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

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

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

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

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

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

> As someone who has worked with male strugglers for a long time I appreciate your concerns and your cautions as a mother and friend. I think your concerns are real and I would too have some cautions if this gentleman is spending one on one time with an 18-year-old.
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> I really think that the best thing to do, as he is your friend, would be to sit down and talk to him. You obviously know that he struggles with homosexuality, yet you love him. He needs to know that. It will be terribly helpful for him to have you in the know and help him in his accountability.
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> I would suggest that you sit down with him and in a very loving manner state to him. “John, you have been a part of our church and family for a long time and we know that you struggle with homosexuality. We also know that you are a godly man, and we love you so very much. Because we do love you we want to know how we can walk with you on this difficult road. I am sure there are times that it is very difficult for you, and we want to be of help and support to you. How can we help?” He may or may not give you some answers. Depends. But at some point I would also say, “I know you wouldn’t want to engage anyone in our church in this activity, but I do want to caution you about being with some of the younger adults and older youth alone. These are crazy days we live in, and I wouldn’t want someone to falsely accuse you of something you never intended to do (i.e. Catholic Church scandal, etc.). You know we trust you with our boys and they love you greatly. But I do want you to be careful for your own good and theirs.” Something to that effect.

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

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

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

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

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

Blessings.

Ricky Chelette
Executive Director, Living Hope Ministries
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