“You Are Degrading Teenagers in Your ‘Safe Sex’ Article”

I just quickly glanced over your article about STDs and pregnancy (Safe Sex and the Facts). I was extremely set back by the hypocritical phrasing, “immature teenagers.” You may want to take a long, deep thought about how people could judge you at this time in your life. Just because teenagers may lack experience, “immaturity” would not be the world to use especially used in your degrading sense.

I think if you had read the article more carefully, you would have seen that I give teenagers a lot of credit where I know credit is due, as in this paragraph:

> *“Current condom-based sex-education programs basically teach teenagers that they cannot control their sexual desires, and that they must use condoms to protect themselves. It is not a big leap from teenagers being unable to control their sexual desires to being unable to control their hate, greed, anger, and prejudice. This is not the right message for our teenagers! Teenagers are willing to discipline themselves for things they want and desire and are convinced are beneficial. Girls get up early for drill team practice. Boys train in the off-season with weights to get stronger for athletic competition. Our teens can also be disciplined in their sexual lives if they have the right information to make logical choices. Saving sex for marriage is the common sense solution. In fact, it is the only solution. We don’t hesitate to tell our kids not to use drugs, and most don’t. We tell our kids it’s unhealthy to smoke, and most do not. We tell our kids not to use marijuana, and most do not.”*

This paragraph puts my comment in context:

> *“Condoms are inherently untrustworthy. The FDA allows one in*

> *250 to be defective. Condoms are often stored and shipped at unsafe temperatures which weakens the integrity of the latex rubber causing breaks and ruptures. Condoms will break 8% of the time and slip off 7% of the time. There are just so many pitfalls in condom use that you just can't expect immature teenagers to use them properly. And even if they do, they are still at risk."*

The comment you found disgusting is not meant in a derogatory way, it is simply a realistic observation. My wife and I have raised two sons, now ages 22 and 24. They are certainly more mature then when they were 13 and 15. Even they would acknowledge that. Teenagers are immature in many ways and that is natural. They haven't had many life experiences, especially sexually, to allow them to act as mature adults and make wise decisions. That was my point. From the statistics cited about teen sexual behavior, the immaturity shows. I also certainly understand that some teenagers are more mature than others. Not everyone fits a generalization. That is understood.

I'm sorry you interpreted the phrase as being degrading. That was not my intention and I see no reason to change it.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"I Liked the Article About Modern-Day Knights"

I read the article "Raising a Modern-Day Knight" by Louis D. Whitworth. I would like to thank him and the others involved

with the article. I am going to be turning 20 April 16 of this year. I know that I am not a teenager anymore but that did not make me a man. At least I do not feel like one. I do have Jesus in my heart. I was raised at a FBC understanding. Also I did not get a Father till 12. I would like to thank him again and the site. I will be looking at your site in the future. I pray that Mr. Whitworth will get this message of thanks.

Hi _____,

Happy Upcoming Birthday!

I will certainly make sure that Lou gets your message. He is no longer with Probe, but I will forward your note to him. Do yourself a favor and get a hold of the book he reviewed (*Raising a Modern-Day Knight* by Robert Lewis), or another truly exceptional book that we enthusiastically recommend to all our high school and college age guys who come to our conferences: *Tender Warrior* by Stu Weber. If you want to know how to grow into being a godly man, that's the best book there is. Lots of men in their 30s and 40s have been greatly impacted by this book, and if you read it as you turn 20 you will be SET!

God bless you.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“My Son Wants To Go to a Britney Spears Concert”

My son is 15 years old. My husband and I have differing opinions on our son’s attraction to Britney Spears. Our son has requested tickets to her concert. The photographs I’ve seen are extremely sexual and seem pornographic. Her physical gyrations at the concerts are repulsive to me but I know my son loves it. It seems that this fixation on Britney is cultivating a strong appetite for more sexually explicit visual stimulations in the future. Share your thoughts or scripture please.

Dear _____,

I know what ***I*** think, but I thought it might be helpful to ask my son Kevin, a college sophomore home for a visit, how HE would answer your question.

First of all, he just shook his head and said “Keep that boy away from her!! She has incited so many guys to lust—I don’t care WHAT she says about being a virgin. She’s a tease.”

Then he sat down with his Bible and provided the following perspective:

Proverbs 5:3-5 says, “For the lips of the adulteress drip honey. . . her steps lead straight to the grave.” Verse 8 says, “Keep far away from her and do not go near the door of her house.” Kevin pointed out that Britney’s provocative dress and onstage behavior has invited so many men to lust after her that, according to the way the Lord Jesus equated lust with adultery in the mind, she could reasonably be considered an adulteress. Not literally, of course, but acting deliberately with the intent of making young men lust after her. And not very different from the woman warned against in Proverbs.

2 Timothy 2:22 says, “FLEE youthful lusts. . .” Don’t even let there be an opportunity, either in behavior or in one’s mind, to pursue unholy thoughts. Going to a Britney Spears concert is the exact opposite of fleeing youthful lusts.

And finally, Kevin brought up Proverbs 6:20 and 24-25: “My son, observe the commandment of your father and *do not forsake the teaching of your mother* . . . To keep you from the evil woman, From the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Do not desire her beauty in your heart, Not let her capture you with her eyelids.”

My mother’s heart is delighted that he put such emphasis on your (and my!) role in your son’s life. From that same mother’s perspective, I would put this in the same context as the kind of unpopular decisions we make all the time:

- “I realize you don’t want to brush your teeth and you don’t see any reason for it, butyou need to do it anyway.”
- “I realize you prefer pizza and chocolate cake to anything green, but it’s important for you to eat vegetables, and there will BE no pizza or chocolate cake until you eat the healthy stuff.”
- “I understand you hate pain and so do I, but you have to go to the doctor and get this booster shot, and I’m afraid you don’t have a choice in this.”

So it follows that we would say, “Yes, son, I know you think Britney Spears is the hottest thing since fire and this constitutes child abuse, but because I love you and want to protect you from your own flesh and hormones, you can’t go. End of discussion.”

Part of the value of God placing parents in a place of authority and protection over children is that we are able to see farther down the road than they are, and we can see the big picture of life better than they can. So we make them do

things they don’t want to do, and we prevent them from doing things they really want to do, because acting in their best interests is more important to us than feeling popular and well-liked by our kids. We are no longer in high school; we can choose being wise and responsible over being popular.

But then there’s the other issue, which is that your husband and your son are apparently in agreement *against* your position and beliefs. I’m so sorry you have to deal with that!

But according to what the scripture says about our role as wives, we need to be in submission at the same time that we support our husbands by providing our God-given woman’s perspective. So all you can do is speak to your husband (ALONE) about how you think about this issue (and I would use the word “thoughts” rather than “feelings” since it’s a temptation for many men to dismiss women’s feelings as unreliable and not valuable. Not fair, I know, but it seems to be the way it is a lot of the time). The more logical and analytical you can be in sharing your perspective, the better the communication will probably be. Once your husband knows your position, leave the final decision up to him (which it should be anyway since he’s the dad) and turn over the situation into God’s hands. (This reminds me of a word of wisdom I heard the other day: If you can’t change something, release it.) If your son ends up going to the concert, pray for him! Pray that he will have eyes to see the truth about what Britney’s doing; pray that he will feel guilty; pray that he will have a growing discomfort with this kind of self-absorbed fleshly behavior. And if you haven’t read *The Power of a Praying Parent* by Stormie Omartian, get it and pray it!

I hope this helps.

Blessings on you,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

MySpace: Parents and Kids Wisely Navigating Online Social Networking

MySpace and other social networking sites can be a great boon or a great danger. Byron Barlowe cautions Christian parents of teens to exercise discernment in educating themselves about this important part of life, and look for a redemptive view of this social technology.

Very Big and Very Hip

MySpace.com: *It's big, it's growing, it's controversial for good reasons, and it's probably touched your family—and you may not even know it. In this section, we answer the questions, "What is it and why do you as a parent need to learn more about protecting your kids without cutting them off?"*

Is *MySpace* a harmless teen hangout or a treacherous trap? Should parents forbid your kids from using *MySpace* or similar social networking Web sites? Kids, do your parents, like, *even* have a *clue*? And could Christians legitimately use *MySpace* as a mission field?

Controversy about *MySpace* still abounds, even in the fast-moving online world.

Imagine this: Your straight-A, straight-laced teenaged daughter Lori met Aaron online when he visited her *MySpace* profile, a Web page about her. Now she wants to go to the concert with Aaron and his online buddy, "PartyCrasher." "But mom, we've been 'friends' for weeks!" she whines. Mom and Dad,

what do you do now?

This may not happen to your family, but something similar happened to a Michigan family whose previously trouble-free sixteen-year-old daughter sneaked a flight to the Middle East to rendezvous with a *MySpace* "friend"![{1}]

So, what is *MySpace*? According to one top ranking site, in August 2007 it became the sixth-most-visited Web site on the Internet,[{2}] with over 100 million accounts.

A "perfect storm": millions of people—many of them in their teens and twenties—are connecting with friends, meeting new ones, producing Web
pages and video and music, chatting, inviting back and forth to events—even
doing business and art—all within virtual communities.

Think of it as a microcosm of the World Wide Web, only much more easily connected and organized, even by kids. If the Internet was the Wild West, social networking sites—sites like *MySpace*—are becoming its boomtowns.

Wired magazine explains, "*MySpace*.Com, the Internet's most popular social networking site…has *helped redefine the way a generation communicates*."[{3}]

One digital culture watcher wrote, "Community-based websites are the fastest growing sites on the Internet. The teen social ecosystem *MySpace*" is the biggest.[{4}]

"According to some," writes Connie Neal, author of *MySpace for Moms & Dads*, "MySpace marks a societal revolution as monumental as the industrial revolution."[{5}]

MySpace owner Rupert Murdoch said, "The average person who is computer proficient is self-empowered in a way they never have [been] before."[{6}]

It's this newfound "empowerment" that rightly concerns

parents.

Let's keep perspective. It's only natural that real life is replicated online. A Roper study found that "online communities represent a real and growing phenomenon, but one that is dwarfed by interest in *real-world* social networks . . . [like] extended family (94% interest), neighborhood or town (80%), religious or spiritual organization (77%), hobby/interest (69%)" and so forth.

The directors of *BlogSafety.com* have written a handy book entitled *MySpace Unraveled: A Parent's Guide to Teen Social Networking.* ("Blog" is short for Weblog, an online diary or commentary page.) They write regarding the rapidly evolving topic of teens redefining blogging into more of a social interaction: "As we adults struggle to find the language that describes this phenomenon, teens are speeding ahead, making it up as they go. . . . To them, these sites are just another tool for socializing."{7} Online and offline distinctions blur into oblivion.

What does this mean for Christian youth and parents?

Dangers and Solutions

MySpace *and similar social networking sites can be intimidating, even dangerous places. Threats like malicious software, cyberbullying, and sexual predators render it risky for the unprepared and unsupervised.* MySpace *is being called to account and is responding, but it's primarily up to parents to protect their children.*

One thoughtful parent and Christian school educator responded to the topic as I first did: "Isn't *MySpace* a waste of time or worse, a place where kids think they're experiencing real relationships but are *only* getting a risky situation?" His observation was that the kind of kids who were drawn to *MySpace* already had deep needs that weren't being fulfilled,

primarily by parents.

As a parent of three pre-teens, I shared his skepticism. Yet, there's a bigger picture, I found. There's hope, too. Nonetheless, it can be scary, especially in light of greater autonomy for kids who naturally lack discretion.

Let's pretend you find your thirteen-year-old son pacing after something hits the wall with a crash. He blurts out, "They put up a site about me with nasty pictures and said I'm fat! Now everybody is messaging about it. I'm not going to school." He's been cyberslammed and feels his young world crashing in.

The sense of public humiliation caused by cyberbullying is coupled with the danger that online threats can spill into real life. *MySpace* and similar sites can be intimidating, even dangerous places. As a parent, you may choose to forbid or restrict use of *MySpace* in your home. But I suggest you choose in an informed, careful way.

Sexual dangers are the best known. Chatrooms and posted messages easily enable such temptations and threats. One recent trip to *MySpace* rendered solicitations to chat online with a sultry woman seeking American servicemen and a gang-type fellow with the screen name "King Pimpin'."

In 2002, fifteen-year-old Katie Canton met John in a live online chat room. Since he lived far away, Katie felt free to send photos and flirt. Soon John was sending Katie gifts and e-mailing.

This story ended well: Katie testified at John's trial where he got twenty years in prison. But it had taken Katie participating in a role-playing video game to realize that her behavior and that of her would-be abuser was becoming a classic case of online predation.{8} This is why parental education and supervision are crucial.

Again, some perspective is in order. It's tempting to view

sites like *MySpace*.com as a monolithic online ghetto. A more accurate word picture may be a high school campus. Enter on one side, see the "dopeheads"; enter another, see the "jocks" and cheerleaders. You can't paint with too broad a brush in assessing it accurately. And students can privately stay in the "nice part of town."

Concern is warranted, of course. The required minimum age for *MySpace* is fourteen. However, age verification is still technically impossible, largely due to lack of a public track record for minors—ironic, as many of them create public records openly on such sites.

Parents have sued on behalf of their abused daughters, and thirty-four state attorneys general are now demanding more age-verification controls.{9} Meanwhile, *MySpace* has reportedly discovered thousands of members who are convicted sex offenders. "The attorneys general of Georgia, Idaho, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Mississippi and New Hampshire joined Connecticut in signing a letter to the company asking it to turn over information."{10}

MySpace has responded. The company deleted two hundred thousand "objectionable" accounts.{11} (A similar move by networking site *Friendster* caused a mass exodus, a sad commentary on many of its users.) *MySpace* also began developing parental tracking software, seen by many as just a start.

After hiring a former prosecutor with experience working on sex crimes against children as chief security officer, in January, 2007, *MySpace* donated a breakthrough national database to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). It features the first-ever method to match faces and body features like tattoos to often-elusive sex offenders. Providing "a way to filter convicted offenders from younger *MySpace* members, the database combines the records of individual state registries, plus allows searches based on

images, which the NCMEC said is important."{12}

A new senate bill would require—for the first time ever—sex offenders to register their email addresses. Donna Rice Hughes, president of the watchdog/activist group Enough Is Enough, says, "While there is no 'silver bullet' for protecting children from Internet dangers, this legislation will help to provide another protective barrier for millions of children. . . . Parents must remain proactive and educated about the safety rules and software tools available."{13}

Child safety experts agree: parental guidance should be the first and strongest line of defense. Technology continues to outrun ethical reflection in a culture marked by the philosophy, "If it can be done, go for it!" Pragmatism, the myth of progress as always good, lack of a biblical understanding of sin's pervasiveness and seriousness and sheer greed, drive many of the developments like the *MySpace* revolution.

But so do innately human needs and God-given desires to connect in a disjointed, wired world. Moral panic regarding teens and technology are nothing new. Doomsday prophecies—partially deserved—ensued with the advent motion pictures, television, and the Internet itself, as Internet researcher Danah Boyd points out.{14} Wise adaptation is always essential to being "in the world but not of it."{15}

Hanging Out and Friending

Kids hang out on MySpace *because virtually everyone they know does, even if they would prefer not to. Another big draw: shared interests. But teens need to appreciate the distinction between acquaintances and true friends, as well as appropriate vs. illegitimate public intimacy while being truly "real."*

What can make young men cry? Take away their online "space."

At a conference panel discussion on social networking, four ministry leaders shared nearly identical experiences. Their teens had naturally migrated to *MySpace* with their peers and created profiles there, unknown to these conservative Christian dads. After perusing the site, three of the four outright forbade use of *MySpace*. One by one, they told tales of begging and weeping. One boy sobbed, "Dad, it's the only time I've ever felt cool."

This is tricky. Parents' gut reaction may be to minimize or dismiss such a notion. Yet, socialization at this age happens naturally, inevitably, even critically. But online? Here?

But part of the vital process of adolescent socializing is decoding cues about where you fit into the youth culture and *who* you are perceived to be. If kids are deeply grounded in the love of their God and family, it's just another "place." It's when this grounding is missing that *MySpace* can easily become a platform to present a false self.

Danah Boyd talks about the psychology of publicly viewable social networking: it's performed. "Showing face" becomes key, being "real" has its limits while "friending" online. Note the use of "friend" as a verb there.{16}

Author Connie Neal lists ways *MySpace* meets the needs of teens in uncanny ways, needs to:

- *Communicate with peers*
- *Try on different styles*
- *See what others are like*
- *Explore their generation's music, art, photography*
- *Hear, view, read stories through media*
- *Flirt*

- *Make friends*
- *Feel included in a group{17}*

For a time, *MySpace* also seemed unavoidable (it may be "like, so last year" at this point; *Facebook* is reportedly the social site of choice today among youth). Danah Boyd says, "For most teens, it is simply a part of everyday life—they are [at *MySpace*] because their friends are there and they are there to hang out with those friends. Of course, its ubiquitousness does not mean that everyone thinks that it's cool. Many teens complain that the site is lame, noting that they have better things to do.
Yet, even those teens have an account which they check regularly because it's the only way to keep up with the Joneses."{18}

Social networking relies on clicking to "make" or invite "friends." In contrast, an ancient Hebrew proverb states, "A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."{19}

This leads to a deeper question: "What does the term 'friend' really mean?" Certainly more than a popularity contest, which many accuse *MySpace* of becoming. Stephanie Bennett, writing for *Breakpoint,* warns, "In many ways these technologies reduce relationship to a commodity—something one possesses rather than a jointly developed friendship."

Bennett continues:

> *Just as the practice of [slow-paced] courtship . . . gave way to dating and the now common practice of objectifying "the other" [or "hooking up" and casual sex], the rules of relationship are . . . being rewritten, and . . . are being shaped by a distinctly media-centered worldview rather than a Christian one.{20}*

Author C. S. Lewis wrote:

> *Friendship arises out of mere companionship when two or more of the companions discover that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure (or burden). The typical expression of opening Friendship would be something like, "What? You too? I thought I was the only one."{21}*

Perhaps herein lies the greatest appeal of *MySpace*—shared interests. This is not lost on teenagers.

In balance, as one participant in a CNN.com forum wrote, "True friends . . . need to learn when to stop blogging and go across campus to help a friend."{22}

C. S. Lewis also wrote, "Eros will have naked bodies; friendship naked personalities."{23} The scantily clad girls parading on certain pages at *MySpace*
reflect our culture. Sex is confused with intimacy nowadays; psychological nudity on the Internet is not so different.

Billed as a place to make friends and connect in community, *MySpace*, *Facebook*, *Xanga* and the like may be having the opposite effect, according to one study at San Diego State. It uncovered "an attitude of 'It's all about me'" prevailing among college students, the *Chicago Tribune* reported, and "blogging and social networking are 'playing a big role' in this."{24}

Nonsense, says tech educator Andy Carvin. Social networking largely entails "communities where people reinforce interpersonal relationships through sharing and creating content. . . . [They] want to be a part of something bigger than themselves."{25}

Social sites should reflect and enhance relationships, not

define them. Challenge the presumption of *instant-friendship-by-mouseclick* with your kids as necessary. Guard against not only physical but "psychological nudity."

This presents one more important conversational topic for parents training their kids in a biblical worldview marked by serving others, not by parading themselves or sending false signals.

Parents and Teens Cooperating

Picture yourself or your child in a situation like this: "We're sorry, Caitlyn, but we just cannot hire you. Your online history isn't in keeping with our company's standards." A growing host of those among the Internet generation with online regrets have walled off their online socializing from prying parents and ended up miring their futures in controversy.

Another problem with *MySpace* and social sites is what Boyd calls *persistence in digital publics*. Unable to envision the future, kids don't grasp the lasting ramifications of their youthful foolishness, often captured publicly and permanently in cyberspace. "Without impetus," Boyd says, "teens rarely choose to go private on *MySpace* and certainly not for fear of predators or future employers. They want to be visible to other teens, not just the people they've "friended." They would just prefer [that] adults go away. All adults. Parents, teachers, creepy men."{26}
Natural teenage feelings indeed.

Boyd continues:

> *While the potential predator or future employer doesn't concern most teens, parents and teachers do. Reacting to increasing adult surveillance, many teens are turning their profiles private or creating separate accounts under fake names. In response, many parents are demanding complete*

control over teens' digital behaviors. This dynamic often destroys the most important value in the child/parent relationship: trust.{27}

While hers may sound like a throwback to the 1960s "Question authority!" mantra, Boyd raises a good point. She points out that nowadays adults control youth environments as never before due to fear of abduction and safety issues. "Teens have increasingly less access to public space. Classic 1950s hang outs like the roller rink and burger joint are disappearing while malls and 7-11s are banning teens unaccompanied by parents."{28} Balancing the imperative to protect against the need to let go is tough.

At the same time, parents, teachers, and youth leaders need to inculcate and model a biblical respect for God-given authority. When kids disrespect this, their Internet privileges should be at stake. Some practical safety tips for parents:

• Make sure your kids profile themselves online privately, only to well-chosen friends.

• Ask your kids to invite you online as a "friend"—but don't embarrass them!

• Openly discuss your concerns about social networking with your child.

• Tour their online space and those of their friends.

• Be alert to kids who are very secretive about their Internet use.

• Use the computer in a common area of the house.

• Monitor mobile online use and set up accountability with meaningful consequences. Yet, too many rules could exasperate older kids.{29}

Remember the story of the crying kids who had *MySpace* privileges revoked? One dad took a different approach. He entered into his daughter's online world and began exploring how to safely navigate and do ministry outreach together. Connie Neal describes *MySpace for Moms and Dads* how she participates with her daughter's willing friends as spiritual and relational advisor.{30}

The eventual goal of child-rearing is increasing autonomy and decreasing dependency. Social networking allows kids some autonomy, but they need to be careful in such a public arena. We as parents do well to act knowledgeably, not react out of sheer emotion.

Redeeming *MySpace*

MySpace has effectively tapped into youth culture *and* human nature. Teens are riding a culture-wide wave of self-expression.

But adult audiences there—and especially at other networking sites—are even bigger. Companies are now glomming onto the model for business purposes. *AnimalAttraction.com*, a social networking site for people who love pets, started as a dating service. Now, you can create a tailor-made social network through services like *Ning*.

Up to ten thousand Virginia Tech students conversed on social sites the day thirty-two were murdered in a shooting rampage.{31} Presidential candidates are leveraging networking sites today.

Why is this idea so powerful? Could it be that self-expression is a sign of *imago dei*, the image of God imprinted into the soul of everyone? God spoke the world into existence, and we, his highest creatures, create ideas in much the same way. We seem to have an insatiable need to be heard, especially as we emerge into young manhood or womanhood.

What if we're really after much more—eternally satisfying relating that nothing on earth can compare to? For many folks, online "friends" or a bigger-than-life Web identity are just new ways to reach out for what's unreachable in this life. As C. S. Lewis wrote, "If we discover a desire within us that nothing in this world can satisfy . . . we should begin to wonder if perhaps we were created for another world."{32}

MySpace can be surprisingly redemptive. It served as a clearinghouse of mourning for Anna, murdered in cold blood while working at a McDonald's. A youth-led movement to help Ugandan orphans is building to huge proportions.

The head of Internet outreach for one of the world's largest ministries encourages viewing *MySpace* as a mission field. He tells kids, "It's where your friends and *their* friends are already. Jesus called us to be smart, not safe." As Paul wrote to the Roman church, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."{33}

If you decide that *MySpace* is not for your family, there are Christian alternatives created for fellowship, evangelism, and discipleship; *Meetfish.com* and *MyPraize.com* are two.

Rather than "circle the countercultural wagons," why not explore the frontier of online social networking with your child? In a few years, the choice will be theirs, and they will likely default to socializing online as well as offline. They need to learn how to:

- ***Be discerning online****, asking things like, "Do I know and trust this person? Will this help me or hurt me?"*
- ***Reflect Christ online:*** *"How am I coming across? Does it honor my family and God? Am I teasing with moral compromise?"*
- *Ask themselves "Who seems lost, alone, afraid? Who needs the gospel?"* ***That is, see their online life as a calling of***

Christ.

Dr. Kathy Koch of *Celebrate Kids* offers a real-life prescription for healthy self-esteem: "Parents and teachers who pay attention to children and teens for who they are and not just what they do, believe in kids' present value and not just their future potential, and encourage kids by celebrating them on more than their birthdays."{34}

Do this while teaching discernment and a thoroughly biblical worldview, and social networking may not be a problem. It could be a blessing in disguise.

Notes

1. "'MySpace' teen back from Middle East," *USA Today*, www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-06-09-jordan-MySpace_x.htm (accessed August 14, 2007).

2. Alexa Top 500, www.alexa.com/site/ds/top_sites?ts_mode=global&lang=none# (accessed August 14, 07).

3. "Marines Use MySpace to Recruit," *Wired*, www.wired.com/techbiz/media/news/2006/07/71448, July 24, 2006 (accessed August 14, 2007) (italics added).

4. Ellyssa Kroski, "Community 2.0," blog post on Web log Infotangle, infotangle.blogsome.com/2006/04/07/community-20/, posted April 7, 2006 (accessed August 14, 2007).

5. Connie Neal, "A Mom's Guide to MySpace: What you need to know about this popular website," *Today's Christian Woman* online edition, January/February 2007, Vol. 29, No. 1, Page 30 (print edition), www.christianitytoday.com/tcw/2007/janfeb/5.30.html (accessed August 14, 2007).

6. Ibid.

7. Larry Magid and Anne Collier, *MySpace Unraveled: A Parent's Guide to Teen Social Networking*, www.myspaceunraveled.com.

8. Ibid.

9. Lisa Lerer, "Why MySpace Doesn't Card," *Forbes* online, January 25, 2007, tinyurl.com/2jhwfy (accessed August 19, 2007).

10. Scott Malone, "Thousands of sex offenders discovered on MySpace," May 14, 2007, tinyurl.com/35x2zq (accessed August 14, 2007).

11. Joshua Chaffin and Aline van Duyn, "MySpace acts to calm teen safety fears," *Financial Times*, March 30 2006, www.ft.com/cms/s/3f8a53d4-c01c-11da-939f-0000779e2340.html (accessed August 14, 2007).

12. Ed Sutherland, "MySpace Makes Offer on Offender Database," January 29, 2007, www.internetnews.com/security/article.php/3656676 (accessed August 14, 2007).

13. Donna Rice Hughes, "Enough Is Enough Endorses The 'Kids Act Of 2007'," *Enough is Enough*, March 16, 2007, www.enough.org/inside.php?id=PM5ECT8A (accessed August 14, 2007).

14. Danah Boyd, "Identity Production in a Networked Culture: Why Youth Heart MySpace," *American Association for the Advancement of Science*, St. Louis, MO. February, 2006, www.danah.org/papers/AAAS2006.html (accessed August 14, 2007).

15. John 17:14-15 (NIV).

16. Boyd, "Identity Production in a Networked Culture."

17. Connie Neal, *MySpace for Moms and Dads: A Guide to Understanding the Risks and the Rewards*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 98-99.

18. Boyd, “Identity Production in a Networked Culture.”

19. Proverbs 18:24 (NIV).

20. Stephanie Bennett, “MySpace—The Final Frontier?” January 12, 2007, radio commentary, *Breakpoint*, breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=5969 (accessed August 15, 2007).

21. C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (Orlando, FL: Harvest Books: Harcourt, Inc., original copyright 1960), 65.

22. Anonymous forum participant, CNN.com (page no longer available), as quoted in a conversation on eMinistryNotes on “Can Internet communication sustain us?” October 9, 2006, www.eministrynotes.com/2006/10/09/new-trend-conversations-offline (accessed August 15, 2007).

23. Lewis, 71.

24. “Narcissism due to social networking?” *NetFamilyNews*, March 9, 2007, www.netfamilynews.org/nl070309.html#6 (accessed August 15, 2007).

25. *NetFamilyNews*, “Narcissism due to social networking?”

26. Boyd, “Identity Production in a Networked Culture.”

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Based on Neal, *MySpace for Moms and Dads*.

30. Ibid.

31. *ABC Nightline*, April 16, 2007. “At one point today, up to 10,000 Virginia Tech students were using social Web sites like Facebook & MySpace to communicate about the tragic events that unfolded on their campus.”

32. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.

33. Romans 12:21 (ESV).

34. Dr. Kathy Koch, Celebrate Kids, celebratekids.com.

© 2007 Probe Ministries

Sex Education

Christians are increasingly confronted with arguments in favor of sex education in the public schools. Often the arguments sound reasonable until the scientific reports that advocate these programs are carefully analyzed. I am going to be discussing a number of these studies and will conclude by providing a biblical perspective on sex education.

I want to begin by looking at reports released by the Alan Guttmacher Institute, the research arm of Planned Parenthood. One of these reports was entitled, "Teenage Pregnancy in Developed Countries: Determinant and Policy Implications."

Alan Guttmacher was president of Planned Parenthood from 1962 until his death in 1974, so it is not surprising that the Guttmacher report supports the Planned Parenthood solution to teenage pregnancy. The Guttmacher report concludes that the adolescent pregnancy rate in the U.S. is the highest among developed nations and implies that this rate will decline if sex-education programs are instituted and contraceptive devices are made readily available.

There are a number of problems with the report, not the least of which is the close connection between the Guttmacher Institute and Planned Parenthood. But even if we ignore this policy-making symbiosis, we are still left with a number of

scientific and social concerns.

First, the authors of the report selected countries that had lower adolescent pregnancy rates than the U.S. and looked at the availability of contraceptive devices. But what about countries like Japan, which has a very low teenage pregnancy rate but does not have a national sex-education program? Japan was excluded from the final “close” comparison of countries. In a footnote, Charles Westoff says that “conservative norms about early marriage and premarital sex may explain this phenomenon better than the availability of fertility control.” So we are given only a selected look at developed countries; those with conservative morality (like Japan) were excluded.

Second, the researchers cite statistics that make a case for sex education but seemingly ignore other statistics of concern to society at large.For example, the Guttmacher report suggests we can learn a great deal from Sweden’s experience with sex education, which became compulsory in 1954. While it has a much lower teenage pregnancy rate than the U.S., Sweden has paid a heavy price for this rate. Here are a few crucial statistics that should have been cited along with the Guttmacher report.

From 1959 to 1964, the gonorrhea rate in Sweden increased by 75 percent, with 52 percent of the reported cases occurring among young people. Between 1963 and 1974, the number of divorces tripled and the number of people bothering to get married dropped 66 percent. By 1976, one in three children born in Sweden was illegitimate, despite the fact that half of all teenage pregnancies were aborted.

So while it is true that the teenage pregnancy rate in Sweden is down, the percentages of venereal disease, illegitimate births, and teenage disillusionment and suicide are up.

School-Based Health Clinics

With more than one million teenage girls becoming pregnant each year, family-planning groups are pushing school-based health clinics (SBCs) as a means of stemming the rising tide of teenage pregnancy.

These groups argue that studies of teen sexuality demonstrate the effectiveness of these clinics. Yet a more careful evaluation of the statistics suggests that SBCs do not lower the teen pregnancy rate.

The dramatic increase in teen pregnancies has not been due to a change in the teen pregnancy rate but rather to an increase in the proportion of teenage girls who are sexually active (28 percent in 1971, 42 percent in 1982). The approximately $500 million in federal grants invested in sex-education programs since 1973 has not reduced the number of teen pregnancies. So proponents now argue that health clinics located in the public schools can reduce the rate of teen pregnancy by providing sex information and contraception.

The most oft-cited study involves the experience of the clinic at Mechanics Arts High School in St. Paul, Minnesota. Researchers found that a drop in the number of teen births during the late 1970s coincided with an increase in female participation at the SBCs. But three issues undermine the validity of the study.

First, the Support Center for School-Based Clinics acknowledges that “most of the evidence for the success of that program is based upon the clinic’s own records and the staff’s knowledge of births among students. Thus, the data undoubtedly do not include all births.”

Second, an analysis of the data done by Michael Schwartz of the Free Congress Foundation revealed that the total female enrollment of the two schools included in the study dropped

from 1268 in 1977 to 948 in 1979. The reduction in reported births, therefore, could be attributed to an overall decline in the female population.

Finally, the study shows a drop in the teen birth rate, not the teen pregnancy rate. The reduction in the fertility rate was probably due to more teenagers obtaining an abortion.

A more recent study cited by proponents of clinics is a three-year study headed by Dr. Laurie Zabin at Johns Hopkins University. She and her colleagues evaluated the effect of sex education on teenagers. Their study of two SBCs showed a 30 percent reduction in teen pregnancies.

But even this study leaves many unanswered questions. The size of the sample was small, and over 30 percent of the female sample dropped out between the first and last measurement periods. Moreover, the word abortion is never mentioned in the brief report, leading one to conclude that only live births were counted. On the other hand, an extensive national study done by the Institute for Research and Evaluation showed that community-based clinics used by teenagers actually increase teen pregnancy. A two-year study by Joseph Olsen and Stan Weed (*Family Perspective*, July 1986) found that teenage participation in these clinics lowered teen birth rates. But when pregnancies ending in miscarriage or abortion were factored in, the total teenpregnancy rates increased by as much as 120 pregnancies per 1000 clients. Olsen and Weed's research had been challenged because of their use of weighting techniques and reliance on statewide data. But when they reworked the data to answer these objections for a second report, the conclusion remained.

School-based health clinics are not the answer. They treat symptoms rather than problems by focusing on pregnancy rather than promiscuity. And even if we ignore the morality of handing out contraceptives to adolescents, we are left with a claim that cannot be substantiated.

Planned Parenthood

Planned Parenthood has been running ads in newspapers around the country that adopt a lesson from George Orwell and engage in a heavy dose of “newspeak.” One ad, for example, contains an impassioned plea for the continued legalization of abortion by defeating what they call “compulsory pregnancy laws.”

I take it that by “compulsory pregnancy laws,” they mean anti-abortion laws. But the ads seem to imply that the people who want to stop the killing of unborn babies are also bent on coercing women into getting pregnant. That is not what the ads really mean, but isn’t it a bit odd to label laws against abortion “compulsory pregnancy laws?”

Another ad carries the title, “Five Ways to Prevent Abortion (And One Way that Won’t).” According to the ad, outlawing abortion won’t stop abortions. But it will. While it may not stop all abortions, it certainly will curtail hundreds of thousands that are now routinely performed every year. And it will force many women who presently take abortion for granted to consider what they are doing.

But what are some of the ways Planned Parenthood suggests will stop abortion? One of their proposals is to “make contraception more easily available.” The ad states that, since the early 1970s, Title X for national family planning has been supported by all administrations except the Reagan and Bush administrations. The ad therefore encourages readers to lobby for increased funding of Title X.

By the way, Planned Parenthood has been the largest recipient of Title X grants. In other words, the solution to abortion requires we give more of our tax dollars to Planned Parenthood.

Foundational to this proposal is a flawed view of teenage sexuality that sees cause-and-effect in reverse order.

Accepting a distorted fatalism that assumes teenage promiscuity as inevitable, Planned Parenthood calls for easy access to birth control. But isn't it more likely that easy access to contraceptives encourages easy sex? Another proposal listed in the ad is to "provide young people with a better teacher than experience." As commendable as that suggestion may sound, what is really being proposed is increased funding for sex-education courses in public schools and the community. Again, notice the presupposition of this proposal. The ad writers assume promiscuity and propose further sex education in order to prevent pregnancy. The emphasis is on preventing pregnancy, not preventing sexual intercourse.

Hasn't Planned Parenthood ignored a better option? Isn't chastity still the most effective means of preventing pregnancy as well as a multitude of sexual diseases? Shouldn't we be encouraging our young people to refrain from sex before marriage? Shouldn't we teach children that premarital sex is immoral?

Arguments for sex education frequently ignore the reality of human sinfulness. We simply cannot teach sexuality in the schools and expect sexual purity unless we also teach moral principles. The greatest problem among young people today is not a lack of education, but a lack of moral instruction.

Parental Notification

Next I want to focus on state laws that require parental notification when minor children are given prescription birth-control drugs and devices.

Opponents refer to these requirements as "squeal rules" and denounce them as an invasion of privacy. This reaction illustrates how far our society has deviated from biblical morality.

High-school students must routinely obtain parental consent in

order to go on field trips, participate in athletics, or take driver's education classes. Many school districts even require parental consent before a student can take a sex-education class. But opponents of parental notification believe these regulations constitute an invasion of privacy.

Critics argue that such regulations will not change the sexual mores of our teenagers. Perhaps not, but they do encourage parental involvement and instruction in the area of sexual morality. The moral burden is placed upon the parent rather than the family- planning clinic.

Without such rules, government ends up subverting the parent's role. Each year taxpayers subsidize thousands of family-planning clinics that provide medical treatment and moral counsel, yet balk at these meager attempts to inform parents of their involvement with their children.

Ultimately, who has authority over teenagers: the clinics or the parents? Opponents of these "squeal rules" would have you believe that these clinics (and ultimately the government) are sovereign over teenagers. But parents are not only morally but legally responsible for their children and should be notified of birth- control drugs and devices dispensed to teenagers.

But even more important than the question of authority is the question of morality. Premarital sex is immoral. Just because many teenagers engage in it does not make it right. Statistics are not the same as ethics, even though many people seem to have adopted a "Gallup poll" philosophy of morality.

Critics of the squeal rule believe government should be neutral. They argue that government's responsibility does not include "squealing" to teenagers' parents. But in this situation an amoral stance is nothing more than an immoral stance. By seeking to be amoral, government provides a tacit endorsement of immorality. Secretly supplying contraceptives through government-subsidized clinics will not discourage

premarital sex. It will encourage teenage sexual promiscuity.

Again, critics of the squeal rule see cause-and-effect acting in only one direction. They contend that the fact of sexually active teenagers requires birth control clinics. But isn't the reverse more accurate? The existence of birth control clinics, along with the proliferation of sex-education courses, no doubt contributes to teenage promiscuity.

Experience with these rules shows that parental notification will increase parental involvement and thus reduce teenage pregnancy and abortion. Parents should not be denied the opportunity to warn their children about the medical, social, and moral effects of premarital sex.

Make no mistake—parental notification laws will not stop teenage promiscuity; secrecy, however, will do nothing but ignite it.

A Biblical Perspective

I would like to conclude with a biblical discussion of sex education. As Christians, we need to understand the basic assumptions behind the movement to place sex-education programs and clinics in public schools.

Proponents of sex education often make naturalistic assumptions about human sexuality. They tend to argue as if young people were animals in heat who are going to have sexual relations despite what is taught at home, in church, and in school. The Bible clearly teaches that we are created in the image of God and have the capacity to make choices and exercise self-control. Sex-education advocates would have us believe that young people cannot exercise sexual control; thus we must capitulate to the teenager's sexual urges.

A second false assumption is the tendency of sex-education programs to ignore human sinfulness. Although we are created in the image of God, we all are born with a sin nature.

Frequently, sex education panders to that fallen nature.

We cannot teach sexuality and expect sexual purity without also teaching moral principles. Most sex-education programs present data in a so-called value neutral way. But, in trying to be amoral, these program become immoral. Human sexuality must be related to moral values. Young people need information about sex, but it must be placed in a moral context. The greatest problem among young people today is not a lack of education about sex, but a lack of moral instruction about sex.

I believe we are involved in a moral civil war over teenage sexuality. Here is how we lost a number of battles. First, the old morality was declared passe. The sexual revolution in the 1960s made words like virginity, celibacy, purity, and chastity seem out of date. In previous generations, peer pressure kept young people from sex; today, peer pressure pushes them into it.

We lost a second battle when we turned sexuality over to scientists and took it away from moralists and theologians. Alfred Kinsey's studies "Sexual Behavior in the Human Male" (1948) and "Sexual Behavior in the Human Female" (1953) presented comprehensive statistics, but no moral reflection. Today, discussions about sex are supposed to be done in value-neutral settings. Inevitably, demographics determine morality.

What is the solution? Christians must reassert their parental authority and instruct their children about God's view of sex. We must teach them to flee fornication just as Joseph did in the Old Testament. We must teach them to avoid temptation by making no provision for the flesh. We must teach them to exercise self- control in every area of their lives, including the sexual. In other words, we must educate them about the dangers of premarital sex and the wisdom of obeying God's commands regarding human sexuality. Instead of capitulating to teenager's sexual urges, as sex-education advocates want us to

do, we should provide them with biblical principles and moral leadership in the area of sexuality.

©1993 Probe Ministries

Supernatural Parenting

Sue Bohlin points out that we can be supernatural parents when we are relying on a supernatural God for direction and strength. It is important that we include parenting as an integral part of our Christian worldview. Applying a biblical perspective is crucial to imparting the truth needed for our children to live truly successful lives.

There are certain universal truths in parenting.

• If you hook a dog leash over a ceiling fan, the motor is not strong enough to rotate a 42 pound boy wearing Pound Puppy underwear and a Superman cape. It is strong enough, however, to spread paint on all four walls of a twenty by twenty foot room.

• If you use a waterbed as home plate while wearing baseball shoes it does not leak—it explodes. A king size waterbed holds enough water to fill a 2000 square foot house four inches deep.

• The spin cycle on the washing machine does not make earth worms dizzy. It will, however, make cats dizzy.

• Cats throw up twice their body weight when dizzy.

Dr. Dobson says that parenting isn't for cowards. It ain't such a hot job for mere mortals, either. What a daunting task—being completely responsible for an infant who cannot do

a single thing for himself except make a lot of noise and a lot of dirty diapers! Teaching them to walk. And talk. And act like civilized human beings. Even more importantly, their eternal destiny is in our hands, and we have the awesome opportunity to show them what God is like, and to lead them to saving faith in Christ!

Praise God, as believers we're not limited to our own strength and power. Christ died for us, to give His life to us, to live HIS life THROUGH us. We can parent with the same supernatural energy that raised Christ from the dead. We can parent with the same infinite supply of wisdom and patience that Jesus had. We can let Him parent through us—we can be supernatural parents!

The Bible says that Christ is our life. What does that mean when you're about to change your fourteenth diaper today? "Lord Jesus, I don't have the stomach or the strength to do this, so You change this diaper through me. Here are my hands—use them—here's my face—show love to my baby by smiling through me."

"I have been crucified with Christ, and the life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." What does that mean when you've been giving, giving, giving all day and you're on empty? "Lord, I'm empty and weak and out of resources. You be strong in my weakness. I will do this in Your strength because I don't have any left."

"For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." How do we live that out in parenting kids who would rather snarl at us than look at us, who have swallowed the junior-high-culture's dictum that the only good parent is a dead parent? "Lord Jesus, Thank You for giving me this child. I choose to remember she is a gift and not a punishment. I don't have what it takes to be kind today, Lord. You be kind in me. I cannot love this child today, Lord, so You channel Your perfect love through me. I am Your willing vessel but I'm fresh out of

unconditional love and acceptance. So You be a loving and wise parent through me."

You can be a supernatural parent. Even without a Superman cape.

©2001 Probe Ministries

Knighthood and Biblical Manhood – A Christian Perspective on True Manliness

Lou Whitworth summarizes an inspiring book which lays out the characteristics of a godly man. The ceremonies and the code of conduct of knights are compared to a biblical perspective on Christian manhood. This model encourages us to live in Christ as examples of godly men.

A Vision for Manhood

In this essay we will be looking at an inspiring book, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight,* in an effort to learn how we can motivate our sons to live lives of honor and nobility. This book, written by Robert Lewis, grew out his own experiences as he and some close friends struggled to lead their sons into balanced, biblical masculinity.

C. S. Lewis wrote that the disparate strands of manhood—fierceness and gentleness—can find healthy synthesis in the person of the knight and in the code of chivalry. Here these competing impulses—normally found in different individuals—find their union.(1)

Were one of these two bents given full rein, the balance required for authentic Christian manhood would be lost. Strength and power, without tenderness, for example, give us the brute. Tenderness and compassion without masculine firmness and aggressiveness produce a male without the fire to lead or inspire others.

Biblical examples of these two elements resident in one man are numerous. Jesus Christ, our Lord, revealed both tough and tender aspects in His humanity. Once Jesus expressed a desire to gather the citizens of Jerusalem together as a hen gathers her young under her wings.(2) We know that Christ wept at least twice: once at the tomb of Lazarus(3) and again as He looked out over the city of Jerusalem and reflected on the fate of those who rejected His witness.(4) However, Jesus could also be very stern. Once He made a whip, ran off the money changers in the temple area, and turned over their tables.(5) And, in the Garden of Gethsemane, His mere glance knocked grown men to the ground.(6)

In Paul, we see the same blend of firmness and gentleness. He poured himself out tenderly nurturing his spiritual children,(7) but he endured more hardship than most soldiers(8) and didn't hesitate to castigate false teachers.(9)

In the Old Testament, we see David, who was a poet and singer, but also a warrior and king. He had the fierceness to kill Goliath, the giant, and the tenderness to provide for the needs of Jonathan's descendants after Jonathan was killed.

Keeping the right balance between our impulses toward power and aggression and the need to be gentle and tender is a challenge most men face. In his book, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight,* author Robert Lewis says that Christian fathers can use knighthood as a symbol, an ideal, and a metaphor for guiding their sons into authentic manhood. In this way opposing drives can be harnessed and balanced.

Now, of course, everyone experiences difficulty balancing competing impulses, but it is specifically the violence by young males that is bringing our society to the verge of breakdown. Our young men need a vision for masculinity that challenges and inspires if our society is to be stable and healthy. In an age of great social, spiritual, and gender confusion, such as ours, there is a desperate need for clear guidelines and models that can inspire young men and harness their aggression for constructive ends.

This is where the image of the knight comes in. Since the Middle Ages these men in iron have fired the imaginations of young men. Knighthood is attractive because of its code and its call to courage and honor. Young men are intrigued by testing themselves against various standards, and the code is inspiring because of its rigor and strictness.

The Need for Modern-Day Knights

In his enthusiastic foreword to Robert Lewis's book, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight,* Stu Weber writes:

> *Our culture is in deep trouble, and at the heart of its trouble is its loss of a vision for manhood. If it's difficult for you and me as adult males to maintain our masculine balance in this gender-neutral' culture, imagine what it must be like for our sons, who are growing up in an increasingly feminized world.(10)*

We must supply our young men with healthy, noble visions of manhood, and the figure of the knight, in this regard, is without equal. In the knight we find a conception of manhood that can lift, inspire, and challenge our young men to new heights of achievement and nobility. One authority asserted: "Not all knights were great men, but all great men were knights."(11) According to Will Durant, chivalry and knighthood gave to the world one of the "major achievements of

the human spirit."(12)

C. S. Lewis, in his essay, "The Necessity of Chivalry," agreed.(13) He wrote that the genius of the medieval ideal of the chivalrous knight was that it was a paradox. That is, it brought together two things which have no natural tendency to gravitate towards one another. It brought them together for that very reason. It taught humility and forbearance to the great warrior because everyone knew by experience how much he usually needed that lesson. It demanded valour of the urbane and modest man because everyone knew that he was likely as not to be a milksop.(14)

In Malory's *Morte Darthur* a fellow knight salutes the deceased Lancelot saying: "Thou wert the meekest man that ever ate in hall among ladies; and thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest." This expresses the double requirement made on knights: sternness and meekness, not a compromise or blend of the two. Part of the attraction of the knight is this combination of valor and humility.

Someone once said history teaches us that, "When most men are soft, a few hard men will rule." For that reason we must do everything we can to build into our boys the virtues of strength and tenderness so they can be strong, solid family men and so society will be stable.

The lack of connection between fathers and sons in our culture, made worse by broken homes and the busyness of our lives, has left many young men with a masculine identity crisis. That's why the ideas in this book are so timely and important. Our sons are looking to their fathers for direction. Fathers are searching for real answers in their attempts to guide their sons into godly manhood. This book provides answers and guidelines for this search.

First, from the example of the knight, fathers have a way to

point their sons to manhood with clear ideals: a vision for manhood, a code of conduct, and a transcendent cause. Second, the pattern of advancement from page to knight provides fathers with a coherent process for guiding their sons to manhood. Third, numerous suggestions for ceremonies equip dads with a variety of means to celebrate and validate their sons' achievements.

The Knight and His Ideals

Now we will turn our attention to the knight and his ideals. In *Raising a Modern-Day Knight,* author Robert Lewis suggests three major ideals for modern-day knights: a vision for manhood, a code of conduct, and a transcendent cause.

A Vision for Manhood – The author states four manhood principles: Real men (1) reject passivity, (2) accept responsibility, (3) lead courageously, and (4) expect the greater reward. He suggests that though men have a natural inborn aggressiveness, they tend to become passive at home and avoid social responsibility. These principles, if followed, prevent passivity from becoming a significant problem.

A Code of Conduct – The code for modern-day knights comes from the pages of the Bible. Lewis lists 10 ideal characteristics appropriate for modern-day knights taken from the Scriptures: loyalty, kindness, humility, purity, servant- leadership, honesty, self-discipline, excellence, integrity, and perseverance. Modern-day knights must be trained in three important areas. First, the modern-day knight needs to understand that there must be a will to obey (God's will) if there is to be spiritual maturity. The young man must come to know that life is inherently moral and that there is a God who knows everything and who rewards good and punishes evil. He must know that absolute values exist and that the commandments of God are liberating, not confining. Lewis states "True satisfaction in life is directly proportionate to one's obedience to God. In this context, moral boundaries take on a

whole new perspective: they become benefits, not burdens."

Second, the modern-day knight needs to understand that he has a work to do that is in keeping with his inner design. This work is not just his profession or trade, but refers to work in his home, church, and community. Life is certainly more than a job, and your son should hear this from you lest he get the mistaken perception that manhood is just one duty and obligation after another.

A third realm of responsibility for the modern-day knight is a woman to love. The code of chivalry requires that all women be treated with respect and honor. Sons need to see and hear from their fathers the importance of caring for women in general and loving, leading, and honoring their wives in particular.

The knight in training should be taught the value of work, have summer jobs, do chores around the house, and study hard on his school work. The goal here is to establish patterns of industry and avoid sloth so that a solid work ethic is in place as he gets older.

A Transcendent Cause – Life is ultimately unsatisfying if it is lived solely for self. Jesus said if you give up your life you will find it, so if you live for a cause greater than yourself, you'll be happy and fulfilled. A transcendent cause is a cause that a person believes is truly heroic (a noble endeavor calling for bravery and sacrifice), timeless (has significance beyond the moment), and is supremely meaningful (not futile).

The only antidote to the futility of life is a transcendent cause and a vision for life that "integrates the end of life with the beginning," and connects time and eternity. Obviously becoming a Christian, developing a personal relationship with Christ, and living for Him are basic, irreplaceable elements for having a meaningful life.

A Knight and His Ceremonies

At this point, we turn to focus on the importance of ceremonies in the life of a young man. It is said that a knight remembers the occasion of his dubbing (i.e., his installment as a knight) as the finest day of his life. Such is the power of ceremony that it makes celebrated events unforgettable. Ceremonies are also invaluable markers that state emphatically: "Something important has happened here!"

In much of the world, older men have instinctively seen the wisdom of providing for their sons markers of their journey to manhood. These markers have been in the form of periodic ceremonies or a significant, final ceremony. Following such events there is no doubt in the young man's mind that he has reached the stage in his development celebrated in the ceremony. Later he can always look back on the ceremony and remember what it meant.

After the elaborate physical, mental, and religious disciplines endured and passed in relation to his dubbing ceremony, no medieval knight ever wondered, "Am I a knight?" Such matters had been settled forever by the power of ceremony in the presence of other men. This is what our sons need.

Our sons do not normally have such experiences. As Lewis writes, "One of the great tragedies of Western culture today is the absence of this type of ceremony. . . . I cannot even begin to describe the impact on a son's soul when a key manhood moment in his life is forever enshrined and memorialized by a ceremony with other men."(15)

The author suggests that there are natural stages in a young man's life that lend themselves to celebration. Each stage has a parallel in the orderly steps toward knighthood.

Puberty: The Page Ceremony – The first step for a young boy on the path to knighthood was to become a page. He was like an

apprentice, and he learned about horses, weapons, and falconry and performed menial tasks for his guardians. Since puberty occurs in a young boy's life around 13 and is an important point in a young man's journey toward adulthood, it is an excellent time for a simple ceremony involving the boy and his father celebrating this stage of the young man's life.

High School Graduation: The Squire Ceremony – The next stage on the path to knighthood was the squire; he was attached to a knight, served him in many ways, and continued to perfect his fighting skills. This stage is roughly parallel to the time of high school graduation. It should be marked by a more involved ceremony led by the boy's father but involving other men.

Adulthood: The Knight Ceremony – This is the stage in which the squire, after a period of testing and preparation, is dubbed a knight in an elaborate ceremony. This marks the end of youth and the arrival of adulthood for the knight. For the modern- day knight this stage of life is characterized by the completion of college or entering the world of work or military service. The author suggests this stage as a perfect time to have a celebration marking a son's arrival at manhood and full adulthood. This ceremony should be very special; it should involve the young man, his father, his family, and other men.

Some Final Thoughts on Knighthood

In this discussion we have been looking at Robert Lewis's book, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight,* and discussing knights and chivalry in an attempt to promote the knight as a worthy ideal, symbol, and metaphor for young men to emulate. A question left unasked is why young men might need a stirring, vivid image or concept like the knight as a model. After a lifetime of studying cultures and civilizations, both ancient and modern, the eminent anthropologist Margaret Mead made the following observation:

> *The central problem of every society is to define appropriate roles for the men.(16)*

Though Margaret Mead was a controversial figure, and I have sometimes disagreed with her myself, in this statement, I believe she is right on target. Author George Gilder adds a similar insight when he states: “Wise societies provide ample means for young men to affirm themselves without afflicting others.”(17)

Men need appropriate roles, and they need the desire to live and perform those roles. They need to be inspired to do so. Men need roles that are considered valuable and held to be worthwhile. This is true because men are psychologically more fragile than women and suffer with their identity more than women do, though feminists would have us think otherwise. Why is this so? It is true because “Men, more than women, are culture-made.”(18) This is why it is so important to have a culture-wide vision of manhood.

In modern Western society boys make the journey to manhood without a clear vision for what healthy manhood is. If they get out of control, the whole society suffers. Proverbs 29:18 states: “Where there is no vision, the people perish” [or, “are unrestrained”]. Knights and chivalry can supply a stirring vision of manhood that has been lacking. Yet some may think that the figure of the knight is an inappropriate image to use to inspire Christian young men. Such people need to take a close look at Scripture. The teachings of Jesus and the letters of Paul use the image of the hard working farmer, the athlete, and the soldier to illustrate the points they are trying to make.

Furthermore, there are numerous biblical passages that picture knight-like images, some of whom are angelic beings and others are Christ Himself. Specifically, Revelation is replete with images of courtly life familiar to medieval knights: kings,

thrones, crowns, swords, censers, bows, armies, eagles, dragons, chariots, precious stones, incense, etc.

Actually, we are more indebted to the knightly virtue of chivalry than we realize. Many of the concepts and words have become part of our familiar vocabulary. It is from chivalry, for example, that we acquired the concept of the gentleman (notice the dual stress here—gentle-man) and our concepts of sportsmanship and fair play. It is perhaps no accident that the decline in chivalry parallels the rise of taunting and the "win at any price" attitude among our sports figures.

There is one more aspect to all of this that needs to be emphasized. If we are successful in inspiring our young men to seek to become modern-day knights, we need to remind them and ourselves that one can't become a knight on his own. Our young knights need the company of godly men to be all that they can be; they need the Roundtable. As Robert Lewis states so well: "Boys become men in the community of men. There is no substitute for this vital component. . . . if your boy is to become a man, you must enlist the community."(19) Why? "First, if a father's presence is weighty, the presence of other men is weightier still. . . . Second, enlisting the community of men results in a depth of friendship that the lonely never experience. . . . And third, the community of men expands a son's spiritual and moral resources."(20)

Notes

1. C. S. Lewis, "The Necessity of Chivalry," *Present Concerns* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), pp. 11-16.

2. Matthew 23:37.

3. John 11.

4. Luke 19:41.

5. John 2:13-16.

6. John 18:6.

7. Thessalonians 2: 5-9.

8. 1 Corinthians 11:23-27.

9. Galatians 5:12.

10. Stu Weber cited in Robert Lewis, *Raising A Modern-Day Knight: A Father's Role in Guiding His Son to authentic Manhood* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Focus on the Family, 1997), vii.

11. Matthew Bennett, "The Knight Unmasked," *The Quarterly Journal of Military History*, vol. 7, no. 4(Summer 1995): 10, cited in Robert Lewis, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*, 18.

12. Will and Ariel Durant, *The Story of Civilization—The Age of Faith 4* (New York: Simon & Schuster,1950), 578, cited in Robert Lewis, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*, 18.

13. C. S. Lewis, "The Necessity of Chivalry," 13-26.

14. Ibid.

15. Robert Lewis, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*, 99.

16. Margaret Mead, *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* (New York: Dell, 1968),168, cited in Lewis, 46.

17. George Gilder, *Men and Marriage* (Gretna, La.: Pelican, 1992), 34, cited in Lewis, 46.

18. David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America* (New York: Basic, 1995), 17, cited in Lewis, 46.

19. Lewis, 150.

20. Ibid., 150-51.

©1997 Probe Ministries

Generation X – How They Fit in the Christian Community

Generation X! Are you familiar with this phrase? It is highly probable that you have heard or read the phrase at least once. What does it bring to your mind? Does it provoke fear, confusion, despair, misunderstandings, or is it just another in a long line of such expressions used to label youth? Generation X has quickly entered our vocabulary as an easily recognizable moniker for the children of another definable generation: the "baby boomers." Thus this generation of teenagers also has come to be known as the "baby busters." "Xers" and "busters" normally don't elicit positive thoughts about our youth. Is this a legitimate response? Or are we maligning a significant portion of our population with such terms?

In 1991 a Canadian named Douglas Coupland published a novel entitled *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*. Coupland's book "is the first major work to take twentysomethings seriously, even if the book is humorous and fictional."{1} Thus he is the originator of the phrase that presently describes a particular generation. But he is just one of many who have given thought to youth culture, both present and past.

A Brief History of American Youth

It seems that youth have always received the attention of adults. Teenagers, as they have come to be called, have been analyzed, diagnosed, and reprimanded because older generations

just don't know what to make of them. "Juvenile delinquents," "the beat generation," "hippies," "yuppies" and numerous other titles have been used to describe certain generational distinctives. "The contemporary youth crisis is only the latest variation on centuries-old problems."{2} For example, in the 1730s in New England youth activities such as "night 'walking' and 'company- keeping,' also known as 'revels,' helped produce some of the highest premarital pregnancy rates in American history."{3} And during the early nineteenth century, student riots became a tradition on many campuses such as Brown, North Carolina, Princeton, Harvard, Yale, and Columbia. These riots included "boycotting classes, barricading college buildings, breaking windows, trashing the commons and/or chapel, setting fires around or to college buildings, beating faculty members, and whipping the president or trustees."{4} Such behavior—almost two hundred years ago—probably reminds us of what took place on many campuses during the Vietnam War years.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, youth became the focus of the burgeoning social sciences. "An intellectual enterprise struggled to redefine what 'youth' was or ought to be. That concept was labeled 'adolescence' and has prevailed ever since."{5} It is especially interesting to note that these early social scientists didn't discover adolescence, they invented it. "Adolescence was essentially a conception of behavior imposed on youth, rather than an empirical assessment of the way in which young people behaved."{6} This is important when we understand that the world view premises of the social scientists "came from Darwinian recapitulation theory: the individual life-course replicated the evolutionary progress of the entire race. Adolescence was a distinct 'stage' through which each person passed on the way from childhood (the 'primitive' stage) to adulthood (the 'civilized' stage). Adolescence therefore was transitional but essential, its traits dangerous but its labor vital for attaining maturity. Squelching it was just as bad as giving it

free rein."{7} The fruit of such concepts can be seen in the "lifestyles" that are now so ingrained in our cultural fabric.

The Web of Adolescence

What do the "lifestyles" of adults have to do with adolescents? "Since 'lifestyle' has come to define not just doing but their very being, adults have now become dependent on the very psychological experts who wove the web of adolescence in the first place. The classic youth tasks of 'growth,' 'finding oneself,' and preparing for one's life-work have become the American life-work, even into the golden years' of retirement."{8} Thus the concerns we have for our youth are concerns we have for ourselves. The "web of adolescence" touches all of us. As George Barna has stated, "taking the time to have a positive impact [on our youth] is more than just 'worth the effort'; it is a vital responsibility of every adult and a contribution to the future of our own existence."{9} The importance of this cannot be overemphasized as we contemplate the sometimes-puzzling segment of our population called "Generation X."

Who Are These People?

What is a "Generation Xer" or a "baby buster"? What is the "doofus generation" or "the nowhere generation"? These phrases, and many others, may be used to characterize the present generation of youth. Not very encouraging phrases, are they? More frequently than not, adults always have evaluated youth in pessimistic terms. Even the ancient Greeks were frustrated with their youth.

Today the descriptions are especially derogatory. "Words used to describe them have included: whiny, cynical, angry, perplexed, tuned out, timid, searching, vegged out—the latest lost generation."{10} Are these terms accurate, or do they reek of hyperbole? As is true with most generalizations of people, there is a measure of truth to them. But we make a

grave mistake if we allow them to preclude us from a more complete consideration of this generation. As George Barna has written: “You cannot conduct serious research among teenagers these days without concluding that, contrary to popular assumptions, there is substance to these young people.”{11} Having served among and with youth of this generation for many years, I emphatically concur with Mr. Barna. Generation Xers consist of “41 million Americans born between 1965 and 1976 plus the 3 million more in that age group who have immigrated here.”{12} Most of them are children of the “baby boomers,” who comprise over 77 million of the population. This dramatic decrease in the number of births has left them with the “baby buster” label. Their parents have left a legacy that has produced a “birth dearth” and its accompanying social consequences. There are at least six contributors to this population decline.

First, the U.S. became the site for the world’s highest divorce rate. Second, birth control became increasingly prominent with the introduction of the pill. Women began to experience more freedom in planning their lives. Third, a college education was more accessible for more people, especially for women who began to take more influential positions in the work force. Fourth, social change, including women’s liberation, encouraged more women to consider careers other than being homemakers. Fifth, abortion reached a rate of over 1.5 million per year. Sixth, the economy led many women to work because they had to, or because they were the sole breadwinner.{13}

So we can see that this generation has entered a culture enmeshed in dramatic changes, especially regarding the family. These changes have produced certain characteristics, some positive, others negative, that are generally descriptive of contemporary youth.

How Do You Describe a “Buster”?

How do you describe someone who is labeled as a “baby buster”? We may be tempted to answer this question in a despairing tone, especially if we haven’t taken time to see a clear picture of a “buster.” Consider the following characteristics:

First, they are serious about life. For example, the quality of life issues they have inherited have challenged them to give consideration to critical decisions both for the present and future. Second, they are stressed out. School, family, peer pressure, sexuality, techno-stress, finances, crime, and even political correctness contribute to their stressful lives. Third, they are self-reliant. One indicator of this concerns religious faith; the baby buster believes he alone can make sense of it. Fourth, they are skeptical, which is often a defense against disappointment. Fifth, they are highly spiritual. This doesn’t mean they are focusing on Christianity, but it does mean there is a realization that it is important to take spiritual understanding of some kind into daily life. Sixth, they are survivors. This is not apparent to adults who usually share a different worldview concerning progress and motivation. This generation is not “driven” as much as their predecessors. They are realistic, not idealistic.{14}

Do these characteristics match your perceptions? If not, it may be because this generation has received little public attention. And what attention it has received has leaned in a negative direction because of inaccurate observation. The baby busters’ parents, the baby boomers, have been the focus of businesses, education, churches, and other institutions simply because of their massive numbers and their market potential. It’s time to rectify this if we have the wisdom to see the impact busters will have in the not-too-distant future.

What About the Church and Busters?

Let's survey a few other attributes of Generation X as we attempt to bring this group into sharper focus. These attributes should be especially important to those of us in the Christian community who desire to understand and relate to our youth.

Because of "the loneliness and alienation of splintered family attachments" this generation's strongest desires are acceptance and belonging.{15} Our churches need to become *accepting* places first and *expecting* places second. That is, our youth need to sense that they are not first *expected* to conform or perform. Rather, they are to sense that the church is a place where they can first find *acceptance*. My years of ministry among youth have led me to the conclusion that one of the consistent shortcomings of our churches is the proverbial "generation gap" that stubbornly *expects* youth to dress a certain way, talk a certain way, socialize in a certain way, etc., without *accepting* them in Christ's way.

Another important attribute of this generation is how they learn. "They determine truth in a different way: not rationally, but relationally."{16} Closely aligned with this is the observation that "interaction is their primary way of learning."{17} In order for the church to respond, it may be necessary to do a great deal of "retooling" on the way we teach.

Lastly, busters are seeking purpose and meaning in life. Of course this search culminates in a relationship with the risen Jesus. It should be obvious that ultimately this is the most important contribution the church can offer. If we fail to respond to this, the greatest need of this generation or any other, surely we should repent and seek the Lord's guidance.

Listening to Busters

Let’s eavesdrop on a conversation taking place on a college campus between a Generation X student and a pastor:

Pastor: We have a special gathering of college students at our church each Sunday. It would be great to see you there.

Student: No, thanks. I’ve been to things like that before. What’s offered is too superficial. Besides, I don’t trust institutions like churches.

Pastor: Well, I think you’ll find this to be different.

Student: Who’s in charge?

Pastor: Usually it’s me and a group of others from the church.

Student: No students?

Pastor: Well, uh, no, not at the moment.

Student: How can you have a gathering for students and yet the students have nothing to do with what happens?

Pastor: That’s a good question. I haven’t really thought much about it.

Student: By the way, is there a good ethnic and cultural mix in the group?

Pastor: It’s not as good as it could be.

Student: Why is that?

Pastor: I haven’t really thought about that, either.

Student: Cliques. I’ve noticed that a lot of groups like yours are very “cliquish.” Is that true at your church?

Pastor: We’re trying to rid ourselves of that. But do you spend time with friends?

Student: Of course! But I don’t put on a “show of acceptance.”

Pastor: I appreciate that! We certainly don’t want to do that! We sincerely want to share the truth with anyone.

Student: Truth? I don’t think you can be so bold as to say there is any such thing.

Pastor: That’s a good point. I can’t claim truth, but Jesus can.

Student: I’m sure that’s comforting for you, but it’s too narrow for anyone to claim such a thing. We all choose our own paths.

Pastor: Jesus didn’t have such a broad perspective.

Student: That may be, but he could have been wrong, you know. Look, I’m late for class. Maybe we can talk another time, as long as you’ll listen and not preach to me.

Pastor: That sounds good. I’m here often. I’ll look for you. Have a great day!

This fictitious encounter serves to illustrate how baby busters challenge us to find ways of communicating that transcend what may have been the norm just a few years ago.

New Rules

George Barna has gleaned a set of “rules” that define and direct youth of the mid- and late-90s:

Rule #1: Personal relationships count. Institutions don’t.

Rule #2: The process is more important than the product.

Rule #3: Aggressively pursue diversity among people.

Rule #4: Enjoying people and life opportunities is more important than productivity, profitability, or achievement.

Rule #5: Change is good.

Rule #6: The development of character is more crucial than achievement.

Rule #7: You can't always count on your family to be there for you, but it is your best hope for emotional support.

Rule #8: Each individual must assume responsibility for his or her own world.

Rule #9: Whenever necessary, gain control and use it wisely.

Rule #10: Don't waste time searching for absolutes. There are none.

Rule #11: One person can make a difference in the world but not much.

Rule #12: Life is hard and then we die; but because it's the only life we've got, we may as well endure it, enhance it, and enjoy it as best we can.

Rule #13: Spiritual truth may take many forms.

Rule #14: Express your rage.

Rule #15: Technology is our natural ally.{18}

Now let's consider how parents and other adults might best respond to these rules.

What Do They Hear From Us?

Try to put yourself into the mind and body of a contemporary teenager for a moment. Imagine that you've been asked to share the kinds of things you hear most often from your parents or adult leaders. Your list may sound something like this:

- "Do as I say, not as I do."
- "I'm the adult. I'm right."

• “Because I said so, that’s why.”
• “You want to be *what*?”
• “This room’s a pig sty.”
• “Can’t you do anything right?”
• “Where did you find him?”
• “You did *what*?”
• “Do you mind if we talk about something else?”
• “I’m kind of busy right now. Could you come back later?”

These statements sound rather overwhelming when taken together, don’t they? And yet too many of our youth hear similar phrases too frequently. As we conclude our series pertaining to the youth of Generation X, let’s focus on how we might better communicate and minister to them. In his book *Ten Mistakes Parents Make With Teenagers*, Jay Kesler has shared wise advice we should take to heart and consistently apply to our lives among youth.{19}

Advice to Parents and Other Adults

• Be a consistent model. We can’t just preach to them and expect them to follow our advice if we don’t live what we say. Consistency is crucial in the eyes of a buster.
• Admit when you are wrong. Just because you are the adult and the one with authority doesn’t mean you can use your position as a “cop out” for mistakes. Youth will understand sincere repentance and will be encouraged to respond in kind.
• Give honest answers to honest questions. Youth like to ask questions. We need to see this as a positive sign and respond honestly.
• Let teenagers develop a personal identity. Too often youth bare the brunt of their parents’ expectations. In particular, parents will sometimes make the mistake of living through their children. Encourage them in their own legitimate endeavors.
• Major on the majors and minor on the minors. In my experience, adults will concentrate on things like appearance

to the detriment of character. Our youth need to know that we know what is truly important.
• Communicate approval and acceptance. As we stated earlier in this essay, this generation is under too much stress. Let's make encouragement our goal, not discouragement.
• When possible, approve their friends. This one can be especially difficult for many of us. Be sure to take time to go beyond the surface and really know their friends.
• Give teens the right to fail. We can't protect them all their lives. Remind them that they can learn from mistakes.
• Discuss the uncomfortable. If they don't sense they can talk with you, they will seek someone else who may not share your convictions.
• Spend time with your teens. Do the kinds of things they like to do. Give them your concentration. They'll never forget it.

This generation of youth, and all those to come, need parents and adults who demonstrate these qualities. When youth receive this kind of attention, our churches will benefit, our schools will benefit, our families will benefit, and our country will benefit. And, most importantly, I believe the Lord will be pleased.

Notes

1. William Dunn, *The Baby Bust: A Generation Comes of Age* (Ithaca, N.Y.: American Demographics Books, 1993), 112.
2. Quentin J. Schultze, ed., *Dancing in the Dark: Youth, Popular Culture, and the Electronic Media* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 14.
3. Ibid., 19.
4. Steven J. Novak, *The Rights of Youth: American Colleges and Student Revolt, 1798-1815*(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1977), 17-25. Quoted in Schultze, *Dancing in the Dark*, 23.
5. Schultze, 33.
6. Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York:Basic Books, 1977), 243. Quoted in Schultze, *Dancing in the Dark*, 35.

7. Schultze, 35.
8. Ibid., 45.
9. George Barna, *Generation Next: What You Need to Know About Today's Youth* (Ventura,Calif.: Regal, 1995), 11.
10. Dunn, x.
11. Barna, 18.
12. Dunn, x.
13. Ibid., 16.
14. Barna, 18-21.
15. Jan Johnson, "Getting the Gospel to the Baby Busters," *Moody Monthly* (May 1995): 50.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 51.
18. Barna, 108-15.
19. Jay Kesler, *Ten Mistakes Parents Make With Teenagers (And How to Avoid Them)* (Brentwood, Tenn.: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1988).

© 1997 Probe Ministries International

Homosexual Myths – Exposed from a Biblical Perspective

Sue Bohlin looks a common myths concerning homosexual behavior that are prevalent in our society. These myths prevent us from looking at homosexuality with a biblical worldview and from dealing with this sin in a loving and consistent manner.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

In this essay we'll be looking at some of the homosexual myths that have pervaded our culture, and hopefully answering their arguments. Much of this material is taken from Joe Dallas'

excellent book, *A Strong Delusion: Confronting the "Gay Christian" Movement*.{1} While the information in this essay may prove helpful, it is our prayer that you will be able to share it calmly and compassionately, remembering that homosexuality isn't just a political and moral issue; it is also about people who are badly hurting.

10% of the Population Is Homosexual.

In 1948, Dr. Alfred Kinsey released a study called *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male,* claiming that between 10 and 47% of the male population was homosexual.{2} He got his figures from a pool of 5,300 male subject that he represented as your average "Joe College" student. Many of the men who gave him the data, though, actually consisted of sex offenders, prisoners, pimps, hold-up men, thieves, male prostitutes and other criminals, and hundreds of gay activists.{3} The 10% figure was widely circulated by Harry Hay, the father of the homosexual "civil rights" movement, urging that homosexuality be seen no longer as an act of sodomy but as a 10% minority class.{4}

Kinsey's figures were exposed as completely false immediately afterwards, and by many other scientists since. The actual figure is closer to 2-3%.{5} But the 10% number has been so often reported in the press that most people think it's valid. It's not.

People Are Born Gay.

Ann Landers said it, and millions of people believe it. The problem is, the data's not there to support it. There are three ways to test for inborn traits: twin studies, brain dissections, and gene "linkage" studies.{6} Twin studies show that something other than genetics must account for homosexuality, because nearly half of the identical twin studied didn't have the same sexual preference. If homosexuality were inherited, identical twins should either be

both straight or both gay. Besides, none of the twin studies have been replicated, and other twin studies have produced completely different results.{7} Dr. Simon LeVay's famous study on the brains of dead subjects yielded questionable results regarding its accuracy. He wasn't sure of the sexual orientation of the people in the study, and Dr. LeVay even admits he doesn't know if the changes in the brain structures were the cause *of* homosexuality, or caused *by* homosexuality.{8} Finally, an early study attempting to show a link between homosexuality and the X-chromosome has yet to be replicated, and a second study actually contradicted the findings of the first.{9} Even if homosexuality were someday proven to be genetically related, *inborn* does not necessarily mean *normal*. Some children are born with cystic fibrosis, but that doesn't make it a normal condition.

Inborn tendencies toward certain behaviors (such as homosexuality) do not make those behaviors moral. Tendencies toward alcoholism, obesity, and violence are now thought to be genetically influenced, but they are not good behaviors. People born with tendencies toward these behaviors have to fight hard against their natural temptations to drunkenness, gluttony, and physical rage.

And since we are born as sinners into a fallen world, we have to deal with the consequences of the Fall. Just because we're born with something doesn't mean it's normal. It's not true that "God makes some people gay." All of us have effects of the Fall we need to deal with.

What's Wrong with Two Loving, Committed Men or Women Being Legally Married?

There are two aspects to marriage: the legal and the spiritual. Marriage is more than a social convention, like being "best friends" with somebody, because heterosexual marriage usually results in the production of children.

Marriage is a legal institution in order to offer protection for women and children. Women need to have the freedom to devote their time and energies to be the primary nurturers and caretakers of children without being forced to be breadwinners as well. God's plan is that children grow up in families who provide for them, protect them, and wrap them in security.

Because gay or lesbian couples are by nature unable to reproduce, they do not need the legal protection of marriage to provide a safe place for the production and raising of children. Apart from the sexual aspect of a gay relationship, what they have is really "best friend" status, and that does not require legal protection.

Of course, a growing number of gay couples are seeking to have a child together, either by adoption, artificial insemination, or surrogate mothering. Despite the fact that they have to resort to an outside procedure in order to become parents, the presence of adults plus children in an ad hoc household should not automatically secure official recognition of their relationship as a family. There is a movement in our culture which seeks to redefine "family" any way we want, but with a profound lack of discernment about the long-term effects on the people involved. Gay parents are making a dangerous statement to their children: lesbian mothers are saying that fathers are not important, and homosexual fathers are saying that mothers are not important. More and more social observers see the importance of both fathers and mothers in children's lives; one of their roles is to teach boys what it means to be a boy and teach girls what it means to be a girl.

The other aspect of marriage is of a spiritual nature. Granted, this response to the gay marriage argument won't make any difference to people who are unconcerned about spiritual things, but there are a lot of gays who care very deeply about God and long for a relationship with Him. The marriage relationship, both its emotional and especially its sexual components, is designed to serve as an earthbound illustration

of the relationship between Christ and His bride, the church.{10} Just as there is a mystical oneness between a man and a woman, who are very different from each other, so there is a mystical unity between two very different, very "other" beings—the eternal Son of God and us mortal, creaturely humans. Marriage as God designed it is like the almost improbable union of butterfly and buffalo, or fire and water. But homosexual relationships are the coming together of two like individuals; the dynamic of unity and diversity in heterosexual marriage is completely missing, and therefore so is the spiritual dimension that is so intrinsic to the purpose of marriage. Both on an emotional and a physical level, the sameness of male and male, or female and female, demonstrates that homosexual relationships do not reflect the spiritual parable that marriage is meant to be. God wants marriage partners to complement, not to mirror, each other. The concept of gay marriage doesn't work, whether we look at it on a social level or a spiritual one.

Jesus Said Nothing about Homosexuality.

Whether from a pulpit or at a gay rights event, gay activists like to point out that Jesus never addressed the issue of homosexuality; instead, He was more interested in love. Their point is that if Jesus didn't specifically forbid a behavior, then who are we to judge those who engage in it?

This argument assumes that the Gospels are more important than the rest of the books in the New Testament, that only the recorded sayings of Jesus matter. But John's gospel itself assures us that it is not an exhaustive record of all that Jesus said and did, which means there was a lot left out!{11} The gospels don't record that Jesus condemned wife-beating or incest; does that make them OK? Furthermore, the remaining books of the New Testament are no less authoritative than the gospels. All scripture is inspired by God, not just the books with red letters in the text. Specific prohibitions against

homosexual behavior in Romans 1:26-27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9,10 are every bit as God-ordained as what is recorded in the gospels.

We do know, however, that Jesus spoke in specific terms about God's created intent for human sexuality: "From the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and the two shall be one flesh. . . What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:4-6). God's plan is holy heterosexuality, and Jesus spelled it out.

The Levitical laws against homosexual behavior are not valid today.

Leviticus 18:22 says, "Thou shalt not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; it is an abomination." Gay theologians argue that the term "abomination" is generally associated with idolatry and the Canaanite religious practice of cult prostitution, and thus God did not prohibit the kind of homosexuality we see today.

Other sexual sins such as adultery and incest are also prohibited in the same chapters where the prohibitions against homosexuality are found. All sexual sin is forbidden by both Old and New Testament, completely apart from the Levitical codes, because it is a moral issue. It is true that we are not bound by the rules and rituals in Leviticus that marked Yahweh's people by their separation from the world; however, the nature of sexual sin has not changed because immorality is an affront to the holiness and purity of God Himself. Just because most of Leviticus doesn't apply to Christians today doesn't mean none of it does.

The argument that the word "abomination" is connected with idolatry is well answered by examining Proverbs 6:16-19, which describes what else the Lord considers abominations: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart

that devises evil imaginations, feet that are swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaks lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers. Idolatry plays no part in these abominations. The argument doesn't hold water.

If the practices in Leviticus 18 and 20 are condemned because of their association with idolatry, then it logically follows that they would be permissible if they were committed apart from idolatry. That would mean incest, adultery, bestiality, and child sacrifice (all of which are listed in these chapters) are only condemned when associated with idolatry; otherwise, they are allowable. No responsible reader of these passages would agree with such a premise.{12}

Calling Homosexuality a Sin Is Judging, and Judging Is a Sin.

Josh McDowell says that the most often-quoted Bible verse used to be John 3:16, but now that tolerance has become the ultimate virtue, the verse we hear quoted the most is "Judge not, lest ye be judged" (Matt. 7:1). The person who calls homosexual activity wrong is called a bigot and a homophobe, and even those who don't believe in the Bible can be heard to quote the "Judge not" verse.

When Jesus said "Do not judge, or you too will be judged," the context makes it plain that He was talking about setting ourselves up as judge of another person, while blind to our own sinfulness as we point out another's sin. There's no doubt about it, there is a grievous amount of self-righteousness in the way the church treats those struggling with the temptations of homosexual longings. But there is a difference between agreeing with the standard of Scripture when it declares homosexuality wrong, and personally condemning an individual because of his sin. Agreeing with God about something isn't necessarily judging.

Imagine I'm speeding down the highway, and I get pulled over

by a police officer. He approaches my car and, after checking my license and registration, he says, “You broke the speed limit back there, ma’am.” Can you imagine a citizen indignantly leveling a politically correct charge at the officer: “Hey, you’re judging me! Judge not, lest ye be judged!'” The policeman is simply pointing out that I broke the law. He’s not judging my character, he’s comparing my behavior to the standard of the law. It’s not judging when we restate what God has said about His moral law, either. What is sin is to look down our noses at someone who falls into a different sin than we do. That’s judging.

The Romans 1 Passage on Homosexuality Does Not Describe True Homosexuals, but Heterosexuals Who Indulge in Homosexual Behavior That Is Not Natural to *Them*.

Romans 1:26-27 says, “God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.” Some gay theologians try to get around the clear prohibition against both gay and lesbian homosexuality by explaining that the real sin Paul is talking about here is straight people who indulge in homosexual acts, because it’s not natural to them. Homosexuality, they maintain, is not a sin for *true* homosexuals.

But there is nothing in this passage that suggests a distinction between “true” homosexuals and “false” ones. Paul describes the homosexual behavior itself as unnatural, regardless of who commits it. In fact, he chooses unusual words for men and women, Greek words that most emphasize the biology of being a male and a female. The behavior described

in this passage is unnatural for males and females; sexual orientation isn't the issue at all. He is saying that homosexuality is biologically unnatural; not just unnatural to heterosexuals, but unnatural to anyone.

Furthermore, Romans 1 describes men "inflamed with lust" for one another. This would hardly seem to indicate men who were straight by nature but experimenting with gay sex.{13} You really have to do some mental gymnastics to make Romans 1 anything other than what a plain reading leads us to understand all homosexual activity is sin.

Preaching Against Homosexuality Causes Gay Teenagers to Commit Suicide.

I received an e-mail from someone who assured me that the blood of gay teenagers was on my hands because saying that homosexuality is wrong makes people kill themselves. The belief that gay teenagers are at high risk for suicide is largely inspired by a 1989 report by a special federal task force on youth and suicide. This report stated three things; first, that gay and lesbian youths account for one third of all teenage suicides; second, that suicide is the leading cause of death among gay teenagers, and third, gay teens who commit suicide do so because of "internalized homophobia" and violence directed at them.{14} This report has been cited over and over in both gay and mainstream publications.

San Francisco gay activist Paul Gibson wrote this report based on research so shoddy that when it was submitted to Dr. Louis Sullivan, the former Secretary of Health and Human Services, Dr. Sullivan officially distanced himself and his department from it.{15} The report's numbers, both its data and its conclusions, are extremely questionable. Part of the report cites an author claiming that as many as 3,000 gay youths kill themselves each year. But that's over a thousand more than the total number of teen suicides in the first place! Gibson

exaggerated his numbers when he said that one third of all teen suicides are committed by gay youth. He got this figure by looking at gay surveys taken at drop-in centers for troubled teens, many of which were gay-oriented, which revealed that gay teens had two to four times the suicidal tendencies of straight kids. Gibson multiplied this higher figure by the disputed Kinsey figure of a 10% homosexual population to produce his figure that 30% of all youth suicides are gay. David Shaffer, a Columbia University psychiatrist who specializes in teen suicides, pored over this study and said, "I struggled for a long time over Gibson's mathematics, but in the end, it seemed more hocus-pocus than math."{16}

The report's conclusions are contradicted by other, more credible reports. Researchers at the University of California-San Diego interviewed the survivors of 283 suicides for a 1986 study. 133 of those who died were under 30, and only 7 percent were gay and they were all over 21. In another study at Columbia University of 107 teenage boy suicides, only three were known to be gay, and two of those died in a suicide pact. When the Gallup organization interviewed almost 700 teenagers who knew a teen who had committed suicide, not one mentioned sexuality as part of the problem. Those who had come close to killing themselves mainly cited boy-girl problems or low self-esteem.{17}

Gibson didn't use a heterosexual control group in his study. Conclusions and statistics are bound to be skewed without a control group. When psychiatrist David Shaffer examined the case histories of the gay teens who committed suicides in Gibson's report, he found the same issues that straight kids wrestle with before suicide: "The stories were the same: a court appearance scheduled for the day of the death; prolonged depression; drug and alcohol problems; etc."{18}

That any teenager experiences so much pain that he takes his life is a tragedy, regardless of the reason. But it's not fair

to lay the responsibility for gay suicides, the few that there are, on those who agree with God that it's wrong and harmful behavior.

Notes

1. Dallas, Joe. *A Strong Delusion: Confronting the "Gay Christian" Movement*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1996.
2. Dr. Judith Reisman, "Kinsey and the Homosexual Revolution," *The Journal of Human Sexuality* (Carrollton, Tex.: Lewis and Stanley, 1996), 21.
3. Ibid., 26.
4. Ibid., 21.
5. Richard G. Howe, *Homosexuality in America: Exposing the Myths* (found on the American Family Association website at http://www.afa.net) gives this citation: "Knight lists the following sources in support of the 1%-3% figures: J. Gordon Muir, "Homosexuals and the 10% Fallacy," *Wall Street Journal*, March 31, 1993; Tom W. Smith, "Adult Sexual Behavior in 1989: Number of Partners, Frequency of Intercourse and Risk of AIDS," *Family Planning Perspectives* (May/June 1991): 102; John O.G. Billy, Koray Tanfer, William R. Grady, and Daniel H. Klepinger, "The Sexual Behavior of Men in the United States," *Family Planning Perspectives*, The Alan Guttmacher Institute, vol. 25, no. 2 (March/April 1993)."
6. Dr. Jeffrey Satinover, "The Gay Gene?", *The Journal of Human Sexuality*, 4.
7. Dallas, 114.
8. Ibid., 112-114.
9. Ibid., 116.
10. Ephesians 5:25-32
11. John 20:30
12. Dallas, 193.
13. Ibid., 195.
14. Peter LaBarbera, "The Gay Youth Suicide Myth," *The Journal of Human Sexuality*, 65.
15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 66.

© 1996 Probe Ministries

Teen Drug Abuse

A Nine Inch Nails album *The Downward Spiral* features a song "My Self Destruct" with the lyrics: "I am the needle in your vein and I control you, I am the high you can't sustain and I control you." Another song, "Hurt," explores drugs as a means of escape with lyrics like, "The needle tears a hole, the old familiar sting, try to kill it all away."

Five Dodge City, Kansas teenagers, high on marijuana, killed a stranger for no obvious reason. Three West Palm Beach, Florida teenagers mixed beer, rum, marijuana and cocaine. They then kidnapped and set ablaze a tourist from Brooklyn.

Nearly everywhere we look, the consequences of drug abuse can be seen. Violent street gangs, family violence, train crashes, the spread of AIDS, and babies born with cocaine dependency all testify to the pervasive influence of drugs in our world.

The statistics are staggering. The average age of first alcohol use is 12 and the average age of first drug use is 13. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 93 percent of all teenagers have some experience with alcohol by the end of their senior year of high school and 6 percent drink daily. Almost two-thirds of all American young people try illicit drugs before they finish high school. One out of sixteen seniors smokes marijuana daily and 20 percent have done so for at least a month sometime in their lives. A recent poll found that adolescents listed drugs as the most important problem facing people their age, followed by crime and violence in

school and social pressures.

Drugs have changed the social landscape of America. Street gangs spring up nearly overnight looking for the enormous profits drugs can bring. Organized crime is also involved in setting up franchises that would make McDonald's envious. But these are not hamburgers. In the world of drugs, homicidally vicious gangs compete for market share with murderous results. Many gang members outgun the police with their weapons of choice: semi-automatic pistols, AK-47s, and Uzis. Drug dealers have also gone high tech using cellular phones and computers to keep track of deals, while their teenage runners wear phone beepers in school.

The Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE) reports that children who abuse illicit drugs are significantly more likely to carry a gun to school, take part in gang activities, think of suicide, threaten harm to others, and get in trouble with the police than children who abstain.

One survey released by the University of Colorado shows that the problem of drug use is not just outside the church. The study involved nearly 14,000 junior high and high school youth and compared churched young people with unchurched young people and found very little difference. For example, 88 percent of the unchurched young people reported drinking beer as compared to 80 percent of churched young people. When asked how many had tried marijuana, 47 percent of the unchurched young people had done so compared to 38 percent of the churched youth. For amphetamines and barbiturates, 28 percent of the unchurched had tried them while 22 percent of the church young people had tried them. And for cocaine use, the percentage was 14 percent for unchurched youths and 11 percent for churched youths.

Fighting drugs often seems futile. When drug dealers are arrested, they are often released prematurely because court dockets are overloaded. Plea bargaining and paroles are

standard fare as the revolving doors of justice spin faster. As the casualties mount in this war against drugs, some commentators have begun to suggest that the best solution is to legalize drugs. But you don't win a war by surrendering. If drugs were legalized, addiction would increase, health costs would increase, and government would once again capitulate to societal pressures and shirk its responsibility to establish moral law.

But if legalization is not the answer, then something must be done about the abuse of drugs like alcohol, cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and PCP. Just the medical cost of drug abuse was estimated by the National Center for Health Statistics to be nearly $60 billion, and the medical bill for alcohol was nearly $100 billion.

How to Fight the Drug Battle

Society must fight America's drug epidemic on five major fronts. The first battlefront is at the border.Federal agents must patrol the 8426 miles of deeply indented Florida coastline and a 2067 mile border with Mexico. This is a formidable task, but vast distances are not the only problem.

The smugglers they are up against have almost unlimited funds and some of the best equipment available. Fortunately, the federal interdiction forces (namely Customs, DEA, and INS) are improving their capability. Customs forces have been given an increase in officers and all are getting more sophisticated equipment.

The second battlefront is law enforcement at home. Police must crack down with more arrests, more convictions, longer sentences, and more seizures of drug dealers' assets. Unfortunately, law enforcement successes pale when compared to the volume of drug traffic. Even the most effective crackdowns seem to do little more than move drugs from one location to another.

An effective weapon on this battlefront is a 1984 law that makes it easier to seize the assets of drug dealers before conviction. In some cities, police have even confiscated the cars of suburbanites who drive into the city to buy crack.

But attempts to deter drug dealing have been limited by flaws in the criminal justice system. A lack of jail cells prevents significant prosecution of drug dealers. And even if this problem were alleviated, the shortage of judges would still result in the quick release of drug pushers.

A third battlefront is drug testing. Many government and business organizations are implementing testing on a routine basis in order to reduce the demand for drugs.

The theory is simple. Drug testing is a greater deterrent to drug use than the remote possibility of going to jail. People who know they will have to pass a urine test in order to get a job are going to be much less likely to dabble in drugs. In 1980, 27 percent of some 20,000 military personnel admitted to using drugs in the previous 30 days. Five years later when drug testing was implemented, the proportion dropped to 9 percent.

But drug testing is not without its opponents. Civil libertarians feel this deterrent is not worth the loss of personal privacy. Some unions believe that random testing in the workplace would violate the Fourth Amendment’s prohibition against unreasonable searches. A fourth battleground is drug treatment. Those who are addicted to drugs need help. But the major question is, Who should provide the treatment and who should foot the bill? Private hospital programs are now a $4 billion-a-year business with a daily cost of as much as $500 per bed per day. This is clearly out of the reach of many addicts who do not have employers or insurance companies who can pick up the costs.

A fifth battleground is education. Teaching children the

dangers of drugs can be an important step in helping them to learn to say no to drugs. The National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that 72 percent of the nation’s elementary and secondary-school children are being given some kind of drug education.

Should We Legalize Drugs?

Those weary of the war on drugs have suggested that we should decriminalize drugs. Former Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders suggested we study the impact of legalizing drugs. For years, an alliance of liberals and libertarians have promoted the idea that legalizing drugs would reduce drug costs and drug crimes in this country. But would it? Let’s look at some of the arguments for drug legalization.

1. Legalization will take the profit out of the drug business.

As surprising as it may sound, relatively few drug dealers actually earn huge sums of money. Most in the crack business are low-level runners who make very little money. Many crack dealers smoke more crack than they sell. Drug cartels are the ones making the big profits.

Would legalizing drugs really affect large drug dealers or drug cartels in any appreciable way? Drug cartels would still control price and supply even if drugs were legalized in this country. If government set the price for legalized drugs, criminals could undercut the price and supply whatever the government did not supply.

Addicts would not be significantly affected by legalization. Does anyone seriously believe that their behavior would change just because they are now using legal drugs instead of illegal drugs? They would still use theft and prostitution to support their habits.

Proponents also argue that legalizing drugs would reduce the cost of drugs and thus reduce the supply of drugs flowing to

this country. Recent history suggests that just the opposite will take place. When cocaine first hit the United States, it was expensive and difficult to obtain. But when more was dumped into this country and readily available in less expensive vials of crack, drug addiction rose and drug-related crimes rose.

2. Drug legalization will reduce drug use.

Proponents argue that legalizing drugs will make them less appealing they will no longer be “forbidden fruit.” However, logic and social statistics suggest that decriminalizing drugs will actually increase drug use.

Those arguing for the legalization of drugs often point to Prohibition as a failed social experiment. But was it? When Prohibition was in effect, alcohol consumption declined by 30 to 50 percent and death from cirrhosis of the liver fell dramatically. One study found that suicides and drug-related arrests also declined by 50 percent. After the repeal of the 18th amendment in 1933, alcoholism rose. So did alcohol-related crimes and accidents. If anything, Prohibition proves the point. Decriminalization increases drug use.

Comparing alcohol and drugs actually strengthens the argument against legalization since many drugs are even more addictive than alcohol. Consider, for example, the difference between alcohol and cocaine. Alcohol has an addiction rate of approximately 10 percent, while cocaine has an addiction rate as high as 75 percent.

Many drugs are actually “gateway drugs” to other drugs. A 1992 article in The Journal of Primary Prevention found that marijuana is essentially a “necessary” condition for the occurrence of cocaine use. Other research shows that involvement with illicit drugs is a developmental phenomenon, age correlates with use, and cigarette and alcohol use

precedes marijuana use.

Dr. Robert DuPont, former head of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, argues that the potential market for legal drugs can be compared to the number of Americans who now use alcohol (140 million persons). If his analysis is correct, then approximately 50 million Americans would eventually use cocaine if it were a legal drug.

But the real question is not, Which is worse: alcohol or drugs? The question is whether we can accept both legalized alcohol and legalized drugs. Legalized alcohol currently leads to 100,000 deaths/year and costs us $99 billion/year. We don't need to legalize drugs too.

3. Legalizing drugs will reduce social costs.

"We are losing the war on drugs," say drug legalization proponents, "so let's cut the costs of drug enforcement by decriminalizing drugs."

Currently the U.S. spends $11 billion/year to combat drug-related crime.If drugs were made legal, some crime-fighting costs might drop but many social costs would certainly increase: other forms of crime (to support habits), drug-related accidents, and welfare costs.

Statistics from states that have decriminalized marijuana demonstrate this concern. In California, within the first six months of decriminalization, arrests for driving under the influence of drugs rose 46 percent for adults and 71.4 percent for juveniles. The use of marijuana doubled in Alaska and Oregon when it was decriminalized in those states.

Crime would certainly increase. Justice Department figures show that approximately one-third of inmates used drugs prior to committing their crimes.

And juvenile crime would no doubt increase as well. A 1990

study published in the Journal of Drug Issues found a strong association between the severity of the crime and the type of substance used the more intoxicating the substance, the more serious the incident.

Meanwhile, worker productivity would decrease and student productivity would decrease.

The Drug Enforcement Administration estimates that drug decriminalization will cost society more than alcohol and tobacco combined, perhaps $140-210 billion a year in lost productivity and job-related accidents.

Government services would no doubt have to be expanded to pay for additional drug education and treatment for those addicted to legal drugs. And child protective services would no doubt have to expand to deal with child abuse. Patrick Murphy, a court-appointed lawyer for 31,000 abused and neglected children in Chicago, says that more than 80 percent of the cases of physical and sexual abuse of children now involve drugs. Legalizing drugs will not reduce these crimes; it would make the problem worse.

And is it accurate to say we are losing the war on drugs? Drug use in this country was on the decline in the 1980s due to a strong anti-drug campaign. Casual cocaine use, for example, dropped from 12 million in 1985 to 6 million in 1991. You don’t win a war by surrender. Legalizing drugs in this country would constitute surrender in the drug war at a time when we have substantial evidence we can win this battle on a number of fronts.

4. Government should not dictate moral policy on drugs.

Libertarians who promote drug legalization value personal freedom. They believe that government should not dictate morals and fear that our civil liberties may be threatened by a tougher policy against drugs.

The true threat to our freedoms comes from the drug cartels in foreign countries, drug lords in this country, and drug dealers in our streets. Legalizing drugs would send the wrong message to society. Those involved in drug use eventually see that drugs ultimately lead to prison or death, so they begin to seek help.

Obviously some people are going to use drugs whether they are legal or illegal. Keeping drugs illegal maintains criminal sanctions that persuade most people their life is best lived without drugs. Legalization, on the other hand, removes the incentive to stay away from drugs and increases drug use.

William Bennett has said, “I didn’t have to become drug czar to be opposed to legalized marijuana. As Secretary of Education I realized that, given the state of American education, the last thing we needed was a policy that made widely available a substance that impairs memory, concentration, and attention span. Why in God’s name foster the use of a drug that makes you stupid?”

Biblical Perspective

Some people may believe that the Bible has little to say about drugs, but this is not so. First, the Bible has a great deal to say about the most common and most abused drug: alcohol. Ephesians 5:18 admonishes Christians not to be drunk with wine. In many places in Scripture drunkenness is called a sin (Deut. 21:20-21, Amos 6:1, 1 Cor.6:9-10, Gal. 5:19-20). The Bible also warns of the dangers of drinking alcohol in Proverbs 20:1, Isaiah 5:11, Habakkuk 2:15-16. If the Bible warns of the danger of alcohol, then by implication it is also warning of the dangers of taking other kinds of drugs.

Second, drugs were an integral part of many ancient near East societies. For example, the pagan cultures surrounding the nation of Israel used drugs as part of their religious ceremonies. Both the Old Testament and New Testament condemn

sorcery and witchcraft. The word translated “sorcery” comes from the Greek word from which we get the English words “pharmacy” and “pharmaceutical.” In ancient time, drugs were prepared by a witch or shaman.

Drugs were used to enter into the spiritual world by inducing an altered state of consciousness that allowed demons to take over the mind of the user. In that day, drug use was tied to sorcery. In our day, many use drugs merely for so-called “recreational” purposes, but we cannot discount the occult connection.

Galatians 5:19-21 says: “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft [which includes the use of drugs]; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” The word witchcraft here is also translated “sorcery” and refers to the use of drugs. The Apostle Paul calls witchcraft that was associated with drug use a sin. The non-medical use of drugs is considered one of the acts of a sinful nature. Using drugs, whether to “get a high” or to tap into the occult, is one of the acts of a sinful nature where users demonstrate their depraved and carnal nature.

The psychic effects of drugs should not be discounted. A questionnaire designed by Charles Tate and sent to users of marijuana documented some disturbing findings. In his article in *Psychology Today* he noted that one fourth of the marijuana users who responded to his questionnaire reported that they were taken over and controlled by an evil person or power during their drug induced experience. And over half of those questioned said they have experienced religious or “spiritual” sensations in which they meet spiritual beings.

Many proponents of the drug culture have linked drug use to

spiritual values. During the 1960s, Timothy Leary and Alan Watts referred to the “religious” and “mystical” experience gained through the use of LSD (along with other drugs) as a prime reason for taking drugs.

No doubt drugs are dangerous, not only to our body but to our spirit. As Christians, we must warn our children and our society of the dangers of drugs.

©1996 Probe Ministries.