

"Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance."

~ Romans 2:4



NEWS
Regeneration
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Looking for Wheat

When a Son or Daughter Says, "I'm Gay."

by Joshua Glaser

Mom, Dad, there's something I need to tell you." Bart was 21, a junior in college, home for winter break. He paused, breathed in. "I'm gay."

It was Christmas Eve. The younger kids were asleep. Bart, his mom and his dad stood in the kitchen. His mother stared at him, mouth open. His father looked past Bart into the living room. Bart looked at the floor, then back up at his parents. In the hour that followed, Bart spilled his whole story.

He'd felt different as long as he could remember. When his friends started noticing girls, he was noticing other guys. For years, he'd tried to change, to be "normal." He'd prayed, begged God in tears to help him. But his attractions didn't change. He tried dating, which is when he'd dated Sara, but the feelings just weren't there. His homosexuality was the real reason he broke up with her. His first year away at school, she was the first person he told. She said she was glad he was finally being true to who he is.

Soon, Bart met Ryan. And though that relationship didn't work out, through Ryan he'd met a whole group of gay students. He finally felt at home, like he fit in. Yes, he still believes in God but he's not so sure anymore about Christianity or the Bible. He's been "out" at college now for three semesters and he's felt happier, more at peace with himself than ever before. He's been dating a guy for the past three months and it's serious. Chad had wanted to come home with him for Christmas, but Bart wasn't ready. He still needed to tell his parents.

The Painful News

This story is not unlike many that we hear from Christian parents. They care deeply for their sons or daughters

and want to help them. The difficult news is we have no magic formula for convincing a wayward son or daughter to return to Christ, and we've never been able to convince someone to walk away from homosexuality if they don't want to. But while parents may not be able to change a child's mind or heart, they can seek to allow Christ to change *their* minds and hearts to align with His as they respond to their sons and daughters.

In this article, I am going to address where many parents, even the best intentioned, stumble unintentionally in their early responses to a son or daughter involved in homosexuality. I am going to offer some suggestions on where parents can focus their attention to help draw their children toward Christ rather than pushing them further away.

Permission to Grieve

Grieving is not just about death, it's about loss. If you are a parent whose child has just told you he or she is homosexual, then you are experiencing a loss—not complete loss, perhaps, like in death, but significant loss nonetheless. Maybe the loss of a shared faith or shared moral values; the loss of knowing your son or daughter as well as you thought you did; the loss of what your relationship used to look like; the loss of the future family you'd dreamed of—a beautiful daughter-in-law married to your son, a loving son-in-law caring for your daughter, grandchildren bursting through the front door at Christmas. Don't take these losses lightly or you may fail to recognize your own grief, and this will impact how you interact with your son or daughter.

Take a look at the five stages of grief: Shock (Denial), Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance. In the early stages, it can be especially difficult to discern if you are responding to your child in love or in an effort to escape

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the pain of grief. Are your daughter's friends really the problem or are you walking in denial? Is this righteous indignation at your son's behavior or anger because you feel powerless to restore life to normal? Accepting your need to grieve and allowing yourself to grieve will help you move from *reacting* to your son or daughter in an attempt to alleviate your own pain to *responding* to your son or daughter with his or her best interest in mind.

Grieve. You have a Savior who Scripture calls "a man of sorrows, well acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). When you are gentle with yourself about your own grief, it can also help you be more sensitive to your son or daughter's grief.

Remembering Your Child's Pain

Let's look again at Bart. The bookends of what he shared are about how he's embraced homosexuality, but much of what he told his parents was about the long, painful years he walked alone with unwanted homosexual desires. (In fact, you can

read between the lines and see that he walked through his own grieving process.) What his parents were hearing and grappling with for the first time, he grappled with on his own for much of his life. So while Bart now feels relatively peaceful about the present and hopeful about the future, his parents suddenly feel the opposite. This disparity of emotion can be particularly troubling for parents.

Of course, as loving parents, they wouldn't ask Bart to bear their pain so they could feel better. But listen to the following comments said by well-meaning parents:

- "How can you say you're happier than you've ever been? You were always such a happy child!"
- "If these are the friends you have at school, you're just going to have to find another school."
- "Do Sara's parents know? They're in our Bible study. She hasn't told them, has she?"
- "Why can't we just go back to the way things were before?"

For Bart, these kinds of words could easily be interpreted like this: *I think it would be best if you went back to bearing shame and fear all by yourself, alone and unsure where to turn.* Quick Bible references usually don't fare much better. "But Bart, God's Word teaches that homosexuality is an abomination," can translate, "Bart, if this is who you think you are, then *you're* an abomination." If a parent misses the process a son or daughter has *been through*, focusing primarily on the current place the son or daughter has *come to*, then the parent is more likely to seem unsafe and uncaring to the child.

Incidentally, if your son or daughter has yet to share this part of his or her story with you, maybe that would be a good place to begin. He or she walked many years with an uninvited and unwanted secret burden. What was that like for him? How did she feel? Who did he turn to? What kept her from coming to you? What led him to come to you now? If you can listen without judgment and without defense, you may open lines of communication that have never existed between you before, and at minimum, you'll get to know your son or daughter better.

Remembering the Wheat in the Weeds

Is there any good about your son or daughter's current choices regarding homosexuality? As difficult as this may seem, there is. And where you can see, acknowledge, and affirm the good, you'll be able to more fully model Christ's

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Please Pray With Us . . .

PRAY FOR:

- The health of Regeneration's founder, **Alan Medinger**. Toward the end of October, he was diagnosed with pneumonia and bacteria was found in his blood. This is in addition to him having leukemia (CCL).
- Please continue to pray the Lord would bring the right people to join our paid and volunteer staff.
- Spiritual strength and protection. As our fall programs get underway and we move forward on other fronts, some staff and team members have experienced assault from the enemy.
- The final weeks of pregnancy and the birth of **Josh and Jamie Glaser's** fourth child, due December 12th.

WE THANK GOD FOR:

- The marvelous beginning to the Northern Virginia and Baltimore *Living Waters* programs, as well as Baltimore's sexual addiction recovery program, *Rescue*.
- The many who joined us on November 1st, for our Northern Virginia dessert celebration, and for the wonderful testimonies shared.
- The churches, individuals and families who give so graciously to Regeneration through their time, money, and prayers.

For more information or in-depth monthly prayer requests,

E-mail info@RegenerationMinistries.org.

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heart toward your son or daughter. And you'll likely lay a firmer foundation on which to truly help your child.

Jesus tells a parable about the Kingdom in Matthew 13:24-29 of a man who sowed good wheat seed in a field. In the same field, an enemy came at night and secretly sowed weeds. Time passed, and eventually as expected, wheat began to appear. But then so did the weeds. Seeing the weeds, the man's servants wanted to go pull them up, but he wouldn't let them: "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

A parent's instinct when responding to a son or daughter's announcement of "I'm gay" may be like the servants in the parable—to rush in and uproot that which the enemy has planted. A mother and father may scramble to get their child some help to overcome homosexuality, may order yet another book from Exodus for him to read (even though he hasn't touched the last three), or may pray and pray for God to change his sexual desires without ever asking God how He would have them pray.

Jesus is not scrambling. He is not rushed. Are there weeds in your child's life? Yes. Probably many more than you can see. Certainly more than just homosexuality. But just like the owner of the field, the weeds do not hold Jesus' attention as much as the wheat. We need Jesus' heart and mind here. He sowed good in your son or daughter's life—"wheat" that perhaps is just now coming into view. Does He approve of homosexuality? No. In fact, even less than you do. But the wheat is Jesus' primary concern, and even though it seems the weeds are overtaking the field, perhaps He would ask you not to try to pull up the weeds just yet. Will you let Him show you what He sees?

Recognizing the Wheat

What is the wheat in all of this? Where do we find it? Let me suggest three places to begin looking.

First, look at the disclosure itself. Bart hid this part of his life for at least a decade from two of the most significant people in his life—his mom and dad. Now he's sharing it. If your gay son or daughter has shared this with you, he or she has overcome a huge hurdle that once kept you at a distance. And though you may not approve of his homosexual choices, you can approve of his courage and willingness to finally talk to you. You can affirm that she valued your relationship enough to entrust this to you. He or she has come near to you. This is wheat.

What would it do for your son to have his dad wrap his arms around him and say, "I know that wasn't easy, son, and I'm so glad you told us. That took courage, and I'm proud of you." This is not an endorsement of his homosexuality but an affirmation of his courage, his love for you and your love for him.

Second, look near the weeds. In particular, look near the weeds that seem to be bringing your son or daughter the most joy and peace right now. If the joy and peace is authentic, my guess is there's wheat nearby. Bart's now surrounded by a group of friends with whom he is being honest. And they're affirming him. This may seem like weeds, but look again. There is wheat, too.

For one, Bart is done hiding in darkness. Fear and shame aren't holding him back from moving toward others like they once did. We were all made for the light and this feels more like light to Bart than he's yet experienced. Also, Bart isn't trying to go through life alone anymore. It was God who said, "It's not good for man to be alone." We were all made for community, and those deep places inside are meant to come into real relationships. This may be the most vulnerable Bart's ever been in a community and subsequently the most loved he's ever felt. These things are wheat.

What would it do for Bart to hear his parents respond with, "It brings me such sadness to imagine you carrying that burden alone for so many years. I'm glad you're talking to others about it now, being vulnerable and experiencing acceptance."

Incidentally, feelings like relief, joy, peace, freedom—these suggest wheat to me, not weeds. I wonder if the euphoria sons and daughters experience when they "come out" has

For additional reading on responding to a gay loved one:

When Homosexuality Hits Home by Joe Dallas
Someone I Love Is Gay by Bob Davies and Anita Worthen
Both available through ExodusBooks.org

Other helpful resources:
Parents in Pain by John White
Where Does a Mother Go to Resign? by Barbara Johnson

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less to do with finally embracing themselves as homosexual and more to do with finally embracing themselves as men and women who are made for light, community, honesty, and acceptance. And to some degree, finding these. These things feel good because God has made us to walk in them. Acknowledging one's need for these, that too is wheat.

Third, ask Jesus, the Sower of the seed, for eyes to see beyond the weeds. Seeing beyond a son or daughter's homosexuality can be difficult, especially when he or she is unrepentant. This was a trouble spot for the Pharisees. When someone transgressed the law, that's what they saw.

They criticized Jesus when He didn't seem to see what they saw. Take the prostitute who washed Jesus' feet with her tears in Luke 7. The Pharisee saw her sin, and defined her accordingly. Not so with Jesus. Jesus saw her. And Jesus refuses to define your son or daughter as 'gay' or 'lesbian'.

Think about this: Although the weeds were sown by an enemy, they only grew because Someone had sown wheat there and cared for it so the wheat would grow. So if for now, God seems unconcerned with removing your son or daughter's homosexuality, perhaps it is because He is focused on protecting the wheat. Ask Him how you can do the same. If for now homosexuality seems to be growing more a part of your son or daughter's life, perhaps it is because He is watering and tending the field for the sake of the wheat. Ask Him how you can help.

Seek Jesus that your priorities for your child will match His priorities. There is a time to pull weeds, and maybe that time is now. But remember for Jesus, the time is not determined by when the weeds appear, it's determined by when the wheat is ready. Jesus knows when that is. ■

You are invited
to a night of Chamber Music
Sunday, November 16, 2008
4 p.m. ♦ Truro Church
10520 Main Street, Fairfax, Virginia 22030
703-273-1300
A Concert to Benefit Regeneration Ministries
Light refreshments and desserts to follow.

FINANCIAL NEWS

For the second year in a row, Regeneration ended its fiscal year (September 30) in the black. However, contributions from fiscal year 2007 to 2008 dropped \$20,000 or 5%, and our reserve fund was largely depleted. So far, this has not hindered ongoing ministry, but as we take steps to grow this winter (adding at least one new part-time staff member), we need your help.

As we approach the end of the calendar year, please remember us in your year-end giving. Every dollar helps as we seek to move into the New Year on solid financial footing, ready to continue and expand our outreach to men and women seeking freedom from sexual sin and brokenness. We are grateful for your ongoing financial support and thank you for giving to Regeneration however the Lord leads you.

Regeneration Is . . .

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