn't understand how to defend my faith. But now I do.

Paul: Wow. That's fantastic! Tell me, what's a belief you thought to be true before, but now you realize it's not true.

Kei'Aysha: Before I became a Christian I used to believe in reincarnation. And I used to believe in evolution. But now I

realize God designed all living things. Not that there isn't microevolution. But God created the Earth and all of life.

Paul: Would you recommend *Mind Games* to others?

Kei'Aysha: YES! (smiling) It changed my life! Before I didn't understand how to explain things to people. Like, on the first day (Dr.) Ray asked why we are Christians. I learned how to say why I'm a Christian without saying, well I just believe, or I just have faith. I can say I'm a Christian because I'm convinced by the evidence from creation (motioning all around her).

Paul: How has *Mind Games* impacted your faith?

Kei'Aysha: My faith is much stronger now – much stronger.

Thank you for changing Kei'Aysha's life. You've probably heard the statistics. The majority of the American Church is culturally captive – their beliefs about God, Jesus, truth, the Bible, etc. align more closely with culture than with the teachings of the Bible. Kei'Aysha was one of those statistics. She already believed in Jesus for salvation. But now she believes biblically about what happens after death, and how the Earth was created, because of you.

You made that possible. Thank you. The impact of this experience for Kei'Aysha will bless her the rest of her life. She now has confidence in life after the grave. It's in Christ – not her works here on earth. She now believes in the Creator God – maker of heaven and earth. She is being freed from the bonds of captivity to culture. She's not captive to that anymore thanks to you. Kei'Aysha is thinking biblically now more than she was before. Amazing.

Sign of the Times

Kerby Anderson, President



As hard as it might be to believe, the Southern Poverty Law Center has designated Probe Ministries as a “hate group.” Sadly, that puts us right along with the KKK, the neo-Nazi’s, white supremacists, and Muslim terrorists. You can find more information on page two. I want to tell you what this whole thing *means*.

We earned our “hate group” status (according to them) for promoting the traditional and biblical stance on human sexuality. Let’s be real clear on what’s happening here. This is historic. A legitimate, grace-filled, Christian ministry in America has been labeled a hate group for what reason? Teaching the Bible.

The prophet Isaiah (5:20) writes, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil.” This is a result of culture shifting little by little over many years. This is a result of cultural captivity, the result of a weak anemic church that looks no different from our culture. We have not loved our neighbor courageously or graciously as Jesus did. This is the primary reason our culture’s in this whole mess.

But it’s not too late!

That is why I am so glad for you. You are one of the few who get it. Your prayers, your gifts, your support is taking action to stand up and *be* the Church.

Our culture needs more ambassadors for Christ. Will you love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind?

We don’t need more *hearers* of the word. We need more *doers*. And that’s exactly what you’re doing – training more believers with confidence to be ambassadors for Christ. You’re training

more doers. And for those who are captive to culture, you're freeing them with God's glorious truth fulfilling God's created purpose for their life and yours. You are training more doers of the word. Thank you.

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

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

Why do you, personally, dislike homosexual behavior?

For the same reason I dislike heterosexual behavior (like using pornography or unmarried or extramarital sex) that is outside of God's plan and purpose for our bodies and souls: it is harmful to the person(s) engaging in it. Sex is so powerful, like electricity, that it needs to be contained within the safe confines of marriage between a man and a woman who have committed to each other for life. Outside of that containment, the power of sex is more like lightning, which does damage instead of being channeled into serving us.

But homosexual behavior is not just about sex. There is also a lot of emotional dependency in same-sex relationships, especially between girls and women, when their friendship has overflowed the banks of what is healthy. Emotionally dependent relationships are intense (which becomes exhausting), chaotic

(which drains people further), controlling and manipulative (which is hurtful to the people and to the relationship). I dislike this behavior because it is harmful to the people engaging in it as well. I love people and hate to see them get hurt. That's why I dislike the behavior that contributes (eventually) to heartache.

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

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

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

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

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

was there waiting patiently for him to come to his senses . . . which he did. And now their relationship is stronger than ever.

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

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

Do you believe in abortion, and why?

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

And do you consider Probe Ministries a hate group?

Absolutely not! We were tagged a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center because we don't agree with the LGBT agenda. We align ourselves with the Bible's standards that all sex outside of marriage violates God's commands for human sexuality. Unfortunately, these days mere disagreement is called hate. I have repeatedly invited people to identify the hate-filled words on our website so I can change them, but no

one has ever identified any. I believe that is because you won't find words of hate on our website, or our podcasts, or any of our recorded messages. (And I do know what hate sounds like. Westboro Baptist Church makes me sick.)

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

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

It might also be helpful for you to know that I have run everything I write and say through the filter of trusted friends who were once part of the LGBT community, asking them to identify anything that is unintentionally hurtful or rude or even untrue so I can change it before it becomes public.

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

Have a good day.

Warmly,
Mrs. Bohlin

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When a Church Tells a Member, “It’s Not OK to be Gay”

Watermark Community Church in Dallas (where my husband and I are members) was recently dragged into the media when a former member published a letter to the church on the one-year anniversary of his membership being revoked. After several years of fighting his unwanted same-sex attractions, the young man got weary of the battle and embraced a gay identity—and a boyfriend. The church pleaded with him to repent (turn 180 degrees) and submit to the Bible’s commands to sexual purity, but he would not. So the church sent him a letter which the young man made public.

Within hours, a firestorm erupted on social media, TV media, and print media.

Predictably, the church’s counter-cultural beliefs and stance were misrepresented out of people’s inability (or refusal) to understand biblical values and truths. It would be easy to come away with a very skewed perception of this situation, which is why it’s important to use discernment in reading or hearing anything about this controversial subject.

Recall the wisdom of Proverbs 18:17: “The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him.” It’s important to remember there’s another side of every story, and

to hold judgment until one's discernment kicks in.

It started when the former member's Facebook post was picked up by the *Dallas Morning News*. His title was "Watermark Church Dismissed Me for Being Gay," and the paper chose the title "[Watermark Asks Homosexual Member to Leave Church](#)." It sure sounds like the church kicked him out, doesn't it? But that's not what happened. The church responded, "Watermark makes a distinction between attending our church [*Sue's note: which the former member was welcome to do*] and being a formal member of our church. We don't remove someone's formal status as a member for struggling with sin—whether that sin is pride, materialism or sexual sin. Every member of Watermark needs God's grace to stand firm in the midst of temptation and His forgiveness for the times we fall short."

Jacqueline Floyd, a *Dallas Morning News* columnist, wrote a scathing [column](#) criticizing Watermark.

Ms. Floyd:

"A lot of people are upset that an institution that professes love for all its members would exile someone because of his sexual orientation."

And they should be! But that's not what happened. Pastor Todd Wagner's [response](#):

"Following the example of Jesus, Watermark loves and welcomes people of all backgrounds, economic statuses, ethnicities and sexual struggles. Also following his example, we encourage people to turn away from sin and to follow Jesus. We have *many members* and *several staff* who struggle with same-sex attraction or for whom same-sex sexual activity is a part of their past. We count it a privilege to labor with them in their desire to resist temptation, and we rejoice with them as they experience forgiveness and new life in Christ. Their stories are powerful and serve as beautiful testimonies to the

transforming power of Jesus Christ.” [Emphasis his]

Ms. Floyd:

“He tried for years to conform to church requirements that he alter his essential nature, ‘repent’ his sexual orientation, undergo a form of ‘conversion therapy’ that research as well as mainstream psychology and counselors have denounced as harmful and pointless.”

This makes sense if you believe the culture’s sexual mythology that says being gay is one’s “essential nature,” as if a gay identity were the most important thing about an individual. (Consider how unbalanced it would be if we switched out the standard for how well someone can sing, declaring that one’s “essential nature” was one’s ability to carry a tune—or not. How awfully narrow and unnecessarily limiting that would be, as if every other aspect of one’s giftings and temperament, interests and abilities paled in comparison to their singing voice!)

The church does not require that anyone “alter their essential nature,” but it does align itself with scripture, acknowledging that we are all born sinful and broken, with a tendency to rebel and disobey against God:

“There is no one righteous, not even one;
there is no one who understands;
there is no one who seeks God.
All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one.” (Romans 3:10b-12)

Our true “essential nature” is that we are both infinitely precious and valuable because we are made in God’s image, but also fallen and sinful. That “essential nature” can’t be altered by ourselves, but it can be transformed by God. That is the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I don't know if anyone at Watermark mistakenly urged this brother to repent of his sexual orientation as if he had chosen to be same-sex attracted, but we certainly do exhort everyone to renounce and repent of all sexual sin (which means anything outside of marriage between one man and one woman). Concerning "conversion therapy," Watermark doesn't have that. What we do have is a call to discipleship, asking people to be "all in" with Jesus, obeying His word and pursuing intimacy with Christ. That intimacy usually produces heart change, which means transformation from the inside out, where therapy is an attempt to bring about change from the outside in.

Ms. Floyd:

"Trying to 'change' someone's sexual orientation is about as useful as trying turn a turtle into a duck. When this witch-doctor alchemy predictably failed to work, the church blamed him—and revoked his membership. Not in person. They mailed him a letter."

Lots of people believe that sexual orientation is fixed and unchangeable. That's because if a lie is repeated loud enough and long enough, people will accept it as truth. Change is possible, and feelings (because that's what we're talking about here) are fluid. We see change happening in the first-century church; 1 Corinthians 6:11 says to former homosexuals, "And such were some of you." I have seen change happen before my own eyes, for 18 years of involvement at [Living Hope Ministries](#). And if that's not enough, google "Lisa Diamond Sexual Fluidity" for some intriguing academic [research](#) that cites that change happens.

But then it sure sounds cold to mail someone a letter revoking his membership. And it would be—if it had happened like that. The letter was just the final formal communication, the period at the end of a series of anguished, face-to-face conversations.

See why it's so important to remember that "The first to plead

his case seems right, until another comes and examines him”?

The letter from our own former member needs to be read with discernment as well:

“I spent years battling against my own homosexuality. When I wasn’t able to change, you turned your back on me.”

I’m sure there were some people mistakenly thinking and hoping that his same-sex attractions were a matter of choice that could be changed on demand. “Everstraights,” especially men, have a hard time imagining what it’s like to be drawn to the same sex, and can easily burden those who are, with unrealistic expectations.

Battling one’s homosexuality is incredibly difficult, and I can appreciate that many, many people pray hundreds of times, “God, I beg You, take this away!” That prayer is like mine growing up: “God, *please!* [Heal me!](#)” It’s like the apostle Paul’s prayer, recorded in 2 Corinthians 7b-9:

“I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”

Paul pleaded with God to remove his thorn in the flesh, but God had something better. I pleaded with God to remove my thorn in the flesh, but He had [something better](#). My same-sex attracted brother, our former member, pleaded with God to remove his thorn in the flesh, and He had something better for him as well, but my brother decided to embrace his flesh instead. He wrote,

“I am who God made me to be. I cannot change my sexual orientation, and nor would I want to. I now have internal peace and happiness unlike ever before.”

No, God did not make anyone same-sex attracted. Based on the thousands of men who have come through Living Hope, I would say God probably made him to be sensitive, artistic, creative, relational, and gifted. But not gay.

It's not surprising that he now senses "internal peace and happiness unlike ever before." He quit battling his flesh, the part of us that lives independently from God. The relief that comes from giving into temptation can feel like peace and happiness, for a while. It can feel like freedom. But it comes at a cost. There is no true intimacy with Jesus when we are indulging our flesh. There can be a faux intimacy, the echoes of having walked with Him in obedience and abiding trust. But true intimacy can only happen in the light:

"God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." (1 John 1:5-7)

So I pray for my brother, and I pray for all of us to develop discernment as we process the war of worldviews about sexual ethics. It won't be easy.

[Note: If you want a blessing and strong but grace-filled instruction about church discipline, please watch Todd Wagner's response to this issue from the Watermark platform, "Why Good Leaders Have Always Written Letters to the Church They Love": <http://www.watermark.org/plano/message/4320>]

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/when_a_church_tells_a_member_its_not_ok_to_be_gay
on October 18, 2016.

Muslim Beliefs on Sexuality

Islamic teaching on sexual issues varies significantly from a Christian biblical position in several areas. But, as we have seen in other areas, the beliefs of average Muslims do not necessarily follow the teachings of Islam.

[Over the last several months](#), we have been looking at the religious beliefs and practices as expressed by a worldwide, Muslim population in an extensive Pew Research Center survey^{1} taken in 2012. We have compared those beliefs and practices with those of Americans toward the Christian faith as documented in several recent surveys.

Now, I would like to turn our attention to some cultural beliefs and behaviors. In particular, we will begin by looking at beliefs concerning sexual behavior. Once again the survey data on Muslims will be divided into five regions: North Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Russia, and Turkey), the 'Stans (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan), and South Asia.

For this evaluation, we will use questions asked in the Pew survey. The questions are worded, "I personally believe that _____ is morally acceptable, morally wrong, or it is not a moral issue." The five topics considered (as they are worded in the survey) are:

1. Sex between people who are not married
2. Homosexual behavior
3. Having an abortion
4. Polygamy (having more than one wife)
5. Divorce

A person following the Qur'an and the Hadith would say that the first two items above are morally wrong while the last two items would be considered morally acceptable with some constraints. The question about abortion is not directly addressed in the Qur'an or Hadith. The way in which Muslims actually responded is shown in the table below.

Table 1: Muslims Believing a Behavior is Morally Wrong

	North Africa	Middle East	Eastern Europe	'Stans	South Asia
Sex outside marriage & Homosexuality	84.7%	88.7%	68.9%	77.2%	84.1%
Abortion	73.2%	64.4%	72.0%	52.6%	83.6%
All of the above	67.5%	66.9%	56.5%	44.3%	77.3%
Polygamy	25.2%	30.1%	73.0%	57.7%	39.8%
Divorce	17.0%	34.2%	20.2%	30.4%	27.8%
All behaviors	7.2%	13.6%	11.6%	13.5%	13.9%

As shown, they are fairly consistent on fornication and homosexuality, with strong majorities stating that they are both morally wrong. However, Eastern European Muslims appear to have been influenced by the culture around them, falling about 16 percentage points lower than the average for other areas in the world.

On the question of abortion, we find a greater variation across geographic areas. Those Muslims in South Asia are most united in their views, with well over 80% of them saying that abortion is morally wrong. In contrast, the Muslims of the 'Stans are about evenly split with just over half saying it is morally wrong. The Middle East is not as strong as one might expect, with about two out of three people agreeing that abortion is morally wrong.

Polygamy, seen as acceptable in the Qur'an with a man allowed to have up to four wives, is seen quite differently in different geographic areas. In North Africa, the Middle East,

and South Asia, the majority of Muslims **do not** consider it to be morally wrong. In contrast, in Eastern Europe and the 'Stans, a strong majority of Muslims consider it **to be** morally wrong. Of course most of the Muslims in Eastern Europe and the 'Stans grew up in the Soviet Union or Soviet bloc countries where polygamy was presumably illegal.

Finally, we see that most Muslims across all geographic locations do not believe that divorce is morally wrong.

If we consider that the Christian Bible teaches us that all of these actions are morally wrong (with some exceptions for divorce), we realize (looking at the bottom row of the table) that nine out of ten Muslims do not agree with that perspective.

Looking at data on similar topics from residents of the United States, we find the following:

Table 2: American Christians Believing a Behavior is Not Right

	All	Born Again Christian	All Others	Source
Sex before marriage & Homosexual relations	16.9%	32.8%	7.0%	GSS 2014 ^{2}
Abortion	44.9%	62.0%	34.5%	GSS 2014
All of the above	13.2%	25.6%	5.4%	
Homosexual relations	23.3%	41.7%	13.4%	Baylor 2010 ^{3}
Divorce with children	29.2%	47.1%	19.4%	Baylor 2010

Comparing the two tables and focusing on the Born Again Christian column, we observe that worldwide Muslims are much more likely to see sex outside of marriage and homosexual

relations as morally wrong. On abortion, born again Christians have a similar response as Muslims. But born again Christians are more likely to oppose divorce when children are involved than Muslims.

On the whole, it appears that Muslims are more likely to agree with the teachings of the Qur'an than born again, American Christians are to agree with the teachings of the Bible. However, Muslims do not agree with the full set of biblical stances on sexual issues.

Notes

1. The World's Muslims Data Set, 2012, Pew Research Center – Religion & Public Life. The Pew Research Center bears no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations of the data presented here. The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected by James Bell, Director of International Survey Research.

2. General Social Survey 2014 conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected by Tom W. Smith of the NORC.

3. Baylor University. 2010. The Baylor Religion Survey, Wave III. Waco, TX: Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion. The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected by Kevin D. Dougherty, Paul Froese, Andrew L. Whitehead, Jerry Z. Park, Mitchell J. Neubert.

Pornography – A Biblical Worldview Perspective

Kerby Anderson looks at pornography from a biblical worldview perspective. He clearly chronicles the physical, emotional and spiritual harm created by pornography and lays out the scriptural warnings to protect us from its degrading effects.

Pornography has been tearing apart the very fabric of modern society, but the problem has been made much worse with pornography's proliferation through the Internet. Studies show that 40 million adults regularly visit Internet pornography sites.[{1}](#) To put that in perspective, that is ten times the amount of people who regularly watch baseball.

When I first started writing about pornography in the 1980s, it was already a multi-billion dollar-a-year business mostly promoted through so-called "adult bookstores" and pornographic magazines. With the development of videos, DVDs, and the Internet, pornography has become ubiquitous.



The wages of sin are enormous when pornography is involved. Revenue from Internet porn exceeds by nearly a 2 to 1 ratio, the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC.[{2}](#) And sales of pornographic material on the Internet surpass the cumulative sales of all other products sold online.[{3}](#)

The current estimate is there are over 4 million pornographic websites representing almost 400 million pages of pornographic material.[{4}](#)

Pornography is not just something a few men view in the late hours in the privacy of their homes. At least 70 percent of porn is downloaded during work hours (9 am to 5 pm). A percentage of those who do so admit to accessing pornography at work.

And pornography also affects those in church. According to *Leadership Journal*, 40 percent of pastors admit to visiting a pornographic website.[{5}](#) And at one Promise Keepers Convention, 53 percent of men admitted to visiting a porn site the week before.[{6}](#)

The impact pornography is having on young people is alarming. It used to be that when you would ask someone when they first saw pornography they would tell you a story about seeing a porn magazine at a friend's house when they were in middle school or high school. Now a child in grade school has already seen images that were only available in an adult bookstore a few years ago. At one time these images were inaccessible to youth; now they are merely a mouse click away. The average age of first exposure to Internet pornography is 11 years old. And the largest consumer of Internet pornography is the 12-17 age group.[{7}](#)

How should we define pornography? What is the effect on individuals and society? And what is a biblical perspective on this? I deal with each of these questions in detail in my book, *Christians Ethics in Plain Language*.[{8}](#) In the next section, we address some of these questions.

Definition and Types of Pornography

How should we define pornography? Pornography has been defined as material that "is predominantly sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal." Hardcore pornography "is sexually explicit in the extreme, and devoid of any other apparent content or purpose."[{9}](#)

Another important term is obscenity. In the 1973 Supreme Court case of *Miller v. California*, the justices set forth a three-part test to define obscenity:[{10}](#)

- (a) The average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find the work, taken as a whole, appeals to

the prurient interest.

(b) The work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law, and

(c) The work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

What are the types of pornography? The first type of pornography is adult magazines, which are primarily directed toward adult male readers. The magazines with the widest distribution (*Playboy* and *Penthouse*) do not violate the *Miller* standards of obscenity and thus can be legally distributed.

The second type of pornography is video. Videocassettes or DVDs are rented or sold in most adult bookstores and the Internet. They have become a growth industry for pornography.

The third type of pornography is motion pictures. Ratings standards are being relaxed, and many pornographic movies are being shown and distributed carrying R and NC-17 ratings. Many of these so-called "hard R" rated films would have been considered obscene just a few decades ago.

A fourth type of pornography is television. As in motion pictures, standards for commercial television have been continuously lowered. But cable television poses an even greater threat. The Federal Communications Commission does not regulate cable in the same way it does public access stations. Thus, many pornographic movies are shown on cable television.

A fifth type of pornography is audio porn, which includes "Dial-a-porn" telephone calls, the second fastest growth market of pornography. Although most of the messages are within the *Miller* definition of obscenity, these businesses continue to thrive and are often used by children.

A sixth type of pornography is "cyberporn," or Internet

pornography. Virtually anyone can download and view hard-core pictures, movies, online chat, and even live sex acts through the Internet.

Addiction to Pornography

Victor Cline, a psychologist, documented how men become addicted to pornographic materials, then begin to desire more explicit or deviant material, and finally act out what they have seen.[{11}](#) He maintained “that memories of experiences that occurred at times of emotional arousal (which could include sexual arousal) are imprinted on the brain by epinephrine, an adrenal gland hormone, and are difficult to erase. This may partly explain pornography’s addicting effect.”[{12}](#)

Other research showed that biochemical and neurological responses in individuals who are aroused release the adrenal hormone epinephrine in the brain, which is why one can remember pornographic images seen years before. In response to pleasure, nerve endings release chemicals that reinforce the body’s own desire to repeat the process.[{13}](#) Kimberly Young, an authority on Internet addiction, found that 90 percent of those who became addicted to cyberporn became addicted to the two-way communication functions: chat rooms, newsgroups, and e-mail.[{14}](#)

Psychologists identified a five-step pattern in pornographic addiction. The first step is *exposure*. Addicts have been exposed to pornography in many ways, ranging from sexual abuse as children to looking at widely available pornographic magazines.

The second step is *addiction*. People who continually expose themselves to pornography “keep coming back for more and more” in order to get new sexual highs. James L. McCough of the University of California at Irvine said that “experiences at times of emotional or sexual arousal get locked in the brain

by the chemical epinephrine and become virtually impossible to erase.”[\[15\]](#)

A third step is *escalation*. Previous sexual highs become more difficult to attain; therefore users of pornography begin to look for more exotic forms of sexual behavior to bring them stimulation.

A fourth step is *desensitization*. What was initially shocking becomes routine. Shocking and disgusting sexual behavior is no longer avoided but is sought out for more intense stimulation. Concern about pain and degradation get lost in the pursuit of the next sexual experience.

A fifth step is *acting out fantasies*. People do what they have seen and find pleasurable. Not every pornography addict will become a serial murderer or a rapist. But many do look for ways to act out their sexual fantasies

In my book *Christian Ethics in Plain Language*, I discuss in further detail the issue of pornographic addiction as well as describe the social and psychological effects of pornography.

Social Effects

Defining the social effects of pornography has been difficult because of some of the prevailing theories of its impact. One theory was that pornography actually performs a positive function in society by acting like a “safety valve” for potential sexual offenders.

The most famous proponent of this theory was Berl Kutchinsky, a criminologist at the University of Copenhagen. His famous study on pornography found that when the Danish government lifted restrictions on pornography, the number of sex crimes decreased.[\[16\]](#) Therefore, he concluded that the availability of pornography siphons off dangerous sexual impulses. But when the data for his “safety-valve” theory was further evaluated,

many of his research flaws began to show.

For example, Kutichinsky failed to distinguish between different kinds of sex crimes (such as rape and indecent exposure) and instead merely lumped them together, effectively masking an increase in rape statistics. He also failed to consider that increased tolerance for certain crimes (public nudity and sex with a minor) may have contributed to a drop in the reported crimes.

Proving cause and effect in pornography is virtually impossible because, ethically, researchers cannot do certain kinds of research. As Dolf Zillman said, "Men cannot be placed at risk of developing sexually violent inclinations by extensive exposure to violent or nonviolent pornography, and women cannot be placed at risk of becoming victims of such inclinations."[{17}](#)

Nevertheless, a number of compelling statistics suggest that pornography does have profound social consequences. For example, of the 1,400 child sexual molestation cases in Louisville, Kentucky, between July 1980 and February 1984, adult pornography was connected with each incident and child pornography with the majority of them.[{18}](#)

Extensive interviews with sex offenders (rapists, incest offenders, and child molesters) have uncovered a sizable percentage of offenders who use pornography to arouse themselves before and during their assaults.[{19}](#) Police officers have seen the impact pornography has had on serial murders. In fact, pornography consumption is one of the most common profile characteristics of serial murders and rapists.[{20}](#)

Professor Cass Sunstein, writing in the *Duke Law Journal*, said that some sexual violence against women "would not have occurred but for the massive circulation of pornography." Citing cross-cultural data, he concluded, "The liberalization

of pornography laws in the United States, Britain, Australia, and the Scandinavian countries has been accompanied by a rise in reported rape rates. In countries where pornography laws have not been liberalized, there has been a less steep rise in reported rapes. And in countries where restrictions have been adopted, reported rapes have decreased.”[\[21\]](#)

Biblical Perspective

God created men and women in His image (Gen. 1:27) as sexual beings. But because of sin in the world (Rom. 3:23), sex has been misused and abused (Rom. 1:24-25).

Pornography attacks the dignity of men and women created in the image of God. Pornography also distorts God’s gift of sex which should be shared only within the bounds of marriage (1 Cor. 7:2-3). When the Bible refers to human sexual organs, it often employs euphemisms and indirect language. Although there are some exceptions (a woman’s breasts and womb are sometimes mentioned), generally Scripture maintains a basic modesty towards a man’s or woman’s sexual organs.

Moreover, Scripture specifically condemns the practices that result from pornography such as sexual exposure (Gen. 9:21-23), adultery (Lev. 18:20), bestiality (Lev. 18:23), homosexuality (Lev. 18:22 and 20:13), incest (Lev. 18:6-18), and prostitution (Deut. 23:17-18).

A biblical perspective of human sexuality must recognize that sexual intercourse is exclusively reserved for marriage for the following purposes. First, it establishes the one-flesh union (Gen. 2:24-25; Matt. 19:4-6). Second, it provides for sexual intimacy within the marriage bond. The use of the word “know” indicates a profound meaning of sexual intercourse (Gen. 4:1). Third, sexual intercourse is for the mutual pleasure of husband and wife (Prov. 5:18-19). Fourth, sexual intercourse is for procreation (Gen. 1:28).

The Bible also warns against the misuse of sex. Premarital and extramarital sex is condemned (1 Cor. 6:13-18; 1 Thess. 4:3). Even thoughts of sexual immorality (often fed by pornographic material) are condemned (Matt. 5:27-28).

Moreover, Christians must realize that pornography can have significant harmful effects on the user. These include: a comparison mentality, a performance-based sexuality, a feeling that only forbidden things are sexually satisfying, increased guilt, decreased self concept, and obsessive thinking.

Christians, therefore, must do two things. First, they must work to keep themselves pure by fleeing immorality (1 Cor. 6:18) and thinking on those things which are pure (Phil. 4:8). As a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23:7). Christians must make no provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14). Pornography will fuel the sexual desire in abnormal ways and can eventually lead to even more debase perversion. We, therefore, must “abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). Second, Christians must work to remove the sexual perversion of pornography from society.

Notes

1. Mark Penn, *Microtrends: The Small Forces Behind Tomorrow's Big Changes* (NY: Twelve, 2007), 276.
2. Ibid., 277.
3. George Barna, *Boiling Point: Monitoring Cultural Shifts in the 21st Century* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003), 223.
4. Truth in Porn, www.truthinporn.org.
5. The Leadership survey on Pastors and Internet Pornography, 1 January 2001, <http://ctllibrary.com/9582>.
6. *Today's Christian Woman*, September/October 2003.
7. Truth in Porn.
8. Kerby Anderson, *Christian Ethics in Plain Language* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), chapter 11.
9. Michael McManus, ed., *Final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography* (Nashville: Rutledge Hill,

1986), 8.

10. *Miller v. California*, 413 US 15, 47 (1973).

11. Victor Cline, *Where Do You Draw the Line?* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1974).

12. Victor B. Cline, *Pornography's Effects on Adults and Children* (New York: Morality in Media, 1990), 11.

13. J. L. McGaugh, "Preserving the Presence of the Past," *American Psychologist*, February 1983, 161.

14. Kimberley Young, Paper presented to 1997 convention of the American Psychological Association. A full treatment can be found in Kimberley Young, *Caught in the Net: How to Recognize the Signs of Internet Addiction-and a Winning Strategy for Recovery* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1998).

15. Quoted in Kenneth Kantzer, "The Power of Porn," *Christianity Today*, 7 February 1989, 18.

16. Berl Kutchinsky, "The Effect of Easy Availability of Pornography on the Incidence of Sex Crimes: The Danish Experience," *Journal of Social Issues* 29 (1973): 163-81.

17. Dolf Zillman, "Pornography Research and Public Policy," in *Pornography: Research Advances and Policy Considerations*, ed. Dolf Zillman and Jennings Bryant (New York: Academic, 1989), 387-88.

18. Testimony by John B. Rabun, deputy director of the National Center for Missing and Exploited children, before the Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice of the Senate Judiciary Committee, 12 September 1984.

19. W. Marshall, "Pornography and Sex Offenders," in *Pornography: Research Advances and Policy Considerations*.

20. *The Men Who Murdered*, FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, August 1985.

21. Cass R. Sunstein, "Pornography and the First Amendment," *Duke Law Journal*, September 1986, 595.

LGBT and Political Correctness

Everything about the subject of LGBT (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender) identity and sexuality is colored in some way by political correctness. PC thinking embraces all beliefs and positions (except orthodox Christianity), and seeks to validate any and all self-expression (as long as it differs from biblical morals). One of the most amazing demonstrations of PC thought is this video, in which a short Caucasian male asks students at the University of Washington how they would respond if he told them he was a 6'5" Asian woman. The students were more committed to his right to be whatever he said he wanted to be, no matter how silly it sounded, than what was objectively true:

So much of PC thought in our culture today reminds me of the Hans Christian Andersen tale of a vain emperor who cares about nothing except wearing and showing off his luxurious clothes. He hires two weavers—two scammers—who promise him the finest, best suit of clothes made from a magic fabric that is invisible to anyone who is hopelessly stupid or unfit for his position.

Neither the emperor nor his ministers can see the fabric themselves, but they pretend that they can for fear of appearing unfit for their positions. Finally the weavers report that the suit is finished. They mime dressing him, and the emperor marches in procession before his subjects.

The townsfolk, who of course cannot see the (imaginary) fabric, play along with the pretense, not wanting to appear stupid or unfit for their positions. Then a child in the crowd, too young to understand what was going on, blurts out the truth for all to hear: "The emperor's not wearing any clothes!" The townspeople try to hush him up, even though what he's saying is the truth.

Political correctness is often about maintaining an illusion and hushing up the people who speak the truth. Those who speak out the truth, like the little boy, are shamed with the intention of silencing them. This certainly happens in the arena of sexuality and identity, where the illusion is that sex is the highest pleasure and the most important aspect of life, and everyone has a right to express their sexual feelings however they want.

In order to think rightly about political correctness, we need to know what's really going on—what is fueling the illusion. (Which is why it's so important to understand worldview!) Recently I was privileged to address a Christian high school chapel on this topic, and I told the students that they were born into a cultural brine that is shaping and pickling their thoughts about sexuality and identity, just like the college students on the video. They needed to know how our culture got to the place it is today so they have a chance to refuse the pickling process.

In 1989, Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen wrote a manifesto for normalizing homosexuality, *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s*. Their very specific, very achievable goals now describe American culture. (Please note, the bolded words are Kirk and Madsen's words, not mine):

1. **Talk about gays and gayness as loudly and often as possible.** This would desensitize people to the issue of homosexuality so it would become an always-present, no-big-

deal aspect of American culture.

2. **Portray gays as victims and not as aggressive challengers.**

Two main ways to achieve this: propagate the “born that way” mythology, and portray homosexuals as victims in an anti-gay society.

3. **Give protectors a just cause.** Fighting discrimination, or what is portrayed as discrimination, makes people feel good about themselves as they defend the underdog.

4. **Make gays look good.** Particularly in media such as TV and movies, make the gay characters as good-looking, charming, smart, witty and winsome as possible.

5. **Make the victimizers look bad.** Make the “anti-gays” look so nasty that average Americans will want to dissociate themselves from such types.

Every one of these goals has been attained, and this is the culture we now live in. In order to be aware of the PC thought that shapes how most people think, we need to be aware that the entire society has been manipulated.

What earned Probe Ministries a spot on the Southern Poverty Law Center’s list of hate groups is our website content about homosexuality, which agrees with the biblically orthodox position that same-gender sexual behavior, like every other violation of God’s intention for sex to be limited to the marriage bed of one man and one woman, is wrong. As [my pastor](#) says, “Truth sounds like hate to those who hate the truth.” There are so many cultural lies about God’s design for sex and identity that when we proclaim God’s truth in a culture that embraces lies, we get called hateful and discriminatory.

In order to think biblically, we need to know the difference between the culture’s lies (politically correct thought) and God’s truth:

CULTURE’S LIE: Who I am is a sexual being. Whether it’s a culture or an individual, when God is left out of the equation, sex is elevated to the #1 most important spot

because it's so powerful and a source of such intense pleasure (or can be). So people define themselves by their sexuality.

GOD'S TRUTH: Who I am is God's beloved creation. Made in the image of God, created for intimacy and fellowship with Him, my worth proven by what the Son was willing to pay for me: His very life.

CULTURE'S LIE: Sex is a need and a right for everyone to experience. Many people believe it is on the same level of necessity as food, water and sleep.

GOD'S TRUTH: Sex is so powerful it is to be contained only within marriage between one man and one woman. The mingling of bodies and souls through sex is deeply spiritual as well as physical. God's prohibitions against sex outside of marriage are His gift to us, meant for our protection from the painful consequences of sexual sin. They are like guard rails on a treacherous mountain road, intended to keep us from going off the cliff to pain and destruction.

CULTURE'S LIE: I create my own identity depending on what I feel. Untethered from a connection to God as Creator, people live out the sad, repeated description of Israel in the book of Judges, where "all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes." (Judges 17:6, for one).

GOD'S TRUTH: My identity is who my Creator says I am. All of us exist because God wanted us and hand-crafted each of us (Psalm 139). Feelings are real but they're not reliable. Jeremiah 17:9 instructs us on why our feelings can't be trusted: "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?"

CULTURE'S LIE: Gender is whatever we want it to be. Biological sex has been separated from gender (how one feels about maleness and femaleness). (Personally, this strikes me as illegitimate as proclaiming that the white keys on a piano are bad and the black keys are good.) Facebook currently offers 58 choices of gender.

GOD'S TRUTH: God created man in His own image, in the image of

God He created him; *male and female* He created them. (Gen. 1:27) The first words in the room when a baby is born are still, “It’s a girl!” or “It’s a boy!” Gender is still binary because God still creates male and female.



CULTURE’S LIE: I can create my own reality. For example, recently a man abandoned his wife and seven children, announcing his chosen identity of a 6-year-old girl.

Another man, deciding his identity is a female dragon, cut off his ears and nose, dyed his eyes, and inserted horns in his forehead.



GOD’S TRUTH: There is objective truth and objective reality because God is real and true. We do not have the freedom to dismiss what is objectively true and real; $2 + 2$ will always be 4, not 7 or 200, and gravity will always be operational on the planet. These things are real and true because a real and true God rooted His creation in His own nature.

CULTURE’S LIE: “Born this way.” This lie has so much traction because it’s repeated so often people assume it to be true.

GOD’S TRUTH: No Evidence. There is actually no scientific evidence of a gay gene or any other determiner of same-sex attraction. **Identical Twins Studies:** In identical twins (who

share the same DNA), when one identifies as gay or lesbian, the other one only identifies as gay or lesbian about 11% of the time. If homosexuality were a genetic issue, the correspondence would be 100%.

American culture continues to pump out the illusion—the fantasy, the myth—that sexuality is the most important thing about life and about us, and that sexual identity and expression is where life is found.

Beware: *the emperor has no clothes!*

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/lgbt_and_political_correctness on May 18, 2016.

Should We Go to Our Gay Neighbors' Wedding?

"Sue, I love my sweet gay neighbors, and after the SCOTUS decision I figure we'll be invited to a wedding. Do we go?"

Christians take different positions on this question, just as Christians take different positions on the issue of homosexuality in general and same-sex marriage in particular. I believe that regardless of our feelings on this issue and about our friends and loved ones, we need to follow what the Word of God says.

Both Old and New Testaments clearly state that homosexual behavior is sin. Regardless of how we feel about those who engage in it, the Word of God is internally consistent on this

issue: all sex outside of marriage, which is restricted to one man and one woman in a lifetime covenant, violates God's created intent for us. And that includes homosexual sex. Redefining marriage does not change the unnatural, sinful nature of same-gender sex (Romans 1).

A wedding is a communal event where society gathers together to witness the union of two people coming together to start a new family, a new building block of community. The point of a wedding is that the guests witness, support, bless and approve the marriage. Contrasted to lovers making promises to each other in a private intimacy, the communal witness and celebration of a wedding elevates and formalizes these vows as a covenant (a promise on steroids), and the new one-flesh union becomes a recognized part of the community.

So there is a huge difference between having dinner with gay neighbors, and attending their wedding. When people attend a wedding, it makes a statement. Attendance at a wedding means one is offering support, approval and blessing to the couple.

I suggest that since God has already spoken clearly about the nature of homosexuality, He would not contradict Himself to endorse and celebrate what He has declared to be sin (Leviticus 18:22). Neither should we.

Beyond that, the scriptures also direct us not to support other people's behaviors that God calls sin:

"Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them" (Eph. 5:11).

1 Timothy 5:22 instructs us not to "take part in the sins of others. . ."

How can one attend a gay wedding without participating in "deeds of darkness," without "taking part in the sins of others"?

To be consistent, Christians should examine why we attend any wedding. Since the Bible is equally unequivocal about believers marrying unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14), it would be wrong to attend that wedding as well. It would be saying, "I support, affirm, bless and celebrate this union." Just like going to a wedding of a Christian who dumps his wife without biblical grounds to marry a younger trophy wife. No!

Lots of people scoff at this position: "God is a God of love! Who are you to judge anyone's love?"

It's true, God IS a God of love, and He has described love for us:

Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous;
love does not brag and is not arrogant,
does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,
does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;
bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

If love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but God has declared that same-sex relationships are not right, then it is not loving to engage in unrighteousness. If same-sex relationships are outside God's created intent for human sexuality, then it is not loving to support and bless relationships that grieve God and will result in pain down the road for the people involved.

So, to answer my friend's question: "How can you attend a gay wedding without making a clear statement of support and endorsement, approval and blessing? And since you know what God says about the nature of their relationship as sin, what statement would you be making as His ambassador?" I encourage my friend to keep loving her wonderful neighbors, to continue to be their friends and to be salt and light to them.

But not to go to their wedding.

And if they ask why, to kindly and lovingly say, “I am a Christ-follower, and He has spoken about His intention for marriage. Just as He loves you more than you can imagine, I love you too, but I’m so sorry, I can’t stand with you that day. But I’ll look forward to visiting with you, as usual, on the other side of that day. And I will be praying for you.”

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/should_we_go_to_our_gay_neighbors_wedding on Aug.25, 2015

Dr. Ray Bohlin's SWBTS Class Readings

College at Southwestern, NAS 4203, Introductory Natural Science

Class Schedule and Links to Readings

Dr. Ray Bohlin

Day 1	August 31, 2015	Introduction/Faith and Science/ ID in Astronomy	<i>The Privileged Planet</i>
Labor Day Holiday	September 7, 2015		

Day 2	September 14, 2015	Redeeming Darwin/I.D. and Biology	CEMS Ch. 9 RD Reference Guide, pp. 4, 5, 9,10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 24, 25 <u>DNA, Information, and Signature in the Cell</u>
Day 3	September 21, 2015	Darwin's Dilemma/ Cambrian Explosion	CEMS , Ch. 1, 3, and 4
Fall Break	September 28, 2015		
Day 4	October 5, 2015	Genetics/DNA/ Genetic Engineering	1. <u>Redesigning Humans: Is It Inevitable?</u> 2. <u>Human Genome Project</u> 3. <u>Human Genetic Engineering</u>

Day 5	October 12, 2015	Exam 1 Abortion/Cloning/ Stem Cell Debate	1. <u>Arguments Against Abortion</u> 2. <u>The Continuing Controversy over Stem Cells</u> 3. <u>Stem Cell Commentary: Spinning the Terms</u> 4. <u>Response to the News of the First Human Clone</u> 5. <u>Can Humans Be Cloned Like Sheep?</u> 6. <u>I'm a Girl Because That's What Mommy Wanted</u>
Day 6	October 19, 2015	Christian View of the Environment/ Global Warming	1. <u>Christian Environmentalism</u> 2. <u>The Complex Realities Behind Global Warming</u>
Day 7	October 26, 2015	Homosexuality/ Same Sex Marriage	1. <u>Can Homosexuals Change?</u> 2. <u>Helping Teens Understand Homosexuality</u>

Day 8	November 2, 2015	Christian Views of Science and Earth History/ Flood Geology	1. <u>Christian Views of Science and Earth History</u> 2. <u>The Grand Canyon and the Age of the Earth</u>
Day 9	November 9, 2015	Exam 2/Eugenics	1. <u>Euthanasia: A Christian Perspective</u> 2. <u>A Darwinian View of Life</u> 3. <u>Euthanasia: The Battle for Life</u>
Day 10	November 16, 2015	Darwin's Racists	DR
Thanksgiving Break	November 23		
Day 11	November 30	Sociobiology	<u>Sociobiology: Genes, Evolution and Morality</u>
Day 12	December 7	Biology of Human Uniqueness	<u>The Biology of Human Uniqueness</u>
	December 11-16	Finals Week	
CEMS – <i>Creation, Evolution, and Modern Science</i> , Ray Bohlin, Ed., Kregel Press/Grand Rapids, MI, 2000			

DR – *Darwin's*

Racists: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow, Sharon Sebastian and Raymond G.

Bohlin, Ph.D., VirtualBookWorm Publishing/ College Station, TX, 2009 (www.virtualbookworm.com)

RD – *Redeeming*

Darwin: The Intelligent Design Controversy, Probe Ministries/Plano, TX,
2007 (www.redeemingdarwin.com)

Future Husbands and Cheerleaders: A Review of OMI's Cheerleader and Meghan Trainor's "Dear Future Husband"

Meghan Trainor's song "[Dear Future Husband](#)" and OMI's song "[Cheerleader](#)" have striking similarities. Musically they are both fun and upbeat songs. Both songs engage with the idea of marriage and outline what they expect and value in their potential spouse. However, the two songs offer conflicting ideas of what a good husband and wife look like. It is almost comical that "Cheerleader," from a man's perspective, describes the potential wife as a mere cheerleader and "Dear Future Husband," from the woman's perspective even if only satirically, [\[1\]](#) describes the potential husband as a mere servant. That brings me to the final comparison: both songs expect the spouse to be an aid in providing whatever the artist desires.

However, there are some truths hidden in these songs about the role of husband and wife in marriage that can best be understood and even celebrated through a biblical understanding of marriage.

Marriage as a Deal

Meghan Trainor's song "Dear Future Husband" is basically a list of criteria that a man must accomplish or agree to before he is allowed to marry her. The song introduces the list by remarking "Here's a few things you'll need to know if you wanna be my one and only all my life." Trainor spells out examples of what she expects from her husband including taking her on dates, telling her she is beautiful, not correcting her, apologizing, buying her a ring, opening doors for her, and even letting her sleep on the left side of the bed. Then of course she adds the the catch-all requests such as "be a classy guy," "treat me like a lady," and "love me right."

The song also outlines what he will get in return as a reward if he does everything right. She will only "be the perfect wife," buy groceries, give "some kisses," be his "one and only all [her] life," give "that special loving" if he does exactly what she asks of him. Additionally, he will have to expect that she will be crazy (at least some of the time), she will correct but not be corrected, she will not cook, and they will favor her extended family over his. What a deal! And unfortunately that is exactly what marriage is conflated into—a deal, an exchange.

Most of these actions are pretty standard ways men show love to their wives. However, men should not and likely do not perform the acts because of a contractual agreement or because of expectations. How can this man show true unconditional and sacrificial love to his wife if he does these actions out of duty or hope of reward?

This marred picture of marriage is so faulty because it offers a picture of marriage that is a one-sided willingness to be served by her husband and then only serve him as a response. Even though the song lists loving actions in marriage, this picture of marriage is ultimately selfish, conditional, manipulative, and loveless.

Marriage as a Cheerleader

Looking to “Cheerleader,” the song offers a more hopeful and less distorted picture of marriage—however, we are still left wanting. The future wife in OMI’s song is a woman characterized by her support, affection, strength, physical beauty, readiness to serve, and faithfulness. All these attributes are biblically commendable and should even be sought after. Yet, what does OMI, as the future husband, offer to her? Fidelity and sex. In contrast to Trainor’s song, here the husband remains rightly faithful and offers sex because he values his wife so much, especially her ability to support him. [\[2\]](#)

However, again the picture seems woefully incomplete. The song portrays a limited picture of women by reducing his future wife to only a handful of attributes that benefit him. His wife should be more than a mere cheerleader. She is simply a tool he can pull out whenever he wants or needs her. The song further reduces—and in some ways even dehumanizes—her by focusing on the services she can offer him. As a result, she is not represented as her own person with her own needs and desires.

Marriage as a Picture of Unity



Ultimately marriage is a picture of Christ and the Church—a picture both songs catch a small glimpse of. When Trainor in “Dear Future Husband” desires (albeit via demand) for her husband to show her love by serving her and affirming her, she desires something that is biblical. Husbands are called to nourish, cherish, honor, embrace, protect, and love their wives. [\[3\]](#) Having biblical standards in

what to expect in a husband is what God wants, but not through demands and deals.

OMI also desires legitimate attributes in his wife. He values a wife who will support and affirm him. In Genesis God created woman with Adam's need for companionship and assistance in mind.[{4}](#) Proverbs 31 describes an excellent wife as a woman who is strong, trustworthy and praiseworthy.[{5}](#) However, Proverbs 31 does not just define an excellent wife in those terms; the excellent wife is generous, wise, skilled, dignified, and uses her time buying, selling, trading, and providing for her entire household. So when OMI seeks an excellent wife, he gets a cheerleader—but if he were to look for a biblically defined wife of excellence then the proverb would ring true, that “he who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.”[{6}](#)

But neither artist has the full picture. Marriage is not an exchange of services—yes, spouses should serve each other; not out of duty but out of a thankful and loving heart. The element that is missing from both songs is the true and complete needs and desires of the opposite spouse. However, both songs together offer a fuller picture of what each spouse needs and desires. Ephesians 5 commands husbands to love their wives, something Trainor focused on, and for wives to respect their husbands, as OMI touched on through valuing affirmation from his wife.[{7}](#)

Genesis describes marriage as becoming one flesh, and following that theme Paul in Ephesians calls husbands to “love his wife as himself.”[{8}](#) By being one flesh, spouses should see their separate wills as one unified will and their separate body as one body. Paul writes that concerning this idea of unity, “For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.”[{9}](#) This picture of marriage is strikingly different from the deal-making, manipulating, and self-serving marriage according to

Trainor and OMI.

The true beauty and blessing in marriage for the Christian, is ultimately that marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Again in Ephesians, Paul refers to marriage by writing, "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church."[{10}](#) When a man and a woman marry, they symbolize unity that is fully complete between Christ and His people.[{11}](#)

However, because of our sin we were incapable of being united with Christ. In order for Christ to marry his Church he had to make us clean and even righteous. Christ accomplished this by taking our place and dying on the cross for our sins so we might receive the righteousness of Christ. In that way, when God the Father looks down at His Church He sees a people who are flawless and thus fitting to be united with His son. Christ is the perfect husband, and when we are complete in our glorification, we will be the perfect wife as the Church.

Marriage as a Broken Picture

Yet our marriage is only a picture—a flawed and imperfect picture. Husbands abuse wives, wives undermine their husbands, and spouses cheat on each other which can all lead to separation and divorce. God did not intend marriage to be plagued by sin, and divorce and pain was not in his design.[{12}](#) However, we did sin and as a result sin has damaged our relationships, including marriage, in a deeply painful way.



Nevertheless, God still works to better our marriages. He sent the Holy Spirit to help believers in the process of sanctification—which is making us more like Christ. Both songs

lack a place for sanctification. Trainor does not want to be confronted and OMI only wants to be affirmed.

But marriage is made for more than just affirming the good and ignoring the bad. Because men and women are different yet compatible, God uses marriage to aid in the process of making us more Christlike. Women tend to be more relational and emotional and men tend to be more protective and provisional. In marriage, the wife can learn from and value her husband's strengths and the husband can learn from and value his wife's strengths, as co-heirs with Christ. And when one spouse has wronged the other they can and should go to each other for confession, repentance and reconciliation that will result in more unity and ultimately aid in their sanctification.

With the power of the Holy Spirit working in us, even in our sinful state, we can still strive to symbolize our unity in Christ in our marriages. Married Christians should continually search the Bible for insight and direction on how to better serve and love their spouse. However, both married and single Christians all wait expectantly for the glorious wedding feast celebrating our unity to Christ.

Notes

1. There has been some debate about whether or not Trainor's song is supposed to be understood as a satire. I am more inclined to think it may be hyperbolic but I think it might be too generous to call it a satire. However, most conclude that if it is meant to be satirical it does not skillfully convey that message. For more of this conversation simply google "Dear Future Husband sexist satire" and you should have plenty of articles to start on.
2. Fidelity and sex should both be a fundamental part of a biblical marriage. See Hebrews 13:4.
3. Ephesians 5:28-29, 1 Peter 3:7, and Proverbs 4:7-9. All Bible verses are in the English Standard Version.
4. Genesis 2:18.

5. Genesis 2:18, Proverbs 31:10-11, 17, 28.
6. Proverbs 18:22.
7. Ephesians 5:33.
8. Genesis 2:24 and Ephesians 5:33
9. 1 Corinthians 7:4.
10. Ephesians 5:32.
11. Because marriage is a picture of the reality of our unity in Christ that is not yet fully realized, we value and guard the sanctity of it. That is why as Christians we should be mournful at the distortions of marriage such as divorce or homosexuality. Distortions in marriage are so offensive because they distort the truth that marriage is supposed to reflect. Because marriage should be highly regarded and protected the Bible uses harsh language when speaking about sexual immorality and divorce (For example, see Malachi 2:16 for severity of husbands not loving their wives).
12. See Matthew 19:6 and 1 Corinthians 7:10-11.

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Raising Gender Healthy Kids

Emotionally healthy children who grow up to be emotionally healthy adults are comfortable in their own skin, in the gender God chose for them. These days, when a child shows non-stereotypical gender behavior, people start to freak out, afraid that their child is actually the opposite sex on the inside.

Good news! There are things parents can do to raise gender healthy kids, girls who are content to be girls and boys who are glad to be boys. Without resorting to artificial stereotypes, either.

First, loosen up your expectations of what boys and girls should be like. A friend of mine now in college was recently exasperated when the instructor taught that “Little girls play with dolls and wear dresses.” Carol shot back, “I was NEVER like that!” My friend preferred to climb trees and ride her skateboard, and absolutely hated it when her grandmother tried to teach her to make gravy because “that’s what girls do.” And it really irritated her that her brothers never had to do any kitchen work because “boys don’t do that sort of thing.” Narrow gender stereotypes don’t honor the creativity of the God who makes varieties of girls and boys on a femininity spectrum and a masculinity spectrum (my blog post on [the Gender Spectrum](#) has been helpful to a lot of people; please read it!).

When parents can relax about the kind of boy or the kind of girl they have, it is easier to support and encourage children according to the way God designed them. Some boys are not the rough-and-tumble, athletic type; they are born emotionally sensitive, more relational than most boys, often creative and artistic. I know one little boy who pretty much danced out of the womb, and has been dancing ever since. That’s his gift, his divine design. His family loves it, loves him, and supports him fully. Some girls just aren’t the girly-girl type; they are natural athletes and gravitate toward more classically masculine interests, but God intended them to be more of the tomboy feminine. Like my friend Carol.

Second, cultivate warm, affectionate, respectful relationships in your family—between husband and wife, between mom and children, and between dad and children. Emotionally healthy, gender healthy kids are grounded in the security of parents who love each other and their children. A hurtful relationship with the same-sex parent is the biggest contributing factor to a later development of homosexuality, but there are other forms of brokenness that can also arise from hurtful family relationships.

Third, appreciate the different contributions from mothers and fathers. God created the complementarity of male and female (Gen. 1:27) for our good and for His glory. Moms and dads are not interchangeable, which is why He intended for families to be led by a mother and a father.

Here are some suggestions from Ricky Chelette, my esteemed colleague at Living Hope Ministries, who has been helping parents deal with gender issues for decades, my friend Anne Paulk, author of *Restoring Sexual Identity* . . . and from me:

Fathers and Sons

- Strongly connect with your son at an early age.
 - Affirm the son's identity as a boy.
 - Take interest in him and his interest(s). Be his #1 fan.
 - Demonstrate love by word and deed. He needs to hear you say "I love you, son."
 - Love his mother and assure her security and safety.
 - Powerful affirmation: "You're good enough, you're strong enough, and you have what it takes."
 - Always give affirmation, attention, and affection ([The "Three As"](#))
-
- Don't feel rejected by the mother/child relationship.
 - Draw out your son ("Hey, let's be guys together!").
 - Show him what maleness is.
 - Do things together. Even a trip to the grocery store or Home Depot counts.
 - Cultivate a habit of "thumbs-up" attitude of affirmation. Look for things to affirm.
 - When he doesn't get it right, don't dismiss him and send him to Mom.
 - Encourage and affirm "be-like-Dad" behavior.
 - Be physical. Boys need safe male touch.
 - When giving hugs, let kids (both boys and girls) pull away first.

Mothers and Sons

- Push your son towards his father and encourage their relationship.
- Affirm your son's masculinity.
- Point out the differences between you and him, between him and his sisters, etc.
- Allow for emotional distance and independence. Don't try to keep him bound to you like a baby.
- Demonstrate positive, safe touch with him (not just spankings).
- Love and respect his father.
- Bring other boys into the home and encourage connections with other boys.
- Reinforce the father's role.
- Tell him that being a boy is wonderful, and you're glad God made him a boy!
- Build up the similarities to his daddy.
- Refuse to diminish the glory of the father/son relationship; don't get in the middle of it.
- Affirm what is valuable in your son's father so your son can model it.
- Nurture and comfort with empathy, but allow your husband to nurture differently (aggression nurturing), such as "Hop up, you're OK." Boys need to learn to develop a thicker skin from their dads.
- Don't insist that he look you in the eyes when you're having a difficult conversation (except when it's time to apologize). It's especially threatening and painful for most boys. Take a walk or drive with him where you are shoulder to shoulder, or talk to him in dim lighting (such as bedtime), to encourage him to open up to you.

Fathers and Daughters

- Love and build up your wife, and make sure she feels secure and safe.

- Affirm your daughter's femininity with words and deeds.
- Be your daughter's "protector."
- Tell her she is loved and beautiful 3X more than you think is necessary.
- Love and serve her. Set the bar high for the man she will marry.
- Girls are tactile. Touch is the key to your daughter's heart. Appropriate touch is SO powerful and necessary.
- Girls are verbal, so words are also very powerful. They need to hear words of affirmation more often than boys.

Mothers and Daughters

- Respect and honor your husband.
- Affirm your daughter's femininity.
- Show her what strength and nurture together look like.
- Love your daughter, don't compete with her.
- Do girly things together early and often. She needs to learn to be a girl from you.
- Communicate feelings, not weakness.
- Continually develop and demonstrate a healthy relationship /romance with your husband.
- Be confident so she can admire you.
- Stand up for what is right in godly femininity, in the family and in the world.
- Demonstrate biblical femininity: relational, nurturing, vulnerable, responsive, and beauty (for an excellent article on this, read [A Real Woman: Defining Biblical Femininity](#) on the Living Hope website.
- Pursue contentment; enjoy life where you are right now.
- Model Christlike submission to God, husband, authorities.

And finally: pray, pray, pray for your children!

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/raising-gender-healthy-kids/ on July 28, 2015.