

Homosexuality: What Do Parents Do When They Discover Their Child Is Involved?

By Barbara Johnson

The bundle of homosexual magazines stuffed under our 19-year-old son's bed hit me like a sledge hammer. Without the least hint of warning, shattered were our dreams, pride, "super-spirituality," and us.

It all seemed unreal. How could homosexuality touch the child of Christians? I hadn't even known what a homosexual was until my 20's. And only two months before our confrontation with our son, I'd heard that a youth advisor at a local camp was a homosexual. "I'd rather die than have that happen!" I announced rather loudly to the family. Now our son was involved with another boy his age!

Suddenly, we felt incomplete, uncomprehending, shock, mingled with confused disbelief. We didn't realize then that homosexuality wasn't something you could turn off like a light switch. And, although we tried to convey our love for our son, our overreaction came across as condemnation. You're not my mother! I never want to see you again!" he said.

Two days later, our son disappeared for more than eight months. He left us to piece together our fragmented lives, haunted by the memories of the child we knew before and the child we had unexpectedly uncovered.

We've learned firsthand that Christians are not immune to homosexuality. We've also learned that we are not the sole survivors but part of a growing minority of shattered parents in the process of being healed by God.

God is able to work beauty out of the ugliness of sin, even out of homosexuality. But it takes time and the power of prayer to surrender to God what somehow seems too painful to bear.

Terminally-ill patients often struggle with denial, anger, and depression before they can accept their own approaching death. The reactions of a parent whose child has labeled himself a homosexual often parallel these initial traumatic reactions. But the emotional loss of a child to homosexuality is more far-reaching. It affects one with physical symptoms of anxiety—chest pains, nausea, etc.

It becomes a living grief with an uncertain end, a daily shouldering of self-blame that only God can alleviate, and the nightly drum beat of "why our child?"

Those first few months after we learned about our son, I lost 30 pounds. I could hardly get up in the morning and went into a severe depression.

I wrote reams of letters asking everyone from Billy Graham to Oral Roberts why a Christian boy could get involved. I got no positive answers. No one quite knew what to say.

That's when I created my "joy box," a shoe box stuffed with any inspirational Scriptures, poems, stories and letters I could find. Within easy reach on my kitchen counter, I could grab into that box for a dose of praise and hope whenever the negatives seemed to outweigh the positives.

At first, there didn't seem to be anyone else in the whole world who was going through what we were suffering. "Where are all the other suffering mothers, Lord?" I asked. "There must be one! Just one to help me see it's possible for this wound to heal!"

God answered my prayers in the form of a nearby ministry. Attending "Spatula" meetings (so named because parents have to peel themselves off the emotional ceiling when they first learn of their child's homosexuality) helped my husband and me realize we were not alone.

And having as a friend another mother going through the same situation is invaluable in gaining strength.

Realizing that others share our problems helped greatly, but it hasn't completely stilled the voice of inner questioning: "Why can a Christian become involved? Lord I used my best recipe in raising my kids . . . which ingredient went wrong? Was it my fault? My husband's? Am I being punished for something I did wrong?"

Answers aren't simplistic, nor are they easy to digest, but one answer comes through loud and clear: If your child is a Christian, then he is God's, not yours.

I had been pretending to myself that my son was gone on a long trip and that he would be returning soon. Now God was showing me I had to surrender him

totally, even if that meant I would never see him again, or that he would never be delivered from homosexuality.

Praise is the active key to that door or surrender which leads to healing. How hard it is to praise the Lord for something so devastating to your child's personality and yours!

Many times I've forced myself to crank out an "I don't feel like praising You for it but thank You anyway Lord!" When you learn to praise God in the midst of the situation, you begin to trust and believe He will bring something very special out of it.

"I wasn't a Christian before I learned my 17-year-old son was a homosexual," recounts Dorothy, one of my "Spatula" friends. "But he and his sister have been Christians for four years and had been praying diligently for the salvation of my husband and me.

"It wasn't until we underwent this ordeal that I accepted Christ as Savior through a relative of mine. Little did I know that God would answer my son's prayer through this means! But our family has changed and is really growing. It's wonderful when we look beyond the problems to see how God is bringing beauty out of such an ugly sin."

God wants us to get "unkinked" so love can flow through us to the other people who are hurting. It keeps us from freezing up inside from bitterness and hurt.

Many former practicing homosexuals say, "I felt guilty. I despised myself and lived in terror of the day when everyone I loved would despise me as, one by one, my family and friends learned the truth." Homosexuality is usually a secret, silent struggle which creates great loneliness and inner turmoil.

If your child is into this, he has probably suffered greatly. And he is still your child, no matter what. More than ever, he needs that accepting, unconditional love from you that God can keep you demonstrating. While God hates the sin, He loves sinners.

We have seen answers to prayer with our own son. After disappearing for almost a year, he has returned, and a cautious yet loving relationship has been resumed. Through God's "special filter," we know the Lord is quietly working in his life. Homosexuality is too complex and its causes too diversified for pat solutions. But we continue to pray, surrender, and praise.

Homosexuality is sin. But, like any other sin, Christ paid its price on the cross. The "once gay, always gay" philosophy is a myth that gay activists would like us to believe. But there is a way out of homosexuality. His name is Jesus!

When Homosexuality Hits Home

1. *Stop blaming yourself!* You cannot take blame for the choice your child has made. Remove self-pity by realizing there is no one factor identified as the root cause of homosexuality.
2. *Don't try to give advice.* Rather than play the counselor-psychologist role, unconditionally love and accept your child through his/her struggles with identity.
3. *Start a "Joy Box."* Include inspirational verses and poems to help lighten those days you feel the fog of depression setting in.
4. *Keep communication channels open with your child.* Even if he's left home, or if you've blown your initial confrontation, reach out to him in love, admitting you made a mistake in overreacting.
5. *Concentrate on making your home a warm, loving place for the rest of your family.*
6. *Get involved in a praise-centered church.* Get involved in a prayer cell, in hobbies, tape ministries, or helping others through their suffering.
7. *Praise the Lord continually in the midst of the situation.* Believe He knows the end result and will bring good out of it.
8. *Find a friend with whom you can share, laugh, and cry.* The common strength you draw from friends is invaluable.
9. *Uplift your child continually in prayer.* Remember that God is in charge.
10. *Hang a big spatula in a prominent place.* This is to remind you that your hand, and God's are the only ones which can pull you off the emotional ceiling of self-pity.

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