

1. TRUE CHRISTIAN FRIENDSHIP

SERVANT PREPARATION:

VERSE & REFERENCES: Guard your heart, for out of it spring issues of life”
(Proverbs 4:23)

Reference: I kissed Dating Goodbye, by Joshua Harris

LESSON PREPARATION

OBJECTIVES :

The objective of this lesson is to learn the definition of true friendship, what kinds of things to look for in a friend, and to be able to evaluate what a true friend is and what a friend is not.

INTRODUCTION: As proverbs 4:23 says, a true friend is someone I can entrust my heart to. In order to know who to entrust my heart to, I need to have set Godly criteria for establishing and keeping friendships.

Friendship is a similar concept to marriage. A true friend is indeed hard to find, and it is the most important decision we will ever make after choosing a spouse for marriage. Choosing a spouse for marriage is the most important decision we will ever make in life. Choosing friends is second.

Friends can deeply influence us, they either can guide us towards God or away from God. They influence our thinking, our behavior, our spirituality, our career, our ambition, our deepest thoughts, and our way of life in general. Thus, knowing how to choose a true friend and being able to identify true friends is a crucial aspect of life and requires much godly wisdom.

We note that since we are Christians, choosing Orthodox Christian friends is absolutely a critical aspect of our life, since Orthodox Christians have the same foundation and common spiritual goals as we do. They go through the same things we do, their thinking about God is similar, and their way of life is generally similar. Whether we know it or not, we generally have much more things in common with a Christian as opposed to a non-Christian, and even more in common with an Orthodox Christian, since our belief structure and foundation is the same.

LESSON BODY:

Everyone has friends of some kind. Some have many friends while others have few. Some have good friends while others have bad friends. All people, especially Christians, need to stop and consider the importance of friends and the impact those friends have on one's life.

Everyone has a Need for Friends

Since man was created a social being (Gen. 2:18), he needs the close association of others. As humans, we cannot live happy or meaningful lives to ourselves. We need to be with other people. Romans 14:7 states, "For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself."

We need the love our friends have for us. Life is more pleasant when we have those who care about us and our welfare. We need to know there are those who love us no matter what may come our way or theirs. "A friend loves at all times" (Prov. 17:17).

Friends satisfy many needs -- the need for someone to share our joy and happiness (Rom. 12:15); the need for someone to cheer us in times of sadness (Prov. 27:9); and the need to help us relax and recreate from the routine and pressures of life. Actually, there are an infinite number of reasons why we need friends.

What is a Friend?

The dictionary defines a friend as "a person who has a real liking for and confidence in another person." W.E. Vine, in his *Expository Dictionary of NT Words*, says it is one who is "loved, dear."

The term "friendship" is found only once in the New Testament (Jas. 4:4). It comes from the Greek word *philia* which is akin to *philos* which is translated "love." Vine suggests it includes the idea of "loving as well as being loved."

The Bible contains examples of friendship which illustrate this idea. Its most classic example is that of the friendship of David and Jonathan. "Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the

soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Sam. 18:1). Their love for and confidence in one another is a lesson all who would be and have friends should learn. The apostle Paul and Timothy developed a liking for and a confidence in one another. "I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also" (2 Tim. 1:3-5).

Friendship means the same today. Our close friends are those whom we love and are dear to us. They are those in whom we have confidence that they hold us dear.

Sadly, some whom we think are our friends are not good friends. For one to be a good friend he must not only be good to us but also good for us. We need to be careful in choosing only those friends that are good for us. We must not choose a friend like Jonadab who led his friend Amnon, David's son, astray (2 Sam. 13:1-14).

Some Guidelines for Choosing Friends

In order to choose friends wisely, there are certain principles we must employ. We must begin by applying the principle stated by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:33 -- "Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.'"

We must then realize it is better to have a few friends, even just one, who will be the right kind of friends than a multitude of the kind who could cause us to lose our souls (Matt. 16:26).

We must choose friends who will be good examples to us and others. In that light, we must choose friends who have these fundamental:

- Have good morals (1 Cor. 15:33)
- Are modest (1 Tim. 2:9)
- Abstain from drinking alcohol (1 Pet. 4:3)
- Can bridle their tongues (Jas. 1:26)
- Are honest (Luke 8:15)
- Are law-abiding (Rom. 13:1-7)

We must select as friends those who respect God and things spiritual -- those who regard spiritual things as more important than material things. We must not be deceived into thinking that we can choose otherwise and not be affected.

Friends are priceless. "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24). No amount of money could be enough to replace true friends. We can rejoice in their faithfulness and delight in being around them. We should thank God daily for the friends that we have and pray that the day will never come when we do not have friends.

When it comes to choosing friends, let us all be friends of Jesus (John 15:14).

What is True Friendship According to the Bible?

Answer: The Lord Jesus Christ gave us the definition of a true friend: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:13-15). Jesus is the pure example of a true friend, for He laid down His life for His "friends."

There is an example of true friendship between David and Saul's son Jonathan, who, in spite of his father Saul's pursuit of David and attempts to kill him, stood by his friend. You will find that story in 1 Samuel chapter 18 through chapter 20. Some pertinent passages are 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:4-7, 20:11-17, 41-42.

Proverbs is another good source of wisdom regarding friends. "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17). "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). The issue here is that in order have a friend, one must be a friend. "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses" (Proverbs 27:6). "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17).

The principle of friendship is also found in Amos. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Friends are of like mind. The truth that comes from all of this is a friendship is a relationship that is entered into by individuals, and it is only as good or as close as those individuals choose to make it. Someone has said that if you can count your true friends on the fingers of one hand, you are blessed. A friend is one whom you can be yourself with and never fear that he or she will judge you. A friend is someone that you can confide in with complete trust. A friend is someone you respect and that respects you, not based upon worthiness but based upon a likeness of mind.

Finally, the real definition of a true friend comes from the Apostle Paul: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7-8). "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). Now, that is true friendship!

Here are some additional higher level traits of true Christian friends:

5 Traits of True Christian Friends

So, what does a true Christian friendship look like? Let's break it down into traits that are easy to identify.

1. Christian Friends Love Sacrificially

John 15:13

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus is the finest example of a true Christian friend. His love for us is sacrificial, never selfish. He demonstrated it not only through his miracles of healing, but more fully through the humble service of washing the disciples' feet, and then ultimately, when He laid down his life on the cross. If we choose our friends based only on what they have to offer, we'll rarely discover the blessings of a genuine friendship. Philippians 2:3 says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." By valuing your friend's needs above your own, you'll be on your way to loving like Jesus. In the process, you'll likely gain a true friend.

2. Christian Friends Accept Unconditionally

Proverbs 17:17

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

We discover the best of friendships with brothers and sisters who know and accept our weaknesses and imperfections.

If we're easily offended or hold on to bitterness, we'll have a hard time making friends. No one is perfect. We all make mistakes now and then. If we take a truthful look at ourselves, we'll admit that we bear some of the blame when things go wrong in a friendship. A good friend is quick to ask forgiveness and ready to be forgiving. Forgiveness is a crucial attribute of a true friend.

3. Christian Friends Trust Completely

Proverbs 18:24

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

This proverb reveals that a true Christian friend is trustworthy, indeed, but emphasizes a second important truth as well. We should only expect to share complete trust with a few loyal friends. Trusting too easily can lead to ruin, so be careful about putting your confidence in a mere

companion. Over time our true Christian friends will prove their trustworthiness by sticking closer than a brother or sister.

4. Christian Friends Keep Healthy Boundaries

1 Corinthians 13:4

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy ...

If you feel smothered in a friendship, something is wrong. Likewise, if you feel used or abused, something is amiss. Recognizing what's best for someone and giving that person space are signs of a healthy relationship. We should never let a friend come between us and our church, our parents, our Godly morality, or Godly living. A true Christian friend will wisely avoid intruding and recognize your need to maintain other relationships.

5. Christian Friends Give Mutual Edification

Proverbs 27:6

Wounds from a friend can be trusted ...

True Christian friends will build each other up emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Friends like to be together simply because it *feels good*. We receive strength, encouragement, and love. We talk, we cry, we listen. But at times we also have to say the difficult things our dearest friend needs to hear. Yet, because of the shared trust and acceptance, we are the one person who can impact our friend's heart, for we know how to deliver the hard message with truth and grace. I believe this is what Proverbs 27:17 means when it says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

These five traits will show you areas that may need a little work in your effort to build stronger friendships. But if you don't have lots of close friends, don't be too hard on yourself. Remember, true Christian friendships are rare treasures. They take time to nurture, but in the process we grow more Christlike.

When it comes to choosing friends, let us all be friends of Jesus (John 15:14).

CONCLUSION: Choosing appropriate Christian friends is the most important decision we will ever make after marriage. We must choose friends wisely and seek God's guidance in choosing them. We always need to remind ourselves of examples of good friends and bad friends in the Bible. Examples of good friends are David and Jonathan, and St. Paul and Timothy. Jonathan put his friendship to David above his relationship with his father King Saul because Saul was an ungodly man. Examples of bad friends like Jonadab who led his friend Amnon, David's son, astray (2 Sam. 13:1-14). As Orthodox Christians, we must use Biblical criteria in making friends and in not

making friends! The Bible is our reference frame and user's manual for choosing friends. In order to choose Godly friends, we ourselves must be Godly and must have God as our number one priority in life. Christ must be our best friend, and only Him! It is only then that we can choose Godly friend. Recall the beautiful verse in Exodus 33:11, "God spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend."

VERSE TO REMEMBER: "God spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend" (Exodus 33:11).

2. FRIENDSHIP WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX

SERVANT PREPARATION:

VERSE & REFERENCES: "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own" (1 Corinthians 6:19)

Reference: "I Kissed Dating Goodbye" by Joshua Harris.

LESSON PREPARATION

OBJECTIVES: The objective of this lesson is to understand how to have a proper and Godly friendship with a member of the opposite sex. We must rely on Jesus Christ to help us establish proper and healthy relationships with the opposite sex. Our life must be grounded in Christ, for only through Christ, will be able to guard our heart, mind, and actions.

INTRODUCTION: A great myth and demonic deception in any relationship, especially in a friendship involving the opposite sex is that "I am in control" or "I can control my emotions and actions at any time" or "I can stop what I am doing at any time." This is indeed a huge deception, since if we are not careful, there reaches a certain point where we cannot control our bodily desires and thoughts. Part of this is human nature and a large part is the influence of the devil and demonic forces at work. As St. James says in James 1:14-15, "But each one is

tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

Thus, we must learn to have pure and Godly friendships with the opposite sex so that we can all grow up to be full mature in Christ and be Christlike.

LESSON BODY:

There are 5 principles to establishing and maintaining a Godly friendship of the opposite sex.

1. **Develop a serious spiritual life and regular prayer life** – Having a strong relationship with God keeps us in balance and helps us to make wise and proper decisions. A close relationship with Jesus Christ helps curb our emotions and lessens our needs for others. Our needs become fulfilled in Christ and Christ keeps our emotions and actions in check. We need a daily prayer life to fight off temptation and the thoughts that the devil tries to implant in us. Read the Bible regularly, and find stories and verses in the Bible that talk about purity to strengthen you. A relationship with Christ gives us a much needed healthy self-esteem that enables us to be independent and not seeking love, approval, or emotional or physical satisfaction from others.
2. **Define clear boundaries between you and the other person** – Boundaries are very important when it comes to friendships. Always make sure to maintain proper boundaries between you and the other person. This includes minimizing one on one communication in all forms, including phones, text, or face to face one on one meetings. Such one on one meetings stir emotions, which can then be very hard to control, and they often lead to dating. Always try to talk to the other gender in groups, which is a much healthier form of communication. Avoid physical contact such as hugs, being touchy-feely, getting close, etc... These stir emotions. Always check yourself on boundaries by talking to your father of confession and seeking spiritual counsel from parents and elders. Boundaries are key in friendships with the other gender. If you see that boundaries cannot be properly maintained by either side, end the friendship immediately before disaster occurs. You need to be sharp and clear.
3. **Never trust your ability for self-control**– Many people say, “I can control my emotions. I can end things at any time.” This is the biggest deception the devil has to offer is that he makes you think you are in charge, you can control any situation at hand. This is just

simply a falsehood. The fact is, it is extremely difficult if not impossible to control emotions and thoughts at a young age or at any age when people meet together one-on-one. The intentions may be good, but the results are often disastrous. The emotional and physical needs of the body are extremely difficult to control, especially at a young age or when single.

4. **View the other person as a brother or sister** – Learn how to love others as brothers and sisters by viewing the other person in the image of God. Be holy and unselfish. Do not focus on your needs, but rather focus on serving others. Focusing on my needs often leads to emotional and physical feelings. Focus on serving others and the needs of others. St. Paul says “esteem others better than yourself.” That is, treat people better than you treat yourself and consider the needs of others more important than yours. The best way to fight the devil is through Godly love and sincere service. Treat each other as brother and sister.

5. **Keep busy serving and glorifying God** - One of the best ways to fight off temptation is to keep your mind focused on important things. Stay busy! Never allow time for boredom or stagnation because this is when the devil takes charge. Stay busy with school, sports, church service, reading the Bible, reading spiritual books, prayer, church activities, etc... Never let your mind wander. Minimize watching television or playing video games, surfing the internet, or texting. This is a huge waste of time that often leads to sin. The prophet David is a great example of what can happen when we waste time and have nothing to do. This free time of his led his adultery with Bathsheba and the murdering of her husband. When we sit around with nothing to do, this ultimately leads to sin. Stay busy!

There are 5 deceptions that we must be fully aware of:

1. **The deception that I am in control** – We talked about this deception above. The fact is that we are never in control. View yourself as emotionally and spiritually weak and seek God’s help always!

2. **The deception that he/she needs me** – Sometimes we befriend people for the wrong reasons. We feel that they are in great need and I am the one that can rescue them. They may need help in school, in church, or whatever. We have to be careful here. If we do not keep clear and sharp boundaries, emotions and actions can get out of control. It is quite often that we start out with good intentions but end in disasters. Serve others according to Godly principles and boundaries that we have set above. Never view yourself as the savior or rescuer of others. It is a deception. Praying for others is often more powerful than direct action. Seek counsel from your father of confession and trusted church alders always in these situations.

3. **The deception of good intentions** - Many times I have good intentions in the beginning of a friendship but if I do not keep clear boundaries, the results can be disastrous. Do not befriend someone for the purpose of good intentions. Sometimes people say that “they don’t have any other friends” so I became their friend. Befriend people in the right context, always keep your communication on the group level for this is the least stressful and least tense form of communication. When people are one on one, they begin to have expectations of one other. They feel that things have to advance somehow and this is what leads to emotional and physical relationships. One on one encounters lead to raised expectation and tension. Please avoid it at all costs. Group interaction does not come with any expectations or tension. It does not have a focus on you and one particular individual. It is the healthiest form of boy-girl friendship.

4. **The deception that everyone is doing it** - People love to rationalize. They figure that if everyone else is dating, then why should I be deprived of it? They suddenly feel like a victim. This is yet another one of the great deceptions of the devil: victimology. The devil always wants to make us feel like we are deprived, we are mistreated, life is unfair, and that we are victims. Just because everyone is doing it at school and in the world doesn’t make it right. The path to Christ is a narrow path not a wide path. The Christian must distinguish himself/herself from the world, not be a conformer and follower of the world. St. Paul says “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2). Christ says that “narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:14).

5. **The deception of I am only human and I have needs** – This deception is a self-seeking purely selfish notion of the world. It's the view that it's all about me. My needs, my wants, my desires. It is a statement that I completely lack any kind of self-control and that I function on instincts, like an animal. The fact is that, in Christ, we have the will and desire for tremendous self-control, unlimited love, and unlimited service and unselfishness. We must never think that I'm only human and I need love, or I need sex, or I need a boyfriend, or a girlfriend. We are not animals! We were created in the image and likeness of God.

There are serious consequences to disobeying God's laws and falling into sin, especially sins involving loss of virginity and sins related to loss of purity.

1. **Deep guilt and Regret** – As a result in living for the moment, we can have a lifelong feeling of guilt and regret for our actions that become very difficult to overcome. Lives are ruined, reputations are scarred, futures are ruined, and one lives with a deep sense of guilt and regret that is very difficult to overcome. The healing process is very long.

2. **Loss of Self-Esteem** – When people fall into sins of impurity, they get feeling of very low self-worth and low self-esteem that can haunt a person for life. A healthy self-esteem is so vital for one to do well in school, establish healthy relationships with others, have a successful marriage, have a strong relationship with God, and to have a successful career.

3. **Feelings of Rejection** – Sins of impurity can lead to feelings of rejection of ones self and rejection by others, such a rejection by peers, elders, or even parents. It strains relationships with loved ones and family members. A strain that is very difficult to recover from.

CONCLUSION: It is ever so important to maintain an appropriate, Godly relationship with a member of the opposite sex. Never trust your emotions or self-control. It is important to develop a deep relationship with Christ so he can help us with this fierce spiritual warfare. It is a war and will lose badly if Christ is not in our lives. He alone is the one that gives us the spiritual armor we need to fight the devil in this battle of purity. A strong relationship with Christ will

lead to wiser decisions, better self-control, unselfish behavior, loving people as the image and likeness of God, and serving God for His glory.

VERSE TO REMEMBER: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:10-13).

3 RECOGNIZING THE NEGATIVE TENDENCIES TO DATING

SERVANT PREPARATION:

VERSE & REFERENCES: The main reference for this lesson is the book by Joshua Harris titled “I kissed dating goodbye”.

Verse: This is love: not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since god so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:10-11)

LESSON PREPARATION

OBJECTIVES

Lesson Objective: The objectives of the next two lessons is to learn that there is no benefit from dating and that dating is harmful to our spiritual, physical, and emotional life as well as harmful to our future. As we will see in the next two lessons, dating serves no useful purpose, but it is rather based on my selfish emotional and physical needs. We must learn to think of God’s will first for our life and the needs of others before ours. If we have this mindset, we will never have the desire to date.

LESSON BODY: In the previous lesson, we gave 5 guiding principles of having a Godly friendship with the opposite sex. When these principles are broken and the deceptions kick in, the next natural step in such friendships is to date. Dating is basically a result of selfishness. It results from a deep desire to fulfill my emotional and physical needs. When our emotional and physical needs are stirred up, we will have the desire to date and hence satisfy these needs, regardless of the cost.

When Christ is on control of our life, we will have the desire to please Him, and these emotional and physical needs will be kept under the right control. We will esteem others better than ourselves, not be selfish, and think in a more mature and Christ like way. There are three guiding principles that help us think in a Christlike manner.

1. Waiting until I am ready for commitment before pursuing romance is just one example of letting Christ's love control my relationships with the opposite sex. We must always remember that the joy of intimacy is the reward of commitment. As a teenager, I am in no way ready for any kind of commitment that leads a permanent and lasting relationship with the opposite sex that will lead to marriage.
2. The way we love others should constantly grow and deepen in its knowledge and insight. And when our love grows in knowledge, we can more readily discern what is best in our lives.
3. If we love Christ, then we will have a deep desire to be pure physically, emotionally, and spiritually. God wants us to pursue purity and blamelessness in our motives, our minds, and our emotions. We do this by seeking God's will in our life.

Dating in and of itself isn't the cause of the problems we see in relationships. Sinful and selfish people are the cause of sinful and selfish relationships – it is our wrong attitudes and values that make for defective dating. We are a culture that celebrates self-centeredness and we have the “do whatever feels good mentality.” This is the big problem with dating and this is what leads to sin.

It is for these reasons that the concept of dating itself is flawed and defective. It really serves no good purpose. Good intentions always fail, especially when we put ourselves in one-on-one encounters that lead to many temptations and massive pressures.

The following 7 horrible habits to highly defective dating are very common and essentially certain to occur in most dating relationships. We need to be aware of these 7 horrible habits as teenagers.

1. **Dating tends to skip the friendship stage of a relationship** - One on one dating has the tendency to move a guy and girl beyond friendship and toward romance too quickly.

Example: Jack met Libby at a church sponsored retreat. Libby was a friendly girl with a reputation for taking her relationship with God seriously. Jack and Libby chatted during the retreat and seemed to hit it off. Jack wasn't interested in an intense relationship, but he wanted to get to know Libby better. Two days after the retreat, he called her up and asked if she'd like to go to a movie the next weekend. She said yes. Did Jack make the right move? Well, he did in terms of getting a date, but if he really wanted to build a friendship, he more than likely struck out.

One on one dating has the tendency to move a guy and girl beyond friendship too quickly. Have you ever known someone who worried about dating a longtime friend? If you have, you probably that person say something like this: "He asked me out, but I'm afraid that if we actually start dating, it will change our friendship." What is this person really saying? People who make statements like that, whether they realize it or not, recognize that **dating encourages romantic expectations**.

In a true friendship, you don't feel pressured, by knowing that you "like" the other person or that he or she "likes" you back. You can be yourself and do things together as in a group without expectations or pressure!

C.S. Lewis described friendship as two people walking side by side toward a common goal. Their mutual interest brings them together. Jack skipped this commonality stage by asking Libby out on a typical, no-brainer, dinner-and-movie date where their "coupleness" was the focus.

In dating, romantic attraction is often the cornerstone of the relationship. The premise of dating is "I'm attracted to you; therefore let's get to know each other." The premise of friendship, on the other hand, is "We're interested in the same things, let's enjoy these common interests together in a group setting and in a Godly way." If romantic interest develops later at a stage in life when we are ready for commitment and marriage, this will be an added bonus.

Intimacy without commitment is defrauding. Intimacy without friendship is superficial. A relationship based solely on physical attraction and romantic feelings will last only as long as the feelings last.

2.

Dating often mistakes

a physical relationship for love - When we consider that our culture as a whole regards the words love and sex as interchangeable, we shouldn't be surprised that many dating relationships mistake physical attraction and sexual intimacy for true love. Sadly, this mindset is in so many people, including Christians!

Example: Dave and Heidi did not intend to kiss and get physical on their first date. Really. Dave doesn't have "only one thing on his mind" and Heidi "isn't that kind of girl." It just happened. They had gone to a concert together and afterward watched a video at Heidi's house. During the movie, Heidi made a joke about Dave's attempt at dancing ring the concert. He started tickling her. Their playful wrestling suddenly stopped when they found themselves staring into each other's eyes as Dave was leaning over her on the living room floor. They kissed. It was like something out of a movie. It felt so right.

It may have felt right, but the early introduction of physical affection into their relationship added confusion. Dave and Heidi really hadn't gotten to know each other, but suddenly they felt close. As the relationship progressed, they found it difficult to remain objective. Whenever they would try to evaluate the merits of their relationship, they would immediately picture the intimacy and passion of their physical relationship. It's so obvious we love each other, Heidi thought. But did they? Just because they are physically drawn to each other does NOT mean that the two are right for each other. A physical relationship does not equal love!

When we examine the progression of most relationships, we can clearly see how dating can encourage this substitution. Since dating is most often not a pursuit of marriage, many dating relationships begin with physical attraction. **The underlying attitude is that a person's primary value comes from the way he or she looks!** Even before there is physical contact, the physical and sexual aspect of the relationship takes priority.

Next, such a relationship as that of Dave and Heidi steamrolls toward intimacy. Since dating doesn't require marriage, the two people involved allow the needs and passions of the moment to take center stage. The couple do not look at each other as possible life partners nor do they weight the responsibility of marriage. Instead, they focus on the demands of the present. And with that mindset, the couple's physical relationship can easily become the focus.

Very sadly, many couples gauge the seriousness of their relationship by the level of their physical involvement. Two people who date each other want to feel that they are and

they can special to each other, and that they can concretely express this through physical intimacy means physical involvement.

The main message here is that focusing on the physical is plainly sinful. God demands sexual purity from us. And He does this because He is holy. He also does it for our own good. Physical involvement can distort two people's perspective about of each other and lead to unwise choices. God also knows that we will carry the memories of our past physical involvements into marriage. He doesn't want us to live with guilt and regret.

Physical involvement can make two people feel close. But if people deeply examined the focus of their dating relationship, they would discover that all that they have in common is lust!

3.

Dating often isolates a

couple from other vital relationships – By its very definition, dating is about two people focusing on each other. Unfortunately, in most cases, the rest of the world fades into the background, like family, other friends, school, church, our spiritual life, etc...

Example: While Gary and Jenny were dating, they didn't need anyone else. Since it meant spending time with Jenny, Gary had no problem giving up Youth fun night, church retreats, and Bible study. Jenny didn't think twice about talking to her friends and family now that she was dating Gary. Nor did she realize that when she did talk to them, she was always distracted in thinking about Gary all the time. Without intending to, Jenny was cutting herself off from other important relationships with her friends and family, and God. When Gary and Jenny stopped dating, they were surprised to find their other friendships in disrepair. It's not that their other friends didn't like them; it's just that they hardly knew the Gary and Jenny anymore. Neither had invested any time or effort into maintaining these friendships while they concentrated on their dating relationship.

In a relationship that is moving towards marriage, giving the relationship primary attention is not wrong. To make a wise choice about marrying someone, it's important to focus on getting to know that person well. But even in mature and serious relationships heading towards marriage, it is not wise to isolate yourself from others. **When we allow one relationship to crowd out others, we lose perspective.** In Proverbs 15:22, we read "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors, they succeed." If we make our decisions about life based solely on the influence of one relationship, we will most probably make very poor judgments.

Of course, we can make this mistake in any number of relationships, but we face this problem more often in dating relationships because these relationships involve our hearts and emotions. You put yourself in a precarious position if you isolate yourself from people who love and support you because you dive wholeheartedly into a romantic relationship not grounded and leading to marriage. An author once wrote, “unless a man is prepared to ask a woman to be his wife, what right does he have to claim her exclusive attention? Unless she has been asked to marry him, would a sensible woman promise any man her exclusive attention?” So many people end their dating relationships and then find their ties to friends, family members, and God severed.

4. **Dating can distract teenagers and young adults from their primary responsibility of preparing for the future** – One of the saddest tendencies of dating is to distract teenagers and young adults from developing their God-given abilities and skills. Instead of focusing on their spiritual life and activities in church, instead of equipping themselves with the character, education, and experience necessary to succeed in life, many allow themselves to be consumed by the present needs that dating emphasizes.

Example: Chris and Stephanie started dating when they were both 15 years old. They never got physically involved, and they broke up 2 years later. Their breakup was mutual. So what harm was done? No harm was done in the physical sense but a lot of harm was done in that Chris and Stephanie wasted a lot of precious time when they could have been doing something else, liking studying, focusing on their spiritual life and church, focusing on getting good grades and going to a good college, etc... Maintaining a relationship takes a lot of time and energy. Chris and Stephanie spent countless hours texting and talking on the phone, thinking about each other, and worrying about their relationship. The energy they exerted stole from other pursuits. For Chris, the relationship hurt his performance at school and he was not able to get into a good university. It also hurt his involvement in church activities. For Stephanie, we decided to skip many church retreats and mission trips so that she could stay home and see Chris. This hurt her spiritual life a lot. Their relationship swallowed up time both of them could have spent developing much needed skills for the future.

Dating may help you practice being a good boyfriend or girlfriend, but are these the skills we need for a successful marriage?

5.

Dating can cause

discontentment with God's gift of singleness – God give us singleness – a season of our lives unmatched in its boundless opportunities for growth, learning, and service – and we view it as a chance to get bogged down in finding and keeping boyfriends and girlfriends. We do not find the real beauty of singleness when we keep pursuing romance. We do find beauty in singleness when we use our freedom to serve God with all of our heart and soul.

The period in our life when we are single is a special time of freedom where we can grow the most spiritually and learn the most about God and serve God the most. Later when we get married and move into our careers, our time will be much more limited. We must use our singleness wisely, and not get bogged down in useless and destructive relationships. Our singleness is a true gift from God. Consider what King Solomon says in Ecclesiastes Chapter 12, verses 1-14.

“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth,
Before the difficult days come,
And the years draw near when you say,
“I have no pleasure in them”:
While the sun and the light,
The moon and the stars,
Are not darkened,
And the clouds do not return after the rain;
In the day when the keepers of the house tremble,
And the strong men bow down;
When the grinders cease because they are few,
And those that look through the windows grow dim;
When the doors are shut in the streets,
And the sound of grinding is low;
When one rises up at the sound of a bird,
And all the daughters of music are brought low.
Also they are afraid of height,
And of terrors in the way;
When the almond tree blossoms,
The grasshopper is a burden,
And desire fails.
For man goes to his eternal home,
And the mourners go about the streets.

Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed,
Or the golden bowl is broken,
Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain,

Or the wheel broken at the well.
Then the dust will return to the earth as it was,
And the spirit will return to God who gave it.

“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher,
“All *is* vanity.”

And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out *and* set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and *what was* written *was* upright—words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books *there is* no end, and much study *is* wearisome to the flesh.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:

Fear God and keep His commandments,
For this is man’s all.
For God will bring every work into judgment,
Including every secret thing,
Whether good or evil.”

Recreational dating causes dissatisfaction because it encourages a wrong use of our God given freedom of singleness. God has placed a desire in most men and women for marriage. Although we do not sin when we look forward to marriage, we might be guilty of poor stewardship in our singleness when we allow a desire for something God obviously doesn’t have for us **yet** to rob our ability to enjoy and appreciate what He **has** given us. Dating plays a role in fostering this dissatisfaction because it gives single people just enough intimacy to make them wish they had more. Instead of enjoying the unique qualities of singleness, dating causes people to focus on what they don’t have! Thus, the robbery that is caused by the devil here is that he gets us to focus on what we don’t have instead of focusing on the things we do have (singleness)!

6. **Dating can create an artificial environment for evaluating another person’s character** - Dating creates an artificial environment for two people to interact. As a result, each person can easily convey an equally artificial image. That is, dating creates an artificial environment that doesn’t require a person to accurately portray his or her positive and negative characteristics.

Example: consider the following example to make this point very concrete. On the basketball court at church, we can adjust the hoop at any height. When we lower it to 6 feet, we can all dunk with no problem and it looks like our skill level in basketball is really high when we use this height. However, when we change the hoop back to 10 feet, we are back to reality and our true basketball ability now really shows.

On a date, a person can charm his or her way into a date's heart. He drives a nice car and pays for everything, and she looks great. Being on a fun date doesn't say anything about a person's character or ability to be a good husband or wife. It's all a façade. Part of the reason dating is fun is that it gives us a break from real life. Dating does not show how we behave in real life settings. It does not show how we handle stress, how we serve God, it does not reveal our spiritual life, nor how we deal with people under difficult circumstances.

7. **Dating often becomes an end in itself** – most young people who start dating never think about the future with that person they date, and thus dating becomes an end itself. Most people when they date do not have any long term vision about the relationship and no major goals in the relationship. They date because they enjoy the emotional and physical aspects that dating brings to the table with no thought of the future whatsoever nor the horrendous consequences that dating itself bring on.

The Coptic Orthodox does not believe in dating. For those couple who at the age of marriage and ready for marriage, there is no dating either. For two people who are at least at the age of college graduates (usually much older), the church recommends a monitored courtship period intended for them to get to know one another one on one (not dating) and this must be approved by the father of confession of the couple and the parents of the man and woman. Nothing is done in secret. It is a brief courtship period that must be approved by the priest and the parents. It is a monitored and well defined courtship period. After this brief courtship period, the couple must decide if they want to get engaged or not. If they decide not to get engaged, they must end the relationship. If they decide to get engaged, then their relationship becomes public to everyone, and this should be the case in order to encourage the couple to be serious about the relationship. One of the main goals of an engagement period is that it makes the relationship official and public so the couple take the relationship seriously and act in purity. The engagement period is also short and the length is mutually agreed upon by the couple, the priest (fathers of confession), and the parents. The engagement period is short in order to minimize the temptation of inappropriate emotional and/or physical interaction. The Coptic Orthodox Church in no way approves of dating for teenagers, college students, or anyone in general who is not emotionally, spiritually, and financially ready for marriage.

CONCLUSION: From the 7 defective habits of dating, we see that there is no useful spiritual, emotional, or intellectual purpose to dating whatsoever. We are not to follow the ways of the world. The world dates because people are encouraged to be selfish and self-centered, and only focused on their emotional and physical needs without regarding the welfare and the needs of others. Dating is all about me, and only me! Also, dating never looks to the future nor takes a big picture view of things. It's all about living for the moment. As Christians, we must i) live to serve and please God, ii) esteem others better than ourselves and work to totally eradicate our selfish ambitions, and iii) never live for the moment but rather always think of the future and take a big picture view of things – that is, seek wisdom which can only come as a gift from God.

VERSE TO REMEMBER: “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth” (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

4. A NEW ATTITUDE TOWARDS DATING – Part I

SERVANT PREPARATION:

VERSE & REFERENCES: The main reference to these dating lessons is the excellent book by Joshua Harris titled “I Kissed Dating Goodbye.”

A great verse about changing our attitude towards dating is Ephesians 4:22-24.

“that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

LESSON PREPARATION

OBJECTIVES: The main objective of this lesson is to have a change of attitude towards the entire concept of dating, to truly have the conviction that dating is wrong and useless for us, and to use our time in a better way in serving God, developing an intimate relationship with Christ who is my true and only date, and excelling academically in our middle, high school and college years so that we can glorify God.

INTRODUCTION: In the last two lessons, we learned about the 7 habits of highly defective dating. Hopefully, the previous two lessons challenged the way you think about dating. It is not easy to change attitudes or shift gears. Many times we get stuck in the mindset and ways of the world. But hopefully, you have been deeply challenged now in this topic and you might be saying to yourself, “Ok, I can agree that dating has its problems and issues, but what do I do now? How do we as Coptic Orthodox Christians avoid defective dating?”

The first step is that we must change our attitude towards dating. We need an overhaul in our value system. We need an overhaul in changing my worldly ways of thinking to godly ways of thinking. This is easier said than done, but “with God, nothing is impossible” (Luke 1:37). St. Paul also tells that in Ephesians 4:22-24 that “we can put off our old nature and put on the new man.” It can be done because Christ never makes empty promises. It can ONLY be done by God’s help and God’s help alone. Until we renew our ways of thinking about love and relationships, our lifestyles will continue to flounder in this arena of dating.

What follows are 5 important “new attitudes” that will help us break away from this concept of dating and all its bad habits. Each of these flows from our view of three areas: love, purity, and singleness. The attitude changes described below give a glimpse of the practical alternative God offers those who want to please Him with their whole lives.

LESSON BODY: The 5 new attitude changes towards dating:

1. Every Relationship is an Opportunity to Model Christ’s Love

Example: Bethany, an outgoing freshman at a Christian high school, has a reputation as a bit of a flirt. Unfortunately, much of her interaction with guys is fake – it focuses on attracting attention to herself and getting and getting a reaction from whomever she

currently likes. Bethany invests more energy in getting a guy to like her than she does spurring him towards godliness. But when Bethany changes her perspective and realizes her friendships with guys are opportunities to love them as Christ does, she takes a 180 degree turn from flirtatiousness to honest, sincere, love that treats guys as brothers, not potential boyfriends. Instead of viewing herself as the center of the universe with other people revolving around her, she can begin to look for ways to bless others.

The world will know we follow Christ by the way we love others. For this reason, we must practice love as God defines it – sincere, servant-hearted, and selfless – not the world’s brand of selfish and sensual love on what feels good.

2. My Unmarried Years are a Gift from God

Example: Michael is 17 years old and has an engaging personality that matches his good looks. He is popular in church and so he starts dating girls from school and church. Although Michael may not be doing anything immoral in his dating relationships, his pattern of short-term dating potentially robs him of the flexibility, freedom, and focus of singleness. Michael always feels that he is incomplete without a girlfriend all the way through his college years. But when Michael adopts a new attitude that views singleness as a gift, he learns to be content with friendship during the time God wants him to remain single. As a result, Michael can clear his life of the clutter that dating brings. With this newly freed time and energy, Michael can focus on his relationship with God, being involved and being a leader in church activities, making close friendships with his male friends, and excelling in school and properly preparing for college.

Singleness is a one-time true gift from God that enables us to be free, free of being tied down in a meaningless emotional relationship. It is a time to be free of emotional strain and pressure. It is a time to really get to know myself and enjoy the gifts that God has given. It is an amazing period of stress-free free time. We will never be able to have that kind of freedom again. One we get married and have kids, we will never be able to have that kind of time to ourselves again. Our time will be controlled by others and our freedom will be limited. Our single life is the best opportunity to get to know God, develop deep friendships, serve God at home and abroad through mission trips, and to excel in school. Until we realize God’s gift of singleness, we will miss out on the incredible opportunities it holds. As a single person, you have the freedom right now to explore, study, travel, and tackle the world. No other time in your life will offer these chances. We must always remember the words of St. Paul. He tells us to “redeem our time for the days are evil.” He says in Ephesians 5:15, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

3. I Don't Need to Pursue a Romantic Relationship Before I'm Ready for Marriage

This attitude grows out of the notion we discussed before: "The joy of intimacy is the reward of commitment."

Example: Jenny is 17 and has dated a boy from her church for over 1 year. They are both active in church and they want to marry each other someday. The "someday" part is the problem – realistically, they can't get married for quite a few years (at least 8 years). Both of them have specific things to accomplish for God before they can take that step. The old attitude says "if it feels good, do it." That is, if intimacy feels good, enjoy it now. But the new attitude recognizes that if two people can't make a commitment to each other, they don't have any business pursuing romance. Even though it isn't easy, in her new attitude, Jenny tells her boyfriend that they need to limit the time and energy they invest in each other. Trusting that God can bring them back together if He wills, they halt their progression of intimacy until they can match it with commitment. Though they struggle with the separation, missing the closeness they once enjoyed, they know in the long run – whether they marry each other or someone else – they have made the best choice for both of them.

God has made each of us with a desire for intimacy, and He intends to fulfill it. While we are single, He doesn't expect these longings to disappear, but He asks us to have patience to wait and, in the meantime, seek close relationships with family, and deep non-romantic relationships with brothers and sisters in the Lord. If you are not ready to consider marriage or you're not truly interested in marrying a specific person, it is selfish and potentially very harmful to encourage that person to need you or ask him or her to gratify you emotionally or physically.

This does NOT mean you have to marry the first person with whom you are interested in once you're ready for marriage. Here, we need to rely on God's will, for it is God, and God alone, who chooses our spouse when we seek His will. We all need to read the book of Tobit in learning about how God chooses our spouse and how God's will works in marriage. In the case of Tobias, who was seeking to get married, we read "Do not be afraid, for she was destined for you from eternity. You will save her, and she will go with you,

and I suppose that you will have children by her." When Tobias heard these things, he fell in love with her and yearned deeply for her" (Tobit 6:17).

Also, when Abraham was seeking a wife for his son Isaac, we read, "But Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there. The LORD God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there." So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter" (Genesis 24:6-9).

Marriage is God's work. It is His job. Let Christ do His job in your life!

4. I Cannot "Own" Someone Outside of Marriage

Our Orthodox faith says that two married people become one. Until we are ready to commit to marriage, we have no right to treat anyone as if he or she belongs to us.

Example: Sarah and Phillip are both seniors in high school and have gone out with each other for six months. Their relationship has reached a serious level. They rarely do anything apart – they monopolize each other's weekends, drive each other's cars, etc.. They also have a physical relationship. Even though they haven't had sex, they constantly struggle with going too far. The old attitude says we can "play marriage" if we really love someone. But the new attitude views a claim on another person's time, affection, and future before marriage as unwarranted. Sarah and Philip realize they need to end their relationship as it now exists. By staking a claim on each other, they have stifled their individual growth and needlessly consumed energy that they should have directed into serving and knowing God, and planning for the future. They have planned their lives around each other when they really don't know whether they will get married someday. And in reality, like most high school relationships, there is a very good chance that they will end up marrying someone else.

Even if Sarah and Philip had kept their physical relationship completely pure, they still would have made unwarranted claims on each other's spiritual and emotional lives by continuing the relationship. If God wants them together in the future, their current decision to halt their involvement will not endanger His plan. That is, if it's God's will that they get married someday, even if they break things off now, God will find a way to

bring them together at the right time. Right now, they should choose to obey God and break up a relationship that has them stealing from each other. Are you making unwarranted emotional, spiritual, or even physical claims on someone? Ask God to show you to re-evaluate the relationship and to show you His will.

5. I Will Avoid Situations That Could Compromise The Purity of My Body or Mind

We must always avoid situations that put us in difficult situations with the opposite sex such as one on one situations, doing homework together one on one with the opposite sex, texting, phone calls, email, etc...

Example: Jessica, age 16, is a good girl who is unfortunately very naive. Even though Jessica is a virgin and is saving sex for marriage, she places herself in compromising situations with boys, such as doing homework with them one on one at the library or their home when her parents are gone, taking walks alone, getting car rides alone with a boy, etc... She thinks it's exciting as it gives her a feeling of control over the boy, who desires her physically and emotionally. But when Jessica takes on a new attitude, she sees that purity consists of more than remaining a virgin. When she honestly examines her relationship with her male friends, she realizes that she has veered from the direction of purity. To get back on course, she has to drastically change her lifestyle. First, she must end these one on one encounters, as this could lead to sin. Then, she commits to fleeing those settings that lend themselves to compromise.

Where, when, and with whom you choose to spend your time reveals your true commitment to purity. Do you need to examine your tendencies? If you do, make sure to avoid placing yourself in settings that encourage temptation.

Loss of virginity is NOT the only measuring stick we should use in judging whether our relationship with the opposite sex is inappropriate. There are many measuring sticks we must use to judge whether our actions are appropriate with the opposite sex. These include flirting, one on one encounters, hugging, kissing, inappropriate physical closeness, inappropriate words, too much texting, etc... Virginity is only one of many measuring sticks that help us evaluate our relationship with the opposite sex. Be careful, and do not let the devil deceive you!

Conclusion: Right now, you might be thinking that this new attitude is radical. If we truly believe in God's way, we must act differently than the world. We need to be revolutionaries with the world. The godly life leaves no room for pettiness, insincerity, wasted time, or selfishness. Changing our attitude towards dating is something only God can help us do. But nothing is impossible with God. The Christian with his or her eyes on the goal of sincere and

intelligent love will find that throwing out the world's approach to relationships is no sacrifice at all. Rejecting the old attitude is the natural response not only to the evident problems of dating, but more important, to the high calling we have received from God. God commands us to "throw everything that hinders" and "run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Hebrews 12:10).

Choosing to quit the dating game doesn't mean rejecting friendship with the opposite sex or marriage. We can still pursue these things but we must pursue them according to God's timetable and on His terms. God asks us to put the dating game and our romantic ambitions aside so we can first "seek the kingdom and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

VERSE TO REMEMBER: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

5. A NEW ATTITUDE TOWARDS DATING – Part II

SERVANT PREPARATION:

VERSE & REFERENCES: Reference is "I Kissed Dating Goodbye" by Joshua Harris.

LESSON PREPARATION

OBJECTIVES: We mentioned in the previous lesson that developing a new attitude towards dating requires a deep appreciation and understanding of three important elements: God's definition of Love, Singleness, and purity. In this lesson, we elaborate on these concepts in more detail. Deeply understanding these three

elements will lead us to a new attitude on dating. It will lead us to a new way of life.

Verse: "If you love Me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:5)

LESSON BODY

1. God's Definition of Love:

We cannot overemphasize the importance of gaining God's perspective on love. We can link all the problems in relationships today to adopting a fallen world's attitudes toward love. And the conflict between God's definition of love and the world's is not new. Christians have always had a choice to either imitate the Master or slip into the more enticing pattern of love provided by the world.

St. Paul understood this struggle when he wrote his famous chapter on love in 1 Corinthians 13. The Corinthians were today's version of Hollywood, for the city of Corinth was synonymous with immorality. So St. Paul was compelled to explain what true love is to the Corinthians. St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13,,

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ² And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, ^[a] but have not love, it profits me nothing.

⁴ Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰ But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

¹³ And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love."

Like the Christians in Corinth, we have two styles of love to select from – God’s or the world’s. Which will we choose?

Here is an image that may help us understand our role as followers of Christ and the style of love we should therefore adopt. From the day Adam and Eve disobeyed God, the world has experienced a twisted definition of love. When sin marred God’s original design for love, the human race began experiencing a twisted and corrupt imitation of love based on selfishness and irresponsibility. But because God’s love is perfect and enduring, He created a way for us to experience His design for love once again. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to set things straight. Christ gave His life for a world that rejected Him, and He told us to love our enemies. He washed the feet of the men that called Him Master and told us to serve each other in humility. Christ gave us the pattern – “As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34) – and told us to share it with the world.

As Christians, we need to imitate God’s love to the world. Doing this will profoundly affect our approach to relationships, especially our dating relationships. When we are with others, we represent God’s love, not only to the other person we are with but to everyone who is watching us. People watch us, and what they see affects God’s reputation for loving His creation. If we claim to follow Christ and use the world’s definition of love, then we drag the name and character of our Lord to the dirt. This is why we must always ask ourselves, “Am I loving people according to God’s definition of love? Do my motivations and actions in a relationship reflect the perfect love that God has shown me?” How do we answer these questions?

We can gain a better understanding of God’s love by recognizing and rejecting the world’s pattern of love.

- (a) First, we must understand that all of the world’s deceptions flow from the belief that **love is primarily for the fulfillment and comfort of self**. The world poisons love by focusing first and foremost on meeting one’s own needs. We witness this poison in the boyfriend or girlfriend who pressures a partner into a physical relationship. We have all heard the line, “If you really loved me, you would do it.” In other words, I don’t care about your convictions, I only care about my own.
- (b) We are told that **love is primarily a feeling**. At first glance this seems innocent since we often feel love, but when we make our feelings the most important measure of love, we place ourselves at the center of importance.

(c) The world tells us that **love is beyond our control**. We describe the beginning of a passionate relationship as “falling in love.” Part of the reason such ridiculous statements are made is that they remove personal responsibility.

Christ taught that love is not the fulfillment of self but for the glory of God and the good of others. True love is selfless. Christ also showed that true love is not measured or governed by a feeling. He went to the cross when every emotion and instinct told His body to turn back. Jesus Himself said to God the Father, “Father, save me from this hour. Remove this cup from me” (Mark 14:32). Jesus’s feelings here were not the test of His love.

Christ wants us to have the same attitude. Christ told us, “If you love Me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:5). True love always expresses itself in obedience to God and service to others. Jesus’s example here also shows us that love is under our control. **Christ chose to love us.** Christ chose to lay down His life for us. Committed, sincere, selfless, responsible – all of these words describe God’s love. And each stands in dark contrast to the love practiced by the world.

2. **How to Keep Impatience from Robbing Us from the Gift of Singleness.**

(a) The right thing at the wrong time is the wrong thing! - Sex and romance are good for God created sex. However, here we must emphasize that the right thing (romance and sex) at the wrong time is the wrong thing! In today’s world, we don’t readily accept the concept of delayed gratification. Our culture teaches us that if something is good, we should seek to enjoy it immediately! Our “do it now” mentality has ruined all of our relationships. This is why sex before marriage is continually on the rise and kids are having sex and relationships at a younger age than ever before.

Why do we live this way? Part of the reason is that we have completely lost sight of the biblical principle of seasons in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. God has many wonderful experiences He wants to give us, but He also assigns these experiences to particular seasons of our lives.

Just because something is good does not mean that we have to pursue it right now. We have to remember that the right thing at the wrong time is the wrong thing!

(b) You Don't Need to Shop for What you Can't Afford

Intimacy costs commitment and if we don't have commitment we cannot afford intimacy. Before two people are ready for the responsibility of commitment, they should content themselves with friendship and wait on deep emotional intimacy. Exercising this patience will not handicap them relationally. In friendship, they can practice the skills of relating, caring, and sharing their lives with people. Don't start shopping around for a spouse too early. Learn how to develop friendship and social skills, wait on God. Be patient!

c) Any Season of Singleness is a Gift from God

Most of us will not remain single for our entire lives, and therefore we should view our singleness as a special season of our lives, a gift from God. God gives an outline for the proper attitude toward singleness in 1 Corinthians 7:32. Let us paraphrase what St. Paul says in these verses:

"I want you to live as free of complications as possible. When you're unmarried, you're free to concentrate on simply pleasing the Master. Marriage involves you in all the nuts and bolts of domestic life and in wanting to please your spouse, leading to so many demands on your attention. The time and energy that married people spend on caring for and nurturing each other, the unmarried can spend in becoming holy instruments of God."

St. Paul doesn't say this to put marriage down. He says it to encourage us to view singleness as a gift. God doesn't use our singleness to punish us. He has created this season as an unparalleled opportunity for undistracted devotion to God. It is a time for growth and service that we shouldn't take for granted or allow to slip by.

Someone once said, "Don't do something about your singleness – do something with it!"

We must ask ourselves the following questions to see if we are pleasing God in our life of singleness:

- 1) Am I concentrating on "simply pleasing Christ?"
- 2) Am I using this season of my life to become a holy instrument for God?

- 3) Am I scrambling to find a romantic relationship with somebody?
- 4) Am I failing to believe that God is sovereign over this part of my life and can provide for me?
- 5) Could I possibly be throwing away the gift of singleness?
- 6) Am I cluttering my life with needless complications and worries of dating and impressing others?

Waiting for God's timing in our life requires trusting His goodness and His wisdom. It is also a call for obedience on our part.

3. The Direction of Purity

So, the first two critical elements in our change of attitude is understanding God's definition of love and using our gift of singleness to please God. The third critical element in our change of attitude is the desire for purity.

In today's world, purity is old fashioned. It is a thing of the past. We are ridiculed and made fun of when we say "I don't believe in having a boyfriend (or girlfriend)", "I won't kiss a boy (or girl) until I am married". "I won't be intimate with the opposite sex until I am married," or "I want to save sex for marriage." We are viewed as nerdy, old fashioned, and misfits when we make such statements.

Definition of Purity - Purity is NOT defined by sex alone. We often have the view that as long as I do not cross the line with someone (go all the way), then I am pure. Purity does NOT have such a fixed point definition. It goes way beyond that. True purity is not defined by a fixed point (such as sex), but it is a way of life. It is a direction, a persistent, determined pursuit of righteousness. This direction starts in the heart, and we express it in a lifestyle that flees all opportunities of compromise.

Sins of David - If we truly seek to live pure lives, we cannot allow ourselves to detour even for a second from the pursuit of righteousness. The life of King David shows how dangerous such a detour can be. If a righteous man like David can fall into adultery and murder, who on earth can claim to be safe from temptation?! David's plunge into sin didn't occur in single leap. Like every journey into sin, David's sin first began with a movement away from God. David's sin of adultery occurred because he was not where he was supposed to be. Instead of being on the battlefield, he was on a rooftop

watching Bathsheba bathe. Not being where we should be is the first step away from God. Neglecting our God given responsibilities leads to sin as it did in David's case.

How in the world did David, a man after God's heart fall into the horrible sins of adultery and murder. When did he cross the line of purity? Was it at the moment he touched Bathsheba? Did it happen when he saw her bathing? Where did purity end and impurity begin for David?

As we can see from David's story, impurity is isn't something we step into suddenly. It is not a fixed boundary or line that we cross. Impurity is a general condition that occurs when we lose our focus on God. Often, in dating relationships, impurity starts long before the moments of passion. Impurity begins in our hearts, in our motivations and attitudes. Jesus says in Matthew 5:28, "I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart". Since begins in our minds and hearts. Impurity is not defined based on a specific event or fixed point. Purity is pursuit of righteousness. When we view it merely as a line not to cross, what keeps us from getting as close as possible to the edge? If sex is the line, what is the difference between kissing and holding hands, etc...?

Purity Does Not happen by Accident – If we want to lead pure lives, then we must realize that purity does not happen by accident. Rather, we must constantly pursue the direction of purity. **The book of Proverbs shows us that this ongoing process involves two things – our hearts and our feet.**

In the life of Joseph, we see how he used his heart and his feet. His heart was with God and his heart told him to run from Potiphar's wife when she tried to seduce him. He ran. When sin knocks at the door, we must run! We must get out of there in a hurry! St. Paul says, "flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Timothy 2:22).

In the book of Proverbs, the seductive spirit of impurity and compromise is symbolized by a wayward adulteress. We are warned that "Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng" (Proverbs 7:26). Though king Solomon wrote these words 1,000 years ago, this "woman" continues to lurk all around us today. She snares the innocent with promises of pleasure, but she truly desires nothing but her victim's destruction. She has ruined countless lives – both male and female – with her treachery.

Throughout history, she has crippled the righteous. "Her house," the Bible warns, "is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death" (Proverbs 7:27). Here is

the point. No matter how “good” impurity’s victims may be, or how holy they have been in the past, once they set foot in her house, they speed toward death on an expressway with no exits. Have you ever made a wrong turn on a freeway only to find that you must travel many miles before you can get off to turn around? If so, you probably get annoyed or aggravated by that mistake. You can’t slow down; you can’t turn around; you can only continue speeding farther and farther from your destination. How many Christians in dating relationships felt the same way as they struggle with accelerating physical involvement? They want to exit, but their own sinful passion takes them further from God’s will.

How do we avoid the “on-ramp” of impurity? How do we escape the spirit of adultery? Here is the answer: “do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths” (Proverbs 7:25). Living a pure life before God requires the teamwork of our heart and our feet. The direction of purity begins within; we must support it in the practical, everyday decisions of where, when, and with whom we choose to be. Resolve isn’t enough. Many people make commitments to sexual purity, but instead of adopting a lifestyle that supports this commitment, they continue relationships that encourage physical expression and place themselves in dangerous settings. Someone once said, “I have dated a lot. Before I would go on my dates, I would read the Bible and pray earnestly that I could resist temptation, but it didn’t work.” It never does! The path we take with our feet should never contradict the conviction of our heart.

If we desire purity, we have to fight for it. This means adjusting our attitudes and lifestyles. The following three points will help us maintain a direction of purity with our hearts and our feet.

- a) **Respect the Deep Significance of Physical Intimacy** – Physical intimacy is much more than two bodies colliding. God designed our sexuality as a physical expression of the oneness of marriage. God guards it carefully and places many stipulations on it because he considers it extremely precious. A man and a woman who commit their lives to each other in marriage gain the right to express themselves sexually to each other. A husband and wife may enjoy each other’s bodies because they in essence belong to each other. But if you’re not married to someone, you have no claim on that person’s body, no right to sexual intimacy.

Maybe you agree with the no sex part, but then you claim “making out” is ok, such as kissing, sexual touching, and necking. We need to ask ourselves a serious question here: If another person’s body doesn’t belong to us (that is, we’re not married),

what right do we have to treat that person any differently than a married person who would treat someone who wasn't his or her spouse? You might say, "that's completely different." Is it really? Our culture has programmed us to think that sexually.

- (b) **Set Your Standards Too High** – We need to understand that our bodies are worth the life of Christ. Christ died for us. He paid a very high price, the price of death. Therefore let us not treat our bodies cheaply. Let us have high standard for our bodies for they were bought at a very high price. We put high standards on our bodies when we never allow any impure thing to happen to it. We need to be strict and tough on bodies to never allow any form of impurity. The moment we relax and give in a little, there will be an inevitable collapse of our morals. In Colossians 3:5, we read "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires." Tolerated sin is pampered sin – it grows and gains strength. St. James tells us that "each one is tempted, when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:14-15). If we begin the progression of sin and allow it continue, it will soon grow beyond our control. Only by keeping our standards too high and killing sin in its infantile stage will we avoid its destruction.

- (c) **Make The Purity of Others a Priority** – One of the best ways to obtain a pure life is to watch out for the purity of others. What can you do to protect your brothers and sisters in the Lord from impurity? The support and protection you can provide to same-sex friends is important, but the protection you can give to opposite-sex friends is invaluable.

When it comes to purity in relationships – both physical and emotional – guys and girls usually trip each other up. Let us look at the role of both boys and girls in making purity a priority to one other.

The Guy's Responsibility – First, guys need to understand the girls do not struggle with the same temptations that they struggle with. Guys struggle more with their sex drives and physical attributes while girls struggle more with their emotions. A guy can help guard a girl's heart by being sincere and honest in their communication. Guys must not flirt, play games, and lead girls on. Guys have to go out of their way to make sure that nothing they say or do stirs up emotions in the girls.

The Girl's Responsibility – Girls need to beware of how their actions and glances stir up lust in a guy's mind. Most guys struggle with the eyes. That is, what they see physically in a girl stirs up lust. This is what girls need to dress modestly not to stir up feelings in a guy. Girls always need to wear appropriate clothing, in and out of church. This is why we read in 1 Timothy 2:9-10 "in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works."

CONCLUSION: In this lesson, we learned about the three fundamental aspects that lead to a new attitude towards dating: understanding the definition of God's love and contrasting it with the world's definition of love, the gift of singleness, and purity. If we deeply study and believe in these three elements, we will change our attitude towards dating. It will lead to a new way of life. God's definition of love is in total opposite to the definition of the world's. Godly love is sacrificial and not selfish, it gives and does not take, it edifies, it builds up and does not tear down. We must read St. Paul's definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 to truly understand it. Second, we must enjoy the gift of singleness in our life. This is the best time of our life to get to know God and serve. This period is the best time for spiritual growth and maturity. We need to be patient and obedient to God's will for us in finding a spouse. Rushing things in our life by dating or looking for romance is never the appropriate course of action. Always remember that the right thing at the wrong time is the wrong thing! Thirdly, we must deeply value our purity and the purity of others. We need to encourage one another to be pure. We also need a deep understanding of the real definition of purity. Purity is not a fixed point, it is not a boundary line we cross, it is not defined by a specific event, but rather purity is a way of life with God. It seeks God's will to please God with our bodies and mind. Purity does not come by accident. We have to fight for it.

VERSE TO REMEMBER: "flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

6. MALE HOMOSEXUALITY: CAUSES, CURES, AND PREVENTION – PART I

SERVANT PREPARATION:

VERSE & REFERENCES: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

There are two main references to the next three lessons. The references are two great books by Dr. Joseph Nicolosi. The first book is titled “Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality” and the second book is titled “A Parent’s Guide to Preventing Homosexuality.” These books are an excellent source in learning clinically and academically about this complex topic.

LESSON PREPARATION

OBJECTIVES

Lesson Objective: The objective of this lesson is to a) understand and know what the Bible says about homosexuality, b) understand the root causes of homosexuality, and c) understand the world’s view on homosexuality and the politics surrounding it.

INTRODUCTION: Homosexuality is a deep rooted problem in our society today and this problem has existed from the creation of man. Homosexual activity is discussed in many places of the Old and New Testaments. One of the oldest Biblical references to this problem is in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis, chapters 18-19. The reason Sodom and Gomorrah were burned down is due to the homosexual acts that were being committed there and deep immorality of those who dwelled there. The Biblical stance on homosexuality is very clear in the Old and New Testaments. It is a clear sin and those who live a life of homosexuality “will not inherit the kingdom of God” according to St. Paul. St. Paul talks about homosexuality in Romans 1:24-26, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, and 1 Timothy 1:10. It is also mentioned in Jude 1:7. Leviticus 20:13 also talks about the sinfulness of homosexuality. In this lesson, we will see what the Bible says about homosexuality, b) understand the root causes of homosexuality, and c) understand the world’s view on homosexuality and the politics surrounding it.

❖ LESSON BODY:

Lesson Body:

- 1. What does the Bible say about Homosexuality?** - As Orthodox Christians, our reference frame for the absolute truth is the Bible. Whatever the Bible says is the ground truth for us. The Bible says that homosexuality is wrong and sinful, and those who practice it “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” As discussed above, there are so many stories and verses in the Bible that talk about homosexuality. One of the oldest Biblical references to this problem is in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis, chapters 18-19. The reason Sodom and Gomorrah were burned down is due to the homosexual acts that were being committed there and deep immorality of those who dwelled there. The Biblical stance on homosexuality is very clear in the Old and New Testaments. It is a clear sin and those who live a life of homosexuality “will not inherit the kingdom of God” according to St. Paul. St. Paul talks about homosexuality in Romans 1:24-26, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, and 1 Timothy 1:10. It is also mentioned in Jude 1:7. Leviticus 20:13 also talks about the sinfulness of homosexuality.

We read in Roman 1:24-27, “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.”

Also, we read in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.”

These verses make it abundantly clear that homosexuality is a deep sin and those who practice it “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Also, in 1

Timothy 1:10, we read “for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.”

Thus, the Bible makes is crystal clear that homosexuality is sinful and those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God. From a Biblical perspective, there is nothing to debate at all about homosexuality. Kids and adults today are often confused about the Bible says about this topic. In their defense of homosexuality, they say things like:

- (a) “Don’t judge”
- (b) “It’s ok to be gay as long as they don’t affect or hurt me.”
- (c) “God made them that way. They can’t help it.”
- (d) “We shouldn’t hate anyone”
- (e) “They have rights too.”
- (f) “They’re really nice people”
- (g) “We need to have compassion on people.”
- (h) “We live in a very different world now than 2000 years ago.”
- (i) “We need to be open-minded and intellectually enlightened.”
- (j) “We need to accept everyone.”

In addressing these one liners, we must make note of the following:

- (a) We hate the sin but love the sinner, therefore we are not judging anyone. The bible actually demands that we evaluate the difference between right and wrong, and hence to know what is sinful and what isn’t. This is not judgment. Thus, I may accept a person, but I need not accept their way of life if it contradicts the Bible.

- (b) Some Bible say we are “old fashioned” and the Bible is too old. Ted Turner, the founded of CNN said once in a speech, “No one pays attention to the ten commandments anymore because they’re too old.” A Christian person from the audience politely responded, “well, the law of gravity is even older, but you better not disregard it by jumping off the world’s tallest building.” Thus, the Bible is relevant and it is the living word of God for us Christians.

(c) God is indeed compassionate and full of mercy, but He is also just. Justice and mercy are not separable with God. They are united and cannot be separated. Although God is 100% merciful, He is also 100% just. People tend to conveniently forget the justice of God so they can live according to their own sinful and selfish desires.

(d) As we will discuss shortly, there is no scientific evidence whatsoever to suggest that homosexuality is somehow genetic and that “they can’t help it.” No one is born homosexual! From a spiritual perspective, if God allowed homosexuality to be genetic, then God contradicts Himself and then God indeed would be a creator of sin. He would be sinful Himself. From a purely scientific perspective, there is no scientific evidence or studies whatsoever that have found some “gay gene” that is responsible for homosexuality, nor have any genes been discovered that even suggest a predisposition to homosexuality. Thus, the genetic claim is total nonsense from both a Biblical and scientific perspective.

(e) To say “it’s ok as long as they don’t hurt me” shows that we are selfish and indifferent about sin. This itself is a sin. God wants us to take a stand for the truth and not be indifferent towards sin.

(f) Homosexuality is not an intellectual issue. There is no enlightenment required to understand it. It is a clear sin as stated in the Bible, and as Christians we have no other reference frame than the Bible.

2. Understanding the Root Cause of Male Homosexuality

Now that we have a solid understanding of the Biblical aspects of homosexuality, we now dig deep into the underlying clinical and social cause of homosexuality according to world renowned psychologist Dr. Joseph Nicolosi.

Most of us think of homosexuality as a chosen deviant lifestyle. That, is, I can have the perfect family and church upbringing, but somehow, I desire and choose a deviant sexual lifestyle. The most erroneous myth on homosexuality is that it is a chosen deviant lifestyle that the boy or girl

chooses because they want to be different. According to Nicolosi, this is simply not how homosexuality develops. It is much more complex issue.

(a) Homosexuality is mainly Caused by a Dysfunctional Parent Child Relationship in the home.

- (i) The fact is that homosexuality is caused directly by a dysfunctional home, and in particular male homosexuality is caused by a dysfunctional relationship between the father and the son. Lesbianism is mainly caused by a dysfunctional relationship between the mother and the daughter and/or an abusive relationship with the father. The bottom line is that homosexuality is caused by a dysfunctional relationship between the parents and their children. It is not really a freely chosen lifestyle that arises from a perfect home life or perfect Christian home.
- (ii) As argued by many professional psychologists, male homosexuality is a developmental problem that often results from early childhood problems between father and son. It is what is called a **gender-identity disorder (GID)** or gender-identity confusion.
- (iii) Homosexuality is not genetic! One cannot be born that way. If that were the case, then God must be unjust and indeed the creator of sin!
- (iv) Heterosexual development requires the support and cooperation from both parents as the boy de-identifies from the mother and identifies with the father. All Children when they are born and up to 2 years of age, identify mostly with the mother. She is the one who nurses them and is closest to them at a very young age. However, for boys, there must come a time where they must detach and gravitate towards the father to fully understand and grasp their own gender. That is, boys, must learn and achieve masculinity from the father, and the father alone.
- (v) Girls do not need to carry out this detachment from the mother, and as a result lesbianism is much less common than

male homosexuality. Nicolosi says that the male homosexuality to lesbianism ratio is 10 to 1.

- (vi) Failure to achieve masculinity by the boy through their father will result in a constant attachment to the mother and result in a gender-identification problem. The boys will not be able to gravitate towards the father and achieve his masculinity if
- (a) The father neglects him
 - (b) The father does not accept him – always criticizing the boy where the boy never feels good enough for the boy
 - (c) The father is abusive with the boy or abusive in general in the home. This results in a state where the boy rejects the father – he does not want to be like the father.
 - (d) The father does not affirm the masculinity of the boy by not playing rough and tumble games with him, not playing ball, not taking him fishing, and giving manly responsibilities, and not spending enough one-on-one quality time with him.
 - (e) The boy has a very domineering mother where the mother smothers and controls the boy not allowing the father to achieve masculinity and manhood.
 - (f) The boy does not receive enough affection, praise, or affirmation from the father.

- (vii) Although homosexuality is in no way genetic, there are certain types of boys who may be more vulnerable than others towards developing homosexuality if they do not have the proper relationship to their fathers. Boys who tend to be more sensitive, artistic, musical, and ones who enjoy doing things on their own and not playing with other boys are especially vulnerable. Boys who tend to be more effeminate in nature also tend to be more vulnerable.
- (viii) Sometimes, boys when they are young, start playing girls games, wear dresses, play with dolls, etc... Nicolosi says that if you see your boy doing this, have them stop this immediately. When boys develop a gender-identification problem through a dysfunctional relationship with their father, they do not achieve the require masculinity to move

into heterosexual manhood. As a result, they isolate themselves from other boys early on and have no confidence in their masculinity. They envy the masculinity in other boys and feel that this is something they cannot attain or have. As a result, they identify more with girls as their “friends.” They need to pick a gender. Since they do not fit in with the boys then they must fit in with the girls, and the girl becomes not an attraction to them, but a friend on a same gender level. Their gender identification is through girls not boys. When a boy gets older and reaches puberty and becomes a man, the desire for masculinity manifests itself through sexual and erotic desires for other men. That is, their confidence and desire for masculinity is satisfied through sexual relationships with other men. This then becomes a deep-seeded problem that is very difficult to fix if it is prolonged. It is difficult to fix because the erotic desires become very difficult to control. There is an excitement in engaging in sexual acts and it gives the boy the satisfaction of being accepted a man and embracing masculinity he never had. Through other men, it allows the homosexual man to attain the masculinity he never achieved from his relationship with his father. Nicolosi says “he has never met a homosexual man who had a good and normal relationship with his father.” He says that all of his clients have come “from troubled and deeply problematic relationships with their father.” Nicolosi also says that in psychotherapy sessions that his clients are often deeply angry and resentful of their father. In general, he says they have a deep anger within.

- (ix) Nicolosi also notes that the homosexual lifestyle is highly unstable and non-monogamous. Nicolosi argues that since the homosexual man can never find the perfectly masculine man to satisfy his lack of masculinity, they often go from partner to partner in search of the “perfect man.” Therefore, this leads to a promiscuous lifestyle. Nicolosi also notes that when two partners fight, they typically turn to infidelity in search of that perfect man that satisfies their desires for masculinity and affection. Nicolosi argues that in this sense heterosexual relationships are much more stable than homosexual ones

since the man is inherently different from the woman and is not marrying the woman due to the things he wished he would have had but rather because she is different than he and he is attracted to that.

The Politics of the Homosexual Lifestyle

- (i) As we are all aware, the homosexual lifestyle is now being accepted as a “normal alternative lifestyle”. People are being constantly encouraged to “discover their gender.” Homosexuality was removed as a mental health disorder to the American Psychotherapy Manual in 1973. Today, when homosexuals seek treatment, they are encouraged to accept themselves as who they are and be comfortable with their homosexual lifestyle. They are never encouraged to try and become heterosexual nor are they ever told that homosexuality is an abnormal condition.
- (ii) Gay activists also have a lot of political power and influence in trying to convince the world that homosexuality is an appropriate, normal, and even healthy lifestyle. Gay activists have certainly had a lot of influence on the field of psychology and the treatment of homosexuality. Gay activists have also had a lot of influence on congress in getting them to pass laws allowing for same sex marriage and in obtaining health and retirement benefits and tax breaks.

CONCLUSION: We need to educate our kids biblically and scientifically about homosexuality. From a Biblical standpoint, homosexuality is a serious sin and this way to life leads to eternal condemnation. From a social and psychological perspective, We need to be good Christian parents! Fathers need to be deeply involved in the upbringing of their sons, and provide love, affection, teaching, achievement of masculinity, support, affirmation, acceptance, and encouragement. Fathers also need to be deeply involved in the upbringing of their daughters since it is the father who provides the main source of self-esteem for the daughter. Without this highly needed self-esteem, girls turn to boyfriends! Fathers must allow the son want to detach from the mother and the father must help the son achieve masculinity. In order for this to happen, the father must take a keen interest

in his son teaching him manhood and how to be a man. The father must spend a lot of one on one time with the son, go on trips together that would make them bond, and play games and sports together. The father must be an attractive image to the son. Homosexuality often results from the son rejecting the father because he does not like what he sees in the father. This rejection of the father by the son keeps the son attached to the mother and the detachment from the mother never occurs. Sons who do not detach from the mother by the time they are 11 years of age, are very vulnerable to becoming homosexual.

VERSE TO REMEMBER: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

7. Male Homosexuality – Causes, Cures, and Prevention - Part II

SERVANT PREPARATION:

VERSE & REFERENCES: “If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood *shall be* upon them” (Leviticus 20:13).

The references are two great books by Dr. Joseph Nicolosi. The first book is titled “Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality” and the second book is titled “A Parent’s Guide to Preventing Homosexuality.” These books are an excellent source in learning clinically and academically about this complex topic.

LESSON PREPARATION

OBJECTIVES:

Lesson Objective:

In the previous lesson, we examined the root cause of male homosexuality and saw that it lies in a dysfunctional relationship between the father and the son. Such a dysfunctional relationship prevents the son from achieving masculinity from his father and thus leads to his homosexual tendencies. In this current lesson, we will examine the basic cures to male homosexuality. Since male homosexuality is a deep rooted psychological problem, it is viewed as a mental illness according to Nicolosi, and Nicolosi discusses the cures for this illness in his book. We shall discuss these cures by discussing several case studies and presenting various facts from the book by Nicolosi.

INTRODUCTION: The homosexual man who seeks treatment is a person who is not comfortable with his lifestyle. He may believe in God and have good morals otherwise, but he falls into this illness of homosexuality and is not happy with himself. Therefore, he seeks help. The patients who are not happy with their homosexual lifestyle and seek therapy are the ones that are most likely to be cured. The cure lies in helping them achieve their masculinity without the physical need for other men.

Nicolosi notes that a man may consciously believe he accepts his same-sex desires and even celebrate them, but on the deepest levels of self, he will always be at conflict. Nature made man complimentary to woman, and to cling to the sameness of one's own sex is to look at the world with one eye. Nicolosi says that "I do not believe that any man can ever be truly at peace living out a homosexual orientation."

The binding predicament of the homosexual is that he unconsciously seeks to fulfill his masculine identification through relationships with other men – but at the same time defensive detachment leaves him fearful of the masculine, and therefore, he never allows himself to take it in.

In relationship with a same sex therapist, a client can find some of what he missed in the failed father-son bond. This is the way that a man absorbs the masculine – through answering the challenge of nonsexual male friendships, characterized by

mutuality, intimacy, affirmation, and fellowship. When the client eroticizes a male relationship, a man is perpetually frustrated in absorbing the masculine.

LESSON BODY:

1. Beginning of Treatment

In the first session, the client (patient) often reveals an optimism, even an excitement. He has finally found the therapist who is willing to help him overcome his homosexuality. There is also a happy anticipation about his new relationship with the therapist, a man who he hopes will, perhaps for the first time in his life, intimately understand and accept him.

Although he has hopes, yet he still has doubts. A part of him will resist change. He may have the common anxiety of being made over or undone. One client said, "I have a right to be a man and all those male things that I've spent a lifetime admiring in others. I have a right to my own masculinity."

Treatment will help to put these issues into clear focus and create clarity out of the maze of confusion. Developing healthy male relationships will be one of the first orders of business, as will growth in a general sense of success in meetings life's challenges.

In the early phase of treatment, when there are strong feelings of hope and a sense of mastery, a new and powerful dimension of awareness temporarily supersedes the old sexual patterns. There may be a reduction in homosexual interests and even overall sexual arousal. This is due to the power of hope, whose worth should never be underestimated. Soon after the initial surge of hope, the return of old sexual feelings brings into perspective the long struggle that lies ahead. Over time, sexual intensity will subside once more. As he continues to develop closer mutual relationships with significant men in his life, the client begins to see his sexual attractions from a different perspective. The more he gets to know his male acquaintances on a personal level, the more unlikely it is they will remain objects of his sexual fantasies. The erotic power of their traits moves to the background as the whole person comes into focus.

Below, we talk about several key steps for therapy of the male homosexual:

- 1. Self-Acceptance** - According to popular gay rhetoric, if a man attempts to resolve his homosexuality, he must be unable to accept himself as he is. Even popular psychotherapies promote this false dichotomy. Critics of reparative therapy suspect that it is primarily guilt that keeps clients coming to treatment. Although guilt may have been the motivator that originally propelled the client into therapy, it is never the foundation for successful treatment. In fact, after some months in therapy, the client reports a diminishment of guilt. What has diminished here is not actually valid guilt, but the excessive guilt he has felt so long that it feels natural. Gradually, however, the client will come to realize that with his deepening commitment to healing will come a new support structure to take place of that oppressive mind-set that earlier "kept him in place."

The best part of surrendering excessive guilt is that it frees the mind to see clearly the natural dissatisfaction that results when one's behavior is at odds with one's sense of guilt is – disappointment with oneself for doing something discordant with what one desires to be. Excessive guilt locks a man into the old, self-defeating thought patterns that reinforce a sense of weakness and self-pity. Excessive guilt erodes self-esteem, which is essential to meet initiatory challenges of reparative therapy. Self-acceptance and a sincere desire for wholeness open the way for growth. It is through self-acceptance that the man gains the ability to stay in the pain in the faith that he will get better.

One client describes how the way to his own growth was opened:

"I used to feel overwhelmed and preoccupied by the homosexuality. Homosexuality took my power away. It depressed me. I used to be alarmed, upset; I felt trapped by it. I used to believe that since I'm homosexual and I don't act out my sexuality, then I'm not being true to myself. Now, it feels familiar; I get hungry, I get crabby, I get the homosexual feelings. I no longer deny them or act out, but understand them. My homosexual feelings are just a "snapshot" of who I am right now. They tell me something about where I am. Acceptance of my homosexuality does not mean approval, but a familiarity; "Yeah, this is me, that's weird, but it's me." It does not need to mean loneliness and despair. I don't feel trapped by it, but rather I say to myself, "Oh, here I go again, this is what I do." Homosexual feelings loom larger when I feel the need for deep friendship. I try to act on the knowledge, not the feeling. There's a power in the option of redirecting the energy; of giving new meaning to the feeling. I've gained the personal knowledge of understanding that my homosexuality is an urge toward

male intimacy. Instead of getting all worked up, I ask myself where I am lacking in personal contact. Then I see that the sexual energy will disappear or significantly diminish. In computer language, you have "default," which is where the program goes if you fail to give a new command. Our default is homosexuality . . . and our new command is male intimacy."

2. The Power of Gender

Gender identity structures every man's and woman's way of being and defines each person's participation in society. Gender identity is the grounding for all personal identity. We are all much more than simply "persons." Yet gay liberation groups, along with radical factions of the women's movement, have exerted pressure on the social sciences to deny inherent gender differences and condemn sex-role concepts. There has been a substitution of "non-sexist" language, which denies even basic human differences. Little by little, modern consciousness has lost its image of healthy masculinity and femininity. In freeing himself from his bond with mother, the boy needs help in becoming fully male. He needs to know who he is, and only another man can tell him. Mother, by her grounding in human nature, has told him *what* he is. But father—through his grounding in the outside world—can tell him *who* he is. By bestowing upon the boy a personal identity, he defines his unique relationship to the world.

To be able to identify oneself to oneself is so fundamental a need that we would rather call ourselves anything than have to call ourselves nothing. We can see how a young man who grew up without father's support might look for personal identity through a homosexual relationship. He has eroticized the need for his own masculine identity. As one 32-year-old client said during his first session: "I've always suspected my problem is not about homosexuality, but about masculinity."

Androgyny

Androgyny is the condition where the person has the combination of masculine and feminine characteristics. In the absence of an appreciation for healthy masculinity and femininity, androgyny is now unchallenged in our culture. In popular usage this term has become synonymous with genderlessness, describing a diluted or neutered version of both genders. Yet true androgyny—in its correct sense—implies a complete integration of both the masculine and the feminine within the personality. Before one can develop aspects of the other sex, one must claim one's primary gender. The young woman who fully identifies with the feminine gender will possess the qualities of gentleness and nurturance; later, she may also grow into assertion and independence. She will develop those masculine traits out of the foundation of her femininity. The same is true for the male. In his fullest masculine identity, he may not only be aggressive and risk-taking, but also empathic and sensitive.

3. Gender Empowerment as Treatment

Successful treatment of homosexuality is undermined in a culture where androgyny is upheld as the ideal. There must be acknowledgment by society of the existence of sex-linked traits, behaviors, and perceptions, and a respect for their value. As clients progress in reparative therapy, they develop a deep appreciation of gender difference and how it enhances the individual. Men in treatment typically report that when they are feeling more masculine, mature, strong, or "adult" (each client describes this gender empowerment in his own way), then same-sex attractions are less distracting, less compelling. When they are feeling good about themselves, feeling up, and feeling strong, their homosexual preoccupations markedly diminish. These clients also report the opposite: if they have experienced a setback or rejection, then spontaneous homosexual fantasies will increase to a level of preoccupation. Such feelings of disappointment, discouragement, or failure often lead to anonymous sexual encounters. This clinically observed relationship between negative feelings about oneself and same-sex fantasies and behavior tells us something about the deficit nature of homosexuality. Can we imagine a married man who would say, "When I'm feeling weak and unmasculine, I'm preoccupied with the need to make love to my wife"? And even more bizarre— "When I'm feeling good and strong about myself, I lose most of my desire to make love to my wife"? There is a motivation in the homosexual drive that has nothing to do with the sexual behavior per se, but all to do with a man's sense of himself.

Client testimonies offer strong evidence that in many homosexual men, same-sex eroticism is used as symbolic reparation of a deficit in masculine strength. Several clients have described what they found attractive in other men:

Client #1: Certain guys have a sense of freedom about them —that they could do whatever they want and get away with it. Like they don't even care, it's just so natural to them. That's what I'm attracted to—that inner freedom and power. Like my straight roommate, Bill, who used to say, "You can do just anything if you want to," and sometimes he did. I feel so constricted, like "Oh, I could never do that." I admired that, I wanted to have that power.

Client #2: I'm attracted to a guy having a lot of control. That power and control —I've always wanted to draw off of that, to be so together.

Client #3: The issue for me is disconnectedness from my masculine identity. I feel like an outsider when I'm with men. I don't feel accepted by them, and I have difficulty living out or expressing anything that I see as a masculine trait. Risk-taking is a masculine trait, and goal-setting requires a masculine energy that I feel very intimidated by. I've always had a tremendous craving for the masculine, whether it's a male friend or some activity that is

masculine, some kind of sports. Searching for different ways to reach that masculinity I feel detached from, I realize I don't really want to sexually pursue other men. I see that I'm trying to bond with them so that I can feel a part of them, connected with them, equal to them, and not to feel that I'm less and the other man's more.

Client #4: What is it that defines a man? What is it that is essential to men? Right away I blurt it out—power. A sense of power whether it's physical strength, power over others, or a power over oneself in the form of leadership. I just know what I *really* want and it's not him or his power, it's me — *what I want me to be*. I want to have all the assuredness I need—I don't want to be frightened of anything. I want to have the ability to deal with whatever comes my way and not want to just go into a room and close the door. I want to have the confidence to go ahead and pursue the kinds of friends that I have always wanted.

4. Identifying Masculinity

One of the earliest questions that must be addressed in psychotherapy is: exactly what is the client's perception of masculinity? And in what ways is he, and is he not, in possession of that masculinity? Many men beginning treatment report the sense they have somehow never completely grown up. They may have the sense of themselves as children, as boys. For many of these men, masculinity feels similar to, even synonymous with, adulthood. To feel masculine is to feel adult, and vice versa.

Essential for success in treatment is that the client learns to identify when he is feeling more or less masculine. With practice, he discovers that this is a subjective feeling experienced at different times with varying intensity. Taking stock of his deficits in masculine identity is important because it tells him what he seeks in other men. He may be quite surprised to realize that what he typically seeks in others, he himself feels deficient in. Sometimes he seeks father figures to lean on, or mirror images to bolster his sense of self. There may be a fascination with particular body types, mannerisms, or styles. A number of male clients report that it is a certain style of male strength that is attractive, particularly a confident, outgoing, energetic personal style. Repeatedly, homosexual clients express an admiration for the basic qualities inherent to masculinity: independence, control of one's life, assertion, self-assuredness, and, they will often say, a "physicalness." Within the first few sessions, the client can identify those particular traits he is attracted to, thus beginning the process of demystifying these men. Growth involves not just a behavioral change of giving up homoerotic behavior, but a deeper transformation of personal identification. It will enable him to feel different about himself, relate differently, to see the world from the perspective of a fully male-identified man. When one is in possession of his gender identity, he inherits along with it a vitalizing power.

5. Making Peace with the Father

Nicolosi notes that he is often amazed to see how adult men can become so upset by the briefest contact with their fathers. A weekend home or a telephone conversation can enrage or depress an otherwise rational 30-year-old man. These painful paternal encounters are often followed by a regressive phase that may impel the man back into anonymous sexual encounters. There is a particular quality of anger that usually characterizes the homosexual man's relationship to his father. While heterosexual men also report hostile relations with fathers, there is a qualitative difference. The heterosexual man's anger is usually accompanied by a resigned acceptance. But the homosexual man holds a profound grievance, a grudge, and a deep-seated antipathy that blocks acceptance. A frequent misunderstanding of many a client is that to accomplish resolution with father, he must gain his father's acceptance in the present. This misunderstanding is based upon the unconscious assumption that father has something he needs in order to outgrow his homosexuality. This idea is rooted in the client's early experience of father as having the power to share or withhold his masculinity.

A significant step in the client's treatment is the realization that it is now *he himself* who holds the power of transformation. Central to the attainment of that power is forgiveness of his father. The realization that healing comes from an attitudinal shift on his own part is particularly important in cases where father will not or cannot change. As one client said: "A lot of us know that our fathers aren't going to change. We will get as close as we can to our fathers and that's going to be it. We can't really change them because they'll always be the same way." Then, too, the client may also need to be reminded that the true damage was done not by father, *but by his own defensive detachment from him*. Now he is called to give up this defensive attitude toward all men, beginning with his father. Forgiveness of father is not an easy task because it often means accepting father for who he is, with his limitations, including his limited ability to demonstrate love, affection, and acceptance. It often feels like a death experience for a young man when he realizes that he must bury once and for all the fantasy of receiving his father's love. To understand and forgive and love his father is, paradoxically, to be father to his father—to give him what he, the son, would have desired. Compassion for father is the final step of forgiveness. Often compassion grows out of an understanding of his father's father, and how he treated his own son. Almost all of my clients report that their fathers have very little to say about their own fathers. Sometimes this "shadow father" can be traced back for two generations. Thus, the problem of homosexuality may have had its foundation laid in an earlier generation. As he grows in the resolution of his homosexuality, the client simultaneously begins to appreciate his father as a person and as a man. During this stage—to his initial annoyance—he discovers how much like his father he really is. Those same traits of explosive temper, rigid opinion, easy blame, and

difficulty in directly expressing feelings may equally belong to him. It is interesting to note that gay ideology continues to deny the important common denominator of these problems with father. This results in the ignoring of a key piece of evidence that homosexuality is a developmental failure. In fact there is a deep-seated tendency to refuse to concede any importance whatever to the father. Long ago, many gay men made the decision that father would play no role whatsoever in their lives. This defensive disregard for the importance of the father may in fact have contributed to psychoanalysis's early emphasis on mother, as analysts may have been misled by patients who preferred to spend time and money talking about mother.

6. Factors Affecting Prognosis

Motivation to change has repeatedly been found to be a primary predictor of success in treatment (Hatterer 1970, Mayerson and Lief 1965, Monroe and Enelow 1960, Ovesey 1969, Schwartz and Masters 1984, Stekel 1930, van den Aardweg 1985, 1986). Motivation means the client is unambivalent in rejecting a homosexual identity and is striving toward heterosexuality. Other indicators of favorable prognosis are lack of indulgence in self-pity, a positive sense of self, and the ego-strength to tolerate stress and frustration. Heterosexual fantasies and dreams are also strongly favorable. Also the stronger family relationships the client has, the better his prognosis. Traditional values and the sense of oneself as a member of heterosexual society are also strongly supportive in providing a framework from which to reflect on the homosexual experience. Clients who enter reparative therapy are strong in the conviction that psychological development does not come from a surrendering of identity into the gay subculture. Other factors in treatment success are the ability to resist impulsive behaviors and to postpone gratification, the ability to set goals, and the capacity to reflect upon, verbalize, and learn from past experiences. Clients who believe they have power in shaping their own destinies have a far greater likelihood of overcoming their homosexuality than do those who submit to a fatalistic attitude or who see life as happening to them. The ability to be honest with oneself and others is significant to treatment success, as is the ability to identify what one is feeling. An appreciation for the value of gender differences also does much to support the treatment plan. Those men who have been less sexually active have better prognoses. Considering the habit-forming nature of sexual behavior, the more homosexually active the client is, the more difficult the course of treatment. For this reason, gay-affirmative counseling services situated on high school campuses can be detrimental, because they actively support early homosexual behavior. If that same adolescent desires to grow into heterosexuality in adulthood, he will then have to face not only the burden of breaking a sexual-habit pattern, but also the gay self-identification that his behavioral patterns have fostered. Two final qualities that are of the utmost value — second only to motivation to change — are *patience* with oneself and an *acceptance* of the ongoing nature of the struggle.

Age Factors

The average age for a homosexual client entering reparative therapy is early twenties to early thirties. Many other therapists have made the observation that this is the age group most receptive to treatment (Bieber 1962, Mayerson and Lief 1965, Rubenstein 1958).

This is the time of young adulthood, when friends are getting married and family is exerting pressure to do likewise. There is a line from *The Boys in the Band* that after age 30, you can no longer introduce your lover as a roommate. Social pressure, however, is not the only impetus. This is a time when the natural desire to enter into an exclusive relationship is most intensely felt and when the choice must be made for either Isolation or Adult Intimacy (Erickson 1958). One must now make a lifelong relational commitment, and one must know what gender that partner will be. Treatment before the early twenties has its particular difficulties. The teenager is experiencing his sexual drive at its most intense, and after years of secrecy, isolation, and alienation, most young men find the gay world powerfully alluring, with its romantic, sensual, outrageous, and embracing qualities. At the same time that libidinal drive is at its highest, personal identity is at its most fragile. At this time the adolescent wants to experience. Although he may later have a change of heart, to propose a treatment requiring self-reflection, conviction, and self-denial is almost more than he can bear. Nicolosi's only successful treatment with an adolescent was a 17-year-old whose outstanding advantage was an enthusiastically supportive family and social network, with every significant person in his life committed to helping him change his life direction. Prognosis is also poorer with older men over 35. For too many, their deeply ingrained sexual patterns have made them cynical about change. However, there is evidence of positive outcomes with highly motivated older men, especially those who have only been sporadically sexually active.

Cure

Growth through reparative therapy is in one way like the gay model of coming out of the closet. That is, it is an ongoing process. Usually some homosexual desires will persist or recur during certain times in the life cycle. Therefore, rather than "cure," we refer to the goal of "change," a meaning shift beginning with a change in identification of self. As one married ex-gay man described it: "For many years I thought I was gay. I finally realized I was not a homosexual, but really a heterosexual man with a homosexual problem." Within that essential change in view of self are new ways of understanding the nature of homosexual behavior and its motivational basis in unmet early love needs. One client who had been in reparative therapy for about a year described his feelings as follows: "What my homosexual feelings used to be, they aren't now. They're still around, they're still there, but they're not as upsetting. The improvement is in how they affect me emotionally, how much they shake me up, affect my self-esteem-how compulsive they are, how much I am preoccupied by them."

Another man, a former female impersonator, now married with three teenage sons, commented, "Now those homosexual fantasies are more like a gnat buzzing around my ear." Another man explained: "A problem that used to have a capital 'H' now has a small 'h.' "

While some therapies focus directly on heterosexual conversion, reparative therapy takes a wider view of the homosexual condition as it affects issues of personal power, gender identity, and self-image. Reparative therapy views change as a long-term process, and one that is in fact most probably lifelong. One 25-year-old client explained his process of change in the following letter: "I've been in group therapy now for 13 months, and I can say this time has been the most revealing, growthful, and important period in my life. My love for my Catholic faith originally led me to seek help for my homosexuality, as I felt guilty and unhappy. However, today I continue to come to therapy because I am motivated by my own progress and the progress of the other men in the group. The therapy has helped me understand a lot about myself, my past, and the things that have contributed to my situation. For example, my father left my mother when I was 3 years old, and I grew up never having a close male figure to identify or bond with. Consequently I never felt a true sense of maleness about myself, and as I grew up, I never really felt like one of the guys. This eventually led to an exclusive attraction to males, which I remember started around age six. Therapy has broken down most of the fantasy world I had built up around other males. My self-esteem and sense of masculinity have improved, and this is reflected in my success at work and my newly established male friendships. I have even started dating, and now I definitely see marriage and children in my future. While my relationship with my father is still not so good, I have made him aware of my situation and he has shown compassion. The attraction to other men has still not gone away completely, but it has certainly diminished. Other men who used to both intimidate and attract me are much less threatening today. While I do not think that my same-sex attraction will disappear 100 percent, I do think I will reach a point where my attraction to the opposite sex prevails, and I will be able to move on with my life. All of this growth comes about, I have found, through the wholesome male friendships which I have learned how to develop through therapy, a prayer life, and the sacraments of my church. If our use of the word *change* rather than *cure* sounds pessimistic, one should consider the use of the word *cure* as it applies to other psychiatric conditions. Indeed, except for the most elementary behavior-modification programs such as smoking-cessation and treatment of certain phobias, no psychological treatment can be conceptualized in terms of absolute cure. The alcoholic is never fully cured of his desire to drink, but successful treatment does offer him an effective way of dealing with his lifelong condition. The client with low self-esteem is never fully freed of his doubts and insecurities, but he grows in self-assurance. And are the issues of Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACAs) ever no longer their issues? So rather than "cure" of homosexuality, we should think in terms of growth, by laying the right foundation of healthy nonerotic male relationships. Then for some, celibacy will be the solution; for others, heterosexual marriage is the hoped-for goal. The validity of any therapy —no matter what the treatment method or goal —is found in its overall effect on the life of the client. Good therapy must do more than alleviate a specific symptom. If the

treatment is right for the person, then the freedom and well-being it brings will radiate throughout all aspects of the personality. Most important, the move to health will bring a growing awareness of personal power.

7. Reparative Therapy as Initiation

Most models of psychotherapy can be placed in one of two categories: "masculine-initiatory" or "feminine- unfolding." The unfolding model reflects the feminine psyche, and views the person as having a relatively harmonious relationship to life. Assuming that a client is given an accepting setting and ample time, it trusts the natural momentum from within to carry him to his fullest identity. The humanistic schools of psychology and, in particular, the Rogerian school, typify this approach to psychotherapy. Because the consciousness of our times has become increasingly feminine, it is relatively easy for the reader to understand this unfolding model of personal development. Whereas the feminine function is to integrate and consolidate, masculine consciousness divides, names, and individuates. Masculine consciousness is generally thought of as crude, harsh, and somehow unhumanistic, and it has fallen from favor in today's therapeutic community. Of less popularity today, therefore, is the masculine-initiatory therapeutic process. Initiatory therapy reflects the typically linear masculine mind with its one-dimensional sense of progression: "I will move from here to there." There is a tendency to conceptualize sequentially, viewing progress as consisting of a series of tasks or trials for which there is a "win" or "lose." This hierarchical achievement mentality is witnessed at men's fraternity initiations and other such rites of passage. Initiatory treatment is designed to accommodate this special function of the masculine psyche. In therapy, men need milestones to assess their progress. They generally have difficulty talking directly about their emotional experiences and relationships, and are inclined to express themselves obliquely through events, tasks, and objects. Women tend to find such frames of reference less necessary. For them, a felt sense of progress assures that there has been improvement. In the realm of personal development, a man's need for scorekeeping may, in the final analysis, be impractical. But though we may dismiss a man's desire for such tangible results as unsophisticated, a truly effective therapy for men will satisfy this masculine mode of personal development. Throughout human history a boy's passage into manhood has always been marked by some sort of initiatory trial. Mircea Eliade said that every human existence consists of a series of initiatory trials or ordeals through which man created himself. When we look closely at these rites of passage, we see that they always involve some sort of decisive choice or struggle. The masculine-initiation treatment therefore requires systematic acts of will and determination, often requiring the decision to go counter to what is easiest or most pleasurable. Its philosophy is, "If we wait for it to happen, it may never happen." This philosophy finds analogy in embryology. Unless the fetus undergoes secondary hormonal changes, it remains female. This is referred to as the "Eve first, then Adam" principle (Money 1988). Similarly, if masculine-identity tasks are not completed, one remains feminine. Reparative therapy trusts less in the spontaneous

revelatory process and places more responsibility on the client, expecting him to take charge of his destiny, with the therapist as mentor. The therapist plays a particularly directive role in this type of therapy. Whereas in the unfolding model the therapist elicits change and growth through a relatively passive presence, the initiatory therapist is actively present and challenging. He assumes a more instructive role in the treatment, facilitating growth as a mentor, leader, model, and coach. On the one hand he is supportive, and on the other, confrontative, like the salient father. He conveys confidence that gender empowerment and developmental completion are attainable. Masculine- initiatory treatment is particularly suited for the problem of homosexuality, in view of one of the origins of the condition, namely, an initiatory failure.

8. Ego-strengthening and Self-assertion

A fragmented or wounded identity in any aspect—especially in one so very profound as gender identity —always diminishes ego strength and personal power. Intrinsic power comes from a clear sense of "I am," the determination that "I will," and the confidence that "I can" (Horner 1989). Resolution of homosexual feelings is associated with the development of personal power. The client is well on the way to healing when he himself becomes more of the man he finds attractive in others. As stated earlier, we do not sexualize what we identify with; when we identify with someone, we are no longer sexually attracted to them. It is always to the other-than-ourselves that we are drawn. Ask a man with a homosexual condition what he is attracted to, and he will most likely tell you confidence, self-possession, and a take-charge attitude in his life. Ask a woman what she finds attractive in a man, and she will usually say the same things as the homosexual —because she too lacks these masculine qualities. That is not to say that she does not possess power, but she possesses it in the feminine form.

Homosexual attraction occurs most intensely when the client attempts new ways of asserting his masculine power. Confronting a colleague or boss, changing careers, moving out on his own all call upon an inner strength at variance with his old patterns of passivity, compliance, and compromise. As if exercising an undeveloped muscle, he quickly feels drained and fatigued. There is often the sensation of being out of control. However much he may not want to give in to it, sexual contact with another man briefly short-circuits the stress of having to strive for his own masculine assertion. Failure of the early family environment to nurture more than the false "good little boy" image has fostered this assumption that he is weak and fragile. Unwanted sexual acting out is also often preceded by a general sense of disconnectedness with one's feelings, one's body, and one's environment. Boredom, anxiety, and depression inhibit the natural energy flow of the emotions, disconnect a man from his true self, and block his awareness of personal power. Not knowing how to renew himself, he uses the excitement of a sexual encounter to "jump start" the flow of emotions, to spark up the power. A client in group therapy said: "I feel like an alcoholic

who is sobering up. After three months in therapy I now feel more in touch with reality and I am excited about the future. Assertion is my major issue. I am almost never assertive. I have always tended to avoid confrontations, or I confront in a defensive, anxious way instead of honestly and openly. It is an exhausting pattern. I know it has had a lot to do with my destructive sexual habits and perversions. As I assert myself and remain "sober" and aware, the patterns diminish. Also my relationships become more genuine and less defensive. My self-esteem is growing. My masculinity is something I am just beginning to develop. Through forthrightness with other men, I am slowly discovering it." Gradually the client will outgrow the old sense of being left out, unappreciated, and easily slighted. Rather than seeking out attention, he will begin to assert himself and reach out to other men. As he begins to experience himself as generous and resourceful in his relationships with other males, he will outgrow the unconscious tendency to feel less powerful and in the receiving mode. Overcoming the unconscious assumption that he is hurt and helpless requires the client to continually challenge himself with new tasks. During therapy he is encouraged to look for practical opportunities that will lead to change and growth. In so doing, he becomes alert to a sense of inner momentum. As one client said: "I've always approached challenges obliquely—now I'm learning to hit things straight on." As our training in assertion progresses, we address a number of related issues, including the sense of victimization, compromise of self for approval of other men, and hostile dependency. Often men report a tendency to "lose" themselves to another man, followed by anger at having to compromise themselves to gain the other's acceptance.

9. Bonding

In recent years we have often heard the popular term *bonding*, usually in regard to male relationships. Described in 1969 by Tiger, it results from a selective process in which two individuals choose each other because of a mutual valuing of certain qualities. Bonding conveys a self-esteem to the two individuals because they have chosen each other through the selection process. Bonding relationships are characterized by familiarity, trust, and disclosure. In such a relationship the false self is dropped, permitting honest communication with another. Male bonding characteristically occurs through a shared physical activity or common task. Unlike women, who can sit face-to-face and disclose directly, men bond indirectly through a shared doing. It is this bonding that fosters male identification. Because they probably had few male friends in childhood and adolescence, most homosexual men missed the phase of masculine initiation, when their peers gathered in groups to tell jokes and exaggerated stories about courageous exploits, conquests with girls, and so on. The bonding that results from this male camaraderie ultimately serves the purpose of reinforcing a sense of masculine identity. Having been detached from this youthful ritual, the homosexual adult still needs to find this sense of masculine connectedness. One client reports: "Being friends . . . has ignited a fire inside me. This whole feeling of confidence I attribute to my new male friends. The idea of having a best friend who you can tell things to

just seems to keep moving me." Another said: "Having male friends feels like it's restarting the developmental clock—even though developmentally, some of us are much older."

These initial attempts at male bonding in adulthood sometimes stimulate fears over personal boundary and power issues. Beneath these fears is a basic issue of trust. The client is challenged to look through the confusion and misperceptions, not to be distracted by misplaced anger, nor to withdraw from the challenge through a false, compliant self. He is challenged to overcome feelings of unworthiness and self-condemnation. Gradually he will learn how to show vulnerability and ask for help, and to be transparent and receptive to the lessons other men can teach him.

10. The Challenge of Verbalization

Effective self-expression is often a significant issue for homosexual men. This is understandable since effective self-expression is *the* medium of interpersonal assertion. To speak up is part of the masculine character. So frequently presented during the course of therapy are the complaints of silent, smouldering anger and lack of assertion, that they are considered predictable symptoms of the homosexual problem. The man may feel weak and incapable of speaking up for himself, sensing himself to be speechless or paralyzed; or he may express himself in a reactionary, provocative, and therefore equally self-defeating manner.

Although homosexual men have the reputation of being highly verbal, my clinical experience has shown many men to have difficulty articulating needs and wants directly and decisively. As little boys these men were not encouraged to articulate their needs and wants, and individualistic expression was not well received within the family system. Heterosexual men are said to have more difficulty expressing their feelings; however the homosexual man's difficulty seems to lie in following through with his expression of feelings into verbalization of needs and wants, thus obtaining practical results. He may do a fine job in expressing hurt, frustration, anger, injustice, loneliness, that is, complaints, but falter in making direct and decisive requests of other persons. As one client explains: "I set my questions up carefully so I can read the answer between the lines before it comes. I try to manipulate an answer so I don't get a 'no.' A clear emphatic request might get me a clear, emphatic 'no,' and I'm afraid to hear that." The unstructured format of group therapy poses a special challenge to each member to decide how he will solicit the group's assistance. Through spoken or unspoken consensus, the group must decide who will speak, for how long, about what, and for what purpose. Responsibility is placed upon each man to determine for himself his needs and wants in relation to the other members' needs and wants. Group therapy participation also challenges clients to give up the old habit of passive listening. Passive listening is a removed, self-centered hearing that stimulates self-associations rather than placing the emphasis on the speaker's unique experience. Passive listening as a form of defensive detachment perpetuates emotional isolationism. Active listening, on the other hand, is a felt connection with the speaker in which the listener allows himself an internal,

felt response to what is being said. This felt response will naturally be accompanied by a behavioral response such as advice, questions, or comments.

11. Growing Out of the False Self

The homosexual man often carries a false self from childhood—a presentation of the "good little boy" who compromises his true self to comply with the expectations of one or both parents. This false self can manifest itself in one of two extremes. It can be an overanimated, theatrical, exaggerated presentation of self, in which there is an excessive expenditure of energy; or it can take the form of dreaminess, passive detachment, and a blase, above-it-all withholding of personal energy. What makes change especially hard for this client is that he has not yet discovered what will replace the old, familiar false self. He hopes but does not yet fully believe that he *can* grow into a new sense of self with peace, a mature perspective on life, self-possession, and the capacity for intimacy and trust. To counter the tendency to get bogged down-by indecision, self-doubt, and helplessness, the therapist must strike that optimal balance between pressure and support. He must continually nurture the client's awareness of his personal power, while bringing attention to new challenges. In the middle of a client's long, detailed story of complaint, I often interrupt to ask, "So, what is it that you want?" This simple intervention is a way of returning him to his inner-directedness.

12. Competition

Ex-gay writer and counselor Colin Cook describes an impression he had one day when walking down a path leading to a lake. From behind him came four or five young men in their early twenties, who hurtled past him down the path and threw themselves into the water. Colin watched them wrestling with each other and playing roughly in the lake—diving, laughing, throwing each other under, and playing ball. Watching them, Colin knew without doubt that they were heterosexual (Cook 1990). Since the homosexual client is usually inclined to avoid competition, therapy must involve a test of his resources. Those clients more advanced heterosexually are usually quicker to seize opportunities, to confront challenges on the job, and to speak up effectively (but not reactively) to male authority. Competition is important — to experience a struggle of power, to match one's strength against an equal other. We know that "Iron sharpens iron; so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). Typically, the prehomosexual boy misses the physical contact of rough-and-tumble play with father, and later, he does not take part in the physical competitions characteristic of his age. While he was often looking on from a safe distance, his peers were roughing it up and feeling their strength against one another. Masculinity is inherently connected with the body, and when one is out of contact with bodily activity, it diminishes the sense of masculinity. Nicolosi's clients report that when they engage in vigorous physical activity, especially competitive sports, they feel more masculine. In time, most members of the group develop some male, sports-related interests. For one person, this may mean hiking

with a friend, for another, it is playing tennis once a week with a co-worker. For yet another, it is going to the gym, a particularly "straight" gym where there are no distractions. One client describes the connection between physical activity and masculinity: While I wrestle with a friend or play a hard game of racquetball I feel real masculine. I may be thirty, but something clicks and there's an acceleration in me, an energy, and I feel real masculine. I have no attraction to the guys I play racquetball with . . . he's male, I'm male, I'm on a par with that person. I played racquetball the other day, then we got the usual after-game drink, Gatorade. . . . That's what you're supposed to drink. It felt good to be sweaty. Then I looked out and there was a newsstand and a singles magazine. There was a woman on it and I was attracted to her. I thought, "Where is that girl now that I'm ready for her?" I remember as a kid, I must have been five, I loved wrestling, pounding those other kids. But somewhere along the line it became a "violent sport" to me and I stopped because I wasn't supposed to be violent. But I just loved the contact and I don't understand where that shut off and I began to change. I'm sort of angry at myself for stopping. A lot of times I blame myself. If I had pushed myself and not stopped-not succumbed-I feel like I might be different today." Although gay apologists often describe the historical competitiveness among men as a source of social evil, we in fact see competition as a natural and ingrained part of the male psyche. Competition can be a barrier to male intimacy, but it is the way in which men discover their masculine strength. In fact, it may be the only way.

13. Nonsexual Male Relationships

As we have seen, central to the repairing of homosexuality is the establishment of nonsexual intimate relationships with men. Same-sex friendships have shown themselves to be therapeutic in the lives of men who, without psychotherapy, discovered their own ways of dealing with homosexuality. One such man was the great linguistic philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein. In 1919, Wittgenstein left the family home and took up lodgings in Vienna. As his biographer explains: Wittgenstein was now to find the third district, selected for its convenience, convenient in an unexpected way. By walking for ten minutes ... he could quickly reach the parkland meadows of the Prater, where rough young men were ready to cater to him sexually. Once he had discovered this place, Wittgenstein found to his horror that he could scarcely keep away from it. Several nights each week he would break away from his rooms and make the quick walk to the Prater, possessed, as he put it to friends, by a demon he could barely control. [Bartley 1985, p. 40] His solution was twofold: Wittgenstein would seek milieux or situations satisfying two conditions: to be removed from the temptation of easy and casual sexual relationships with street youths, and such like; and to be surrounded by youths with whom he could enjoy platonic relationships that would "bring him to life." Thus a series of close friendships developed with good looking young men of sweet and docile disposition. . . . toward whom Wittgenstein could become emotionally very much attached . . . friendships, then, he used as moral encounters; within them he became creative, intimate, even playful. [pp. 42-43] In short, Wittgenstein dealt with his conflict by

resolving "to live in a way that will make what is problematic disappear" (p. 42) —through non-erotic male friendships. As one client explained: "Having friends has been the whole problem since I was a child. It's easier for me to make friends with men that are physically smaller or less aggressive than I am. It is a challenge for me to go out and seek out men who intimidate me when they are typical stereotypes of males. When I am able to be friends with those people that I've often been intimidated by. . . it reaffirms my own masculinity. Often that was my problem in growing up. Instead of just trying to be friends with a certain boy, I would put myself down by thinking, I *can't* be friends with him because I'm not as good as him. Now that I'm an adult, when I am able to be friends with such a man, this sexual area just diminishes. And it reaffirms my masculinity because I know that I'm able to be close to such a person without sexualizing him." Another example of the natural diminishing of homosexuality through male friendships is found in Green's *The Sissy Boy Syndrome* (1987). He describes a boy in whom "the sexual need for males is seen as a substitute for nonsexual attention from males." The young man says: I think I have found the attention I need from guys through my friends ... so the sexual or romantic interest has declined. ... As I came to be friends with people with whom I can discuss very personal feelings, then the need to perhaps have sex with them, or think about having sex with them, disappeared. ... I knew that I did not share many common interests with guys my age, and I had a sense that that was wrong. Now I have common interests with my friends. I no longer have a sense of the way I was, not being interested in sports or things like that, as bad, as negative. [pp. 365-366]. Green, who does not believe homosexuals can change in both fantasy and behavior, did not know what to make of this case. He simply called it "atypical of the sample studied" and did not investigate the young man further (private correspondence). Leonardo da Vinci was also said to have suffered from a homosexual problem. He chose the opposite course, however, and isolated himself from close male friendships. This may have contributed to his years of reputed loneliness and depression. Freud (1911) believed homosexuals who redirected their sexual energy into social service were among those who contributed the most to society. He described "those who set themselves against an indulgence in sensual acts" through the sublimation of erotic interests as "distinguished by taking a particularly active share in the general interests of humanity" (p. 61).

The perennial dream of finding the ideal male friendship with qualities of sexual and romantic excitement locks the gay man into an addictive and perpetually frustrating cycle. To free himself from this cycle he must learn to appreciate a relaxed friendship without sexual excitement. At first this feels for some like "making do with less," settling for the colorless ordinariness of male friendship. He is likely to be cynical about "boring, common" friendships.

14. Problems in Homosexual-Heterosexual Male Friendships

It has been observed that girls put relationships first and group activities second, whereas boys do exactly the opposite (Sanford and Lough 1988). This difference in priorities also tends to distinguish homosexual men from heterosexuals. Many homosexuals express difficulty in developing friendships with heterosexual men. Although homosexual men may desire to "share feelings," straight guys are more likely to want to relate through shared activities. The homosexual man is often ill prepared to relate through sports or tasks. One client, expressing this frustration, said: Straight men talk about sports, because it's safe. But that's a real trap for us because of our need. We want a greater amount of disclosure, but when we go for that it only makes matters worse because all they want to do is talk about sports. It feels like a real catch-22; you have to talk about something really uninteresting to you in order to make the connection. You've got to talk sports before you can get to the guy's feelings. Another client agreed: "It's got to be, like-'What are your true feelings about the Rams?' " Sometimes this attitude leads the homosexual to the belief that he is superior to the common man. As a consequence of his sexual orientation, he is supposedly more sensitive, artistic, cultured—somehow more elite—than the ordinary straight man. We see this elitism not only in individuals, but as a characteristic of some gay groups as well.

Categories of Male Friendships

Let us consider four categories of male friendships for the homosexual in increasing order of their reparative value:

Gay friendships create the possibility of erotic attraction and a mutually exploitative sexual agenda. Honest friendship is contaminated by flirtation and vague innuendoes, with each looking for cues of sexual receptivity from the other. Mutual game-playing and manipulation undermine efforts at establishing equality and mutuality, and diminish the value of this type of relationship.

Celibate homosexual friendships with other non-gay homosexuals offer an empathy and special understanding. However they are limited in their potential to break down the male mystique, which is usually reserved for the straight man. Challenges to these relationships include mutually reactive defensive detachment and same-sex ambivalence. These friendships are preparation for the more challenging relationship with the heterosexual male, who is usually less understanding of the homosexual's challenge.

Heterosexual, nonsexually attractive friendships have somewhat more value. Life circumstances often put the client into contact with such men, but he feels no motivation to establish a friendship. When the man seems ordinary, and the old familiar sexual attraction is

missing, there is often a contempt for him, and he typically seems uninteresting or boring. However, such friendships can offer the opportunity for male bonding. Of particular therapeutic value, though, is the client's disclosure of his homosexual struggle to the straight friend. A very risky and anxiety-producing challenge, this disclosure should be a prudent, calculated gamble. However if it is met with understanding, a very healing experience will result. The exchange will bring the friendship to a new depth of honesty and intimacy, and it will break down yet another rationalization that perpetuates defensive detachment ("If he really knew me, he would never accept me").

Heterosexual, sexually attractive male friendships with men for whom the client feels an erotic attraction offer the greatest opportunity for healing. Only through such associations can there be the transformation from erotic attraction to true friendship—that is, the demystifying of the distant male. While aesthetic appreciation for the man's good looks and masculine qualities may always be present, it will become increasingly evident that sexual fantasies do not fit within the mutually respectful friendship. As the client experiences increasing acceptance and familiarity, over time this grows into identification, and the original sexual feelings naturally diminish. This transformational shift from *sexual* to *fraternal* (i.e., eros to philia) is the essential healing experience of male homosexuality.

15. The Transformation

A perceptual meaning transformation occurs in the course of treatment as the client becomes increasingly aware of his true motivations. He realizes what he has always suspected—that an identification deficit lies behind his homoerotic attractions. Insight and self-awareness unavoidably alter the erotic illusion. Like a theatre patron who witnesses a prop fall during a scene in a play, he can never see the scene in the same illusional way. This meaning transformation is described by a client in one of his sessions:

Client: In the past weeks I've noticed a difference in my attraction to guys I see on the streets. Sure there's an attraction there, but I'm getting bored with the whole thing. Before, not a half hour would pass after a sexual encounter, before I'd want to be back out cruising again. But now I feel the futility of it ahead of time. It used to be I'd feel the futility of it afterward, but now I feel it ahead of time.

Therapist: That's an essential part of the cure. . . . just seeing through to the end and that futility.

Client: Yes . . . (laugh) but now I want to get to the place where I don't even have the attraction . . . just the futility, that's all.

Therapist: Well, that's going to happen. As you progress, the experience of attraction and futility will occur closer together in time.

Client: Sometimes I find myself pushing away the futility by embellishing the attraction with sexual fantasy. Whereas the fantasy used to take over on its own, now I see myself trying to push the energy into fantasizing in order to postpone the inevitable futility. In some ways I'm trying to hang onto the old familiar feelings.

Another client described a sexual experience as follows:

In the middle of it all, I suddenly felt like a kid. All of a sudden I thought, "I'm just a kid playing 'touch me' games to see what the other guy is like." Like two little kids discovering sexuality games for the first time. Like, "Well, do you have the same thing I have?" There was the feeling that I was just making up for something I missed in childhood. Touching him felt juvenile and stupid, like there was nothing real beyond this.

16. Relationships with Women

When a young man who is homosexual encounters an attractive woman, his defensive maneuver is to stay on the level of friendship. Being friends with a woman is very easy, and he can talk for hours in a comfortable, familiar way. This kind of relationship is so familiar because it is much of what he did in childhood with mother, sisters, and their female friends. The task to accomplish here is to move beyond the interactional role of the "good little boy" that he learned to play in childhood. The good-little-boy role—a distorted creation of the unhealthy feminine—may have been fostered by mother to gratify her frustrations in an unhappy marriage. Expecting such a man to move beyond platonic friendships with women is to set him up for almost certain failure. One main cause for past psychoanalytic treatment failures was the premature encouragement of heterosexual relations. Prior theory—which emphasized the overpossessive mother—viewed the homosexual as fearful of women (heterophobic). Ironically, it is actually his fear of *men* that leaves the homosexual developmentally unready to approach a woman sexually. Although it might be very easy for the client to become friends with a woman, it may be impossible for him to sexualize the friendship. On the other hand, the sexual attraction to men will be immediate, but he will have to work on the friendship. Romantic relationships with women have actually little or no value in therapy until the latter stages. When I encouraged clients to develop these relationships before they were ready, they came back reporting that they felt uncomfortable, artificial, and dishonest. They saw themselves as having used the woman in an experiment. Because their feelings could not match their behavior, they believed the relationship was exploitative, and universally they returned with a sense of failure. Not only did these clinical attempts to encourage dating prove fruitless and frustrating, but the pressure they created

eroded my relationship with the client. These men invariably talked about male relationships as more significant, more intense, more satisfying, and more relevant.

17. Bibliotherapy

Reparative therapy is strongly supported by bibliotherapy—the therapeutic utilization of books and other reading material. Availability of audio tapes, video cassettes, periodicals from ex-gay groups, and other educational sources outside the therapy setting offers support for the often lonely personal struggle. There are many outreach groups such as Exodus International, Courage, Homosexuals Anonymous, Regeneration, and Love in Action, which offset the demoralizing confusion created by gay propaganda and the popular media of our culture.

CONCLUSION: In this lesson, we have deeply examined the various cures to male homosexuality, which has as its root cause, the lack of masculinity that the son has not achieved due to a dysfunctional relationship with the father. This basic need of masculinity leads to many other problems that homosexuality is accompanied by including low self-esteem, lack of empowerment, and being assertive, problems with verbalization, and self-acceptance. Homosexuality, as explained by Nicolosi, is a mental illness that results from a dysfunctional family relationship, but it can be treated and there are many examples of homosexuals, after having therapy, have gone on to having a heterosexual normal life, getting married and having children.

VERSE TO REMEMBER: “If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood *shall be* upon them” (Leviticus 20:13).

8. Male Homosexuality – Causes, Cures, and Prevention – Part III

SERVANT PREPARATION:

VERSE & REFERENCES:

“Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged” (Colossians 3:20-21).

The main reference for this lesson is an excellent book with Nicolosi titled “A Parent’s Guide to Preventing Homosexuality.”

LESSON PREPARATION

OBJECTIVES

Lesson Objective: The objective of this lesson is for the parents to understand their role in the Christian, normal, healthy upbringing of their children. Parents must not only love their kids, but they must have a keen interest in their lives, be their friend, and mentor. It is this type of closeness that prevents disasters such as homosexuality and lesbianism. Fathers must teach their sons how to be men, they must teach their sons masculinity, and help them achieve it. Fathers must never neglect or abuse their children, nor should they have a disposition for which the children reject them. Fathers must help instill self-esteem in their daughters by praising them and acknowledging their talents and their beauty. The father must initiate the spirituality in the home by encouraging Bible reading, prayer, attending church, and being an active member of the church congregation. The same is true for mothers. Mothers must not be overbearing or controlling of her children. The mother must be kind, loving, compassionate, and a peacemaker in the home. She must foster and allow her children to develop healthy and normal personalities and self-esteem that will empower them to be strong with self-assurance and confidence. The mother must also emphasize and encourage spirituality in the home and be a good example to her kids. She must also live a life of Bible reading, prayer, and going to church. With strong parent-child and father-mother relationships and a strong Christian support system through the church, the child will succeed in life and not suffer from serious psychological conditions such as homosexuality.

INTRODUCTION:

Jacob, a twenty-five-year-old client, had been in treatment for several months because of depression about his unwanted homosexuality. One day—driven by feelings of both sadness and anger—he confronted his mother: He told her, “Mom, you saw me play with Barbie dolls. You allowed me to use makeup and to fix my hair in front of the mirror for hours. My brothers never did any of this. Why didn’t you stop me? What were you thinking?” Jacob later said, “I have no doubt that Mom had wanted the best for me. But she had nothing to say. She just sat there and looked at me, stunned and tearful. Dr. Nicolosi notes that for many years, he has worked with homosexual men who are profoundly dissatisfied by their same-sex attractions. Gay life did not work for them, and they all suspected, on some level, that events in their early lives had laid the foundation for their homosexual feelings.

The fact is, there is a high correlation between gender nonconformity in boyhood and adult homosexuality. Most of the men Dr. Nicolosi counsels were not as feminine in boyhood as Jacob—they did not play with dolls or dress like girls. But just the same, there were telltale signs of conflict and doubt about claiming their gender; particularly, there was a disturbing fear that they somehow did not fit in with other boys. And yet their parents—the vast majority of whom loved their children very much and sought the best for them—often missed the early warning signs and waited too long to seek help for their children. One reason for this is that the mental health profession is not telling them the truth about their children’s gender confusion. Parents have no idea what, if anything, to do about it.

Perpetuating Gender Stereotypes?

We cannot go along with people who—many of them within the mental health profession—say that each of us can “be whatever we want to be,” in terms of gender identity or sexual orientation. They speak as if being gay or lesbian did not have the deepest consequences for us as individuals, for our culture, and for the human race. They speak as if our anatomy was in no way our destiny. They imply that when we help our children to grow more fully into the maleness or femaleness that is their created destiny, we are merely perpetuating outdated gender stereotypes. But the human race was designed male and female; there is no third gender. Furthermore, civilization has shown us that the natural human family (father, mother and children), with all its faults, is the best possible environment for the nurturing of future generations. Have we really gotten it all wrong for so many hundreds of centuries? Are we going to cast all of history aside, in favor of the latest TV show about the glories of gender bending? As one prominent psychoanalyst, Dr. Charles Socarides, says, “Nowhere do parents say, ‘It makes no difference to me if my child is homosexual or heterosexual.’ Given a choice, most parents would prefer that their children not find themselves involved in homosexual behavior. It is fashionable in intellectual circles to believe that we human beings have no innate “human nature” and that the essence of being human is the freedom to redefine ourselves as we wish. But what good can freedom bring us, if it is used in defiance of who we are?

Some things, we would argue, are not redefinable. If indeed normality is “that which functions according to its design”—and we believe that to be true—then nature calls upon us to fulfill our destinies as male and female. In this lesson, we will use the following terms interchangeably: *prehomosexual*, *gender-conflicted*, *gender-confused*, and *gender-disturbed*. All of those conditions have the potential to lead to a homosexual outcome. *Gender-identity disorder* (GID) refers to a psychiatric condition that is an extreme example of this same problem of internal gender conflict. In GID the child is unhappy with his or her biological sex. Many of the children we describe—in the course of their development toward homosexuality—fell short of the strict criteria for a clinical diagnosis of GID, but the warning signs of gender conflict and homosexuality were there nonetheless.

At Odds with the Mental Health Profession

Today’s mass media convey the message that men ought to be encouraged to discover a homosexual or bisexual identity. “Isn’t sexual diversity wonderful?” they ask. A number of TV and movie producers (some of whom are gay themselves) try to persuade us with idealized coming-out-of-the-closet stories. We believe their efforts are misguided attempts to encourage what is actually the unfortunate situation in which too many of our young people find themselves. Of course, in taking this view, Dr. Nicolosi is often at odds with members of his own profession. Those who oppose me say the 1973 decision by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to remove homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM) has settled the issue: homosexuality is normal. But that 1973 decision was made (as even some gay activists have noted) under heavy political pressure from gay activism. The removal of homosexuality from the DSM had the effect of discouraging treatment and research. When it became “common knowledge” that homosexuality was “not a problem,” clinicians were discouraged—and in many cases, prevented—from expressing opinions to the contrary or presenting papers at professional meetings. Soon scientific journals became largely silent on homosexuality as a developmental problem. In fact, as of now, the American Psychological Association refuses to cooperate in any way with the National Association of Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) because they disagree with NARTH’s view that the condition is a developmental disorder. Furthermore, they believe that a scientific position of this sort “contributes to the climate of prejudice and discrimination to which gay, lesbian and bisexual people are subject.” In effect, the APA has placed a moratorium on debate about this subject. This silence among researchers was not brought about by new scientific evidence showing homosexuality to be a healthy variant of human sexuality. Rather, it became fashionable simply not to discuss the condition anymore as a problem. Homosexuality was reported and discussed the way one reports the evening news—as something that “just is,” like the next day’s weather. Ronald Bayer, a researcher from the Hastings Center for Ethics in New York, summarized the entire process. “The American Psychiatric Association,” wrote Bayer, “had fallen victim to the disorder of a tumultuous era, when disruptive elements threatened to politicize every aspect of American social life. A furious egalitarianism . . . compelled psychiatric experts to negotiate the pathological status of homosexuality with homosexuals themselves.”

The result—homosexuality’s removal from the psychiatric manual of disorders— came about not through a rational process of scientific reasoning, “but was instead an action demanded by the ideological temper of the times.”

Prevention: A Growing Need

Before the APA’s decision in 1973, it was accepted practice to try to prevent homosexuality. The condition was a disorder, and disordered sexual-identity development should be avoided whenever possible. Few previous books have been written for parents other than the 1968 classic *Growing Up Straight* by Peter and Barbara Wyden. Since the removal of homosexuality from the diagnostic manual, the only book written by a clinician on prevention has been Dr. George Rekers’s *Growing Up Straight: What Every Family Should Know About Homosexuality* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982). Then there was a recent book aimed at Christian families, *An Ounce of Prevention* by Don Schmierer (Nashville: Word, 1998), which offers scientifically grounded words of practical wisdom from a seasoned pastoral counselor.

Most of the parents of prehomosexual children who seek therapy are people of religious faith— Catholic, Protestant, Mormon, Jewish— but a few, too, are secularists who intuitively sense that humankind is designed to be heterosexual. We can empathize with these parents’ concern because we Orthodox Christians share their worldview. Yet some gay activists (mostly within academic circles) will condemn this position.

This book’s (Nicolosis’s book) focus on the role of parents is not intended to *blame* but to *educate*. Once parents are given accurate advice, they quickly make changes and proceed enthusiastically toward helping their child develop a healthy gender identity. One father acknowledged that his “gut” told him something was wrong, and he indeed sensed what he needed to do, but he heard nothing but warnings from teachers and counselors not to “traumatize your son” but rather to accept him “for who he is.” But when parents consult with a psychotherapist who validates their desire for heterosexuality in their child, and who offers specific guidance to what they intuitively know they should do in response to his gender confusion, there is hope for a heterosexual outcome. Once they have found professional support for their parental intuition, these mothers and fathers immediately grasp their therapist’s treatment plan. They are more than willing to begin applying the positive and affirming strategies that have been outlined for them. Dr. George Rekers, a nationally known expert on sexual disorders, writes that “gender nonconformity in childhood may be the single most common observable factor associated with homosexuality.” And there is considerable evidence, he asserts, that the child with a gender-identity problem *can* resolve the difficulty— with or without psychiatric intervention. Rekers reports, “In a sizable number of cases . . . the gender-identity disorder resolves fully.” Dr. Rekers believes family and social influences appear to have the most powerful influence in the development of homosexuality. Most parents hope for heterosexuality for their children, he notes, and the therapist should not direct the course of treatment to work against the parents’ values. In addition, Dr. Rekers believes that when the therapist is working with a teenager, he should clarify some important points:

- There are life-threatening health risks associated with a gay lifestyle.
- A gay lifestyle adjustment will be difficult and socially controversial.
- Premature sexual activity is psychologically risky.
- The client will be much better able to make wise choices in adulthood about his sexuality.

The most important message we can offer to our children is that there is no such thing as a “gay child” or a “gay teen.” We are all designed to be heterosexual. Confusion about gender is primarily a psychological condition, and to some extent, it can be modified. The American Psychological Association has taken a one-sided, gay-affirming stance in recent years, supporting a political philosophy that actively promotes gay marriage, gay adoption and the normalization of homosexuality, while stigmatizing traditional values and eroding the nuclear family model. The APA’s positions are not purely scientific stances, since none of these are strictly scientific matters; they represent the APA’s political-philosophical opinions and its own sexual-liberationist values. The APA’s political control over the free flow of ideas has in fact grown so oppressive in recent years that we would call it less of a scientific group than a professional trade guild whose goal is to advance a liberal political agenda within our society. In fact, in a rare article of rebuke published in a major professional journal, one bold psychologist-critic charged that the APA’s lack of respect for viewpoint diversity actually “biases research on social issues, damages psychology’s credibility with policymakers and the public, impedes serving conservative clients, results in *de facto* discrimination against conservative students and scholars, and has a chilling effect on liberal education.”

LESSON BODY:

1. Masculinity is an Achievement

At the very heart of the homosexual condition is conflict about gender. In the boy, we usually see a gender wound that traces back to childhood. He comes to see himself as different from other boys. Gender woundedness usually exists as a silent, secret fear—one that the boy’s parents and loved ones only vaguely suspect. The boy has felt this way for as long as he is able to remember. That differentness creates a feeling of inferiority and isolates him from other males. For some little boys, the gender confusion is obvious. Nicolosi in his books says that almost all of his clients did display a characteristic of gender nonconformity from early childhood that had set them painfully apart from other boys. Most of these men remembered themselves in boyhood as unathletic, somewhat passive, lonely (except for female friends), unaggressive, and uninterested in rough-and-tumble play, and fearful of other boys, whom they found both intimidating and attractive. Many of them also had traits that could be considered gifts: they were bright, precocious, social and relational, and artistically talented.

Because most of these men had not been exactly feminine as boys, their parents had not suspected anything amiss. Thus they had made no efforts at seeking therapy. But on the inside, these men had, as boys, been highly ambivalent about their own gender. Many had been born sensitive and gentle, and they just were not sure that maleness could be part of “who they were.” Some writers have aptly referred to this condition as “gender emptiness.” Gender emptiness arises from a combination of a sensitive inborn temperament and a social environment that does not meet this child’s special needs. This temperamentally at-risk boy needs (but does not get) particular affirmation from parents and peers to develop a secure masculine identity. Such a boy will then, for reasons of both temperament and family dynamics, retreat from the challenge of identifying with his dad and the masculinity he represents. So instead of incorporating a masculine sense of self, the prehomosexual boy is doing the opposite—rejecting his emerging maleness and thus developing a defensive position against it. Later, though, he will fall in love with what he has lost by seeking out someone who seems to possess what is missing within himself. This is because what we fall in love with is not the familiar, but the “other than me.”

It’s an Identity Problem

At the root of almost every case of homosexuality is some distortion of the fundamental concept of gender. We see this distortion in the case of the lesbian activist who wants Scripture rewritten with God called “She.” Or when someone says, with obvious pride, “I don’t fall in love with any particular gender, because gender doesn’t matter. I fall in love with the *person*—it can be either a man or a woman.” Or when a psychologist says that bisexuality is a superior orientation because it opens up creative new possibilities for sexual expression. Or when a high school boy insists he be allowed to wear a dress and high heels to school and a judge orders the school to support the boy’s illusion that he is a female. Self-deception about gender is at the heart of the homosexual condition. A child who imagines that he or she can be the opposite sex—or be both sexes—is holding on to a fantasy solution to his or her confusion. This is a revolt against reality and a rebellion against the limits built into our created human natures.

Gender Identity Is Established Within the Context of a Family

Dealing with the problem of pre-homosexuality is a process that must involve

every family member. The father plays a pivotal role in a boy's normal development as a male. The truth is, Dad is more important to the boy's gender-identity development than is Mom.

Growing Up Secure in One's Gender

In infancy, both boys and girls are emotionally attached to the mother. In psychodynamic language, mother is the first love object. She meets all her child's primary needs. Girls can continue to develop in their feminine identification through the relationship with their mothers. On the other hand, a boy has an additional developmental task—to disidentify from his mother and identify with his father. While learning language (“he and she,” “his and hers”), the child discovers that the world is divided into natural opposites of boys and girls, men and women. At this point, a little boy will not only begin to observe the difference, but also he must now decide where he himself fits in this gender-divided world. The girl has the easier task; her primary attachment is already to the mother, and thus she does not need to go through the additional developmental task of disidentifying from the person closest to her in the world—Mom—to identify with the father. But the boy is different: he must separate from the mother and grow in his differentness from his primary love object if he is ever to be a heterosexual man. This may explain why there are fewer female homosexuals than there are male homosexuals. Some studies report a 2 to 1 ratio. Others say 5 to 1 or even 11 to 1. We do not really know for sure, except that it is clear that there are more male homosexuals than there are lesbians.

In Search of Masculinity

Meanwhile, the boy's father has to do his part. He needs to mirror and affirm his son's maleness. He can play rough-and-tumble games with his son—games that are decidedly different from those he would play with a little girl. He can help his son learn to throw and catch a ball. He can teach the toddler how to pound a wooden peg into a hole in a pegboard, or he can take his son with him into the shower, where the boy cannot help noticing that Dad has a male body, just like he has. As a result, the son will learn more of what it means to be a male. And he will accept his body as a representation of his maleness. *This, he will think, is the way boys—and men—are made. And it is the way I am made. I am a boy, and that means I have a penis.* Psychologists call this process “incorporating masculinity into a sense of self” (or “masculine introjection”), and it is an essential part of growing up straight. The penis is the essential symbol of masculinity—the unmistakable difference between male and female. This undeniable anatomical difference should be emphasized to the boy in therapy. The boy who makes the unconscious decision to detach himself from his own male body is well on his way to

developing a homosexual orientation. Such a boy will sometimes be obviously effeminate, but more often he—like most prehomosexual boys—is what we call “gender-nonconforming.” That is, he will be somewhat different, with no close male buddies at that developmental stage when other boys are breaking away from close friendships with little girls (about age six to eleven) in order to develop a secure masculine identity. Such a boy also usually has a poor or distant relationship with his father.

The normal process of gender identification has gone awry. Instead of identifying with their gender, certain boys have defensively detached themselves from the world of men. To protect themselves from hurt, they have closed themselves off from male bonding and identification. Much of this detachment began with a weak relationship with the father. Some fathers find a way to get involved in everything *but* their sons. They lose themselves in their careers, in travel, in golf, or in any number of activities that become so all-important to them that they have no time for their boys. Or they fail to see that this particular son interprets criticism as personal rejection. Or the problem may be rooted in a temperamental mismatch—that “one particular son” was much harder for Dad to reach because of the child’s own sensitive temperament. His father found him hard to relate to, because they did not share common interests (perhaps the activities this particular son enjoys are more social and artistic and less typically masculine). And in the busyness and rush of life, this harder-to-reach boy was somehow put aside and neglected. A few fathers take this scenario to the extreme. I saw one father (an immature and inadequate man who warned his wife, before their son was born, that he did not want a boy) completely reject and ignore their son, while doting on their older daughter. Apparently threatened by the idea of having another “man in the house,” this man made his displeasure so clear that their son, by the age of two, was wearing dresses like his sister and playing with her Barbie doll collection. Not surprisingly, this little boy felt much safer renouncing his masculine identity. For a variety of reasons, some mothers also have a tendency to prolong their sons’ dependence. A mother’s intimacy with her son is primal, complete, exclusive, and this powerful bond can easily deepen into what psychiatrist Robert Stoller calls a “blissful symbiosis.” But the mother may be inclined to hold on to her son in what becomes an unhealthy mutual dependency, especially if she does not have a satisfying, intimate relationship with the boy’s father. In such cases she can put too much energy into the boy, using him to fulfill her needs for love and companionship in a way that is not good for him.

A “salient” (that is, strong and benevolent) father will interrupt the mother-son “blissful symbiosis,” which he instinctively senses is unhealthy. If a father wants his son to grow up straight, he has to break the mother-son bond that is proper to infancy but not in the boy’s best interest afterward. In this way, the father has to be a model, demonstrating that it is possible for his son to maintain a loving relationship with this woman, his mom, while still maintaining his own independence. In this sense, the father should function as a healthy buffer between mother and son. Sometimes Mom might work against the father-son bond by keeping her husband away from the boy (“It’s too cold out for him,” “That might hurt him,” “He’s busy doing things with me today”) in order to satisfy her own needs for male intimacy. Her son is a “safe” male with whom she can have an intimate emotional relationship without the conflicts

she may have to confront in her relationship with her husband. She might be too quick to “rescue” her son from Dad. She may cuddle and console the boy when his father disciplines or ignores him. Her excessive sympathy can discourage the little boy from making the all important maternal separation. Furthermore, exaggerated maternal sympathy fosters self-pity—a feature that is often observed in both prehomosexual boys and homosexual men. Such exaggerated sympathy from the mother may encourage the boy to stay isolated from his male peers when he is hurt by their teasing or their excluding him.

2. The Prehomosexual Boy: Why Should Parents Intervene?

What are the odds? That is the question in the forefront of parents’ minds when they begin to worry about the implications of their children’s gender confusion. And the odds are not good. Little boys who have a fascination and preoccupation with feminine activities have at least a 75 percent chance of growing up to be homosexual, bisexual, or transsexual. Most gender-confused boys are alienated from Dad, lacking male friends, and secretly nursing a “male wound” buried deep in their psyche; because their symptoms are more subtle, they would not be diagnosed with gender-identity disorder of childhood. But these boys, too, are at risk to grow up homosexual.

Gender nonconformity in childhood, most researchers agree, is the single most common factor associated with homosexuality. This is accompanied by the feeling, when these men look back, of having been different from other children. Unfortunately, many members of the mental health profession—psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers—think it is unnecessary to inform parents of the possibility of a homosexual outcome. For too long, many professionals have maintained a patronizing disregard for parents who express concern about their children’s sexual orientation. These professionals would rather ignore the child’s symptoms, it seems, and focus on the parents’ problem with “unenlightened homophobia” or “heterosexism.” But when clinicians take this approach, they are replacing genuine helpfulness with a social agenda that conflicts with the values and concerns of most families. This is because one undeniable fact remains: most parents do not want their children to grow up homosexual.

Many clients describe their homosexual problem as a “gender emptiness” or lack of “gender esteem.” And without this esteem, as Richard Wyler warns, life will be full of problems: Usually, the pain had to do with our feeling unloved or unwanted—or at least, not loved or wanted enough. The pain often included “father hunger,” “mother enmeshment,” peer rejection, poor “gender esteem” and, with disproportionate frequency (compared to the general population), childhood sexual abuse or premature exposure to sexual experience. When this occurred, it was inevitably at the hands of other males, causing untold confusion between love and abuse, and male and female. Time alone could never really heal these kinds of deep wounds without our going back to face them, acknowledge them, grieve them, release

our legitimate anger over them, take steps to repair the damage they had caused us (to the extent we could), and finally, to forgive and move on. Drs. Kenneth Zucker and Susan Bradley, experts in gender-identity problems in children, believe that treatment of the gender-disturbed child should begin as early as possible:

Identifying Gender-Identity Disorder (GID)

Nicolosi believes in a reparative approach to gender-identity conflict. Something is lacking in the GID or gender-empty child's sense of himself as truly male (or her sense of being female). First, remember that *most* boys who become homosexual were never obviously feminine. The effeminate boy is an exaggerated case of the general syndrome of gender nonconformity that leads to homosexuality. However, both the GID (effeminate) and gender-nonconforming boy (when same-sex peer problems are also present) are in conflict about claiming their appropriate gender. And both conditions lay the groundwork for a homosexual outcome. Certain signs of prehomosexuality are easy to recognize, and these signs usually come early in the child's life. Indicators of childhood GID, described by the American Psychiatric Association (APA), are listed below. Clinicians are told to use the following five markers to help them determine whether a child has this disorder:

1. Repeatedly stated desire to be, or insistence that he or she is, the other sex.
2. In boys, preference for cross dressing, or simulating female attire. In girls, insistence on wearing only stereotypical masculine clothing.
3. Strong and persistent preference for cross-sexual roles in make-believe play, or persistent fantasies of being the other sex.
4. Intense desire to participate in the stereotypical games and pastimes of the other sex.
5. Strong preference for playmates of the other sex.

The onset of most cross-gender behavior occurs during the preschool years, between the ages of two and four. Cross-dressing, as Dr. Richard Green's research indicates, is one of the first signs. Of course, for most gender-conflicted boys, the signs of early homosexual development will be more subtle—a reluctance to play with other boys, fear of rough-and-tumble play, shyness about being naked in the presence of other males (but not when in the presence of females), lack of comfort with and attachment to the father, and perhaps an over-attachment to the mother.

Social and Psychological Problems in the Gender-Confused Boy

In spite of the claim by some psychologists and most gay advocates that this blatant distortion of reality is “normal for some people,” cross-gender behavior remains a symptom of a deeper problem—a problem of distorted identity and “not belonging.” Boys suffering gender-identity confusion will suffer many related psychological and social problems. They are more likely to be anxious, depressed, and lonely. Many parents recognize that their GID children are not happy. These children are moody and easily upset and often lament that they do not fit in. Eventually the prehomosexual child usually becomes the “kitchen window boy” who looks out longingly at the other boys in the neighborhood, wishing he could play with the children who reject and tease him. Instead, he ends up staying inside with Mom to clean the house with her and bake cookies. Parents of these children are quite right to be concerned, because this pattern, seen as early as preschool and first grade, portends many other adjustment problems later in life. Some GID boys defy the usual stereotype of timidity and passivity and, instead, are superior-acting or extremely egocentric. Such boys “insist on their own rules in games . . . and when they do not get their way, they either withdraw or have temper tantrums.” Others are excessively worried about getting hurt and bruised, with a sense of fragility about their bodies. Some of these boys have an almost phobic reaction to aggressive language. They often complain about other children’s rough language, and they seem genuinely frightened by aggressive behavior. As Dr. Richard Fitzgibbons notes, fear of sports and other boys’ aggression sets the stage for a weak masculine identity: Weak masculine identity is easily identified and is the major cause of [homosexuality] in men. Surprisingly, it can be an outgrowth of weak eye-hand coordination which results in an inability to play sports well. This condition is usually accompanied by severe peer rejection. In a sports-oriented culture such as our own, if a young boy is unable to throw, catch, or kick a ball, he is likely to be excluded, isolated, and ridiculed. Continued rejection can be a major source of conflict for a child and teenager. In an attempt to overcome feelings of loneliness and inadequacy, he may spend more time on academic studies or fostering comfortable friendships with girls. The “sports wound” will negatively affect the boy’s image of himself, his relationships with peers, his gender identity, and his body image. His negative view of his masculinity and his loneliness can lead him to crave the masculinity of his male peers. Other studies found poor coordination and difficulties in playing contact sports to be common among prehomosexual boys. Similarly, a number of studies show that such boys appear to have trouble distinguishing between normal rough-and-tumble play and the deliberate intent by other boys to hurt them.

Dutch psychologist Dr. Gerard van Aardweg agrees with Dr. Fitzgibbons’s observations regarding fear of aggressive play. The tendency of boys to be cautious and unaggressive and to not participate in team sports is a universal finding recollected in samples of clinical as well as nonclinical homosexuals and is also true in other cultures. In elementary school, other children will begin to call these gender-confused boys “sissies,” “faggots,” “queers,” or “gays.” Most mistakenly and tragically, their teachers may even identify them as “gay children,” and, thus labeled by their own teachers, the children may even come to think of themselves as “born

gay.” They may not be sure what being “gay” means, but they begin to suspect that they are very different indeed. Before long, their emotional estrangement from their own sex will begin to surface in same-sex romantic longings. A former client of Dr. Nicolosi, “Alex”, writes of his secret, early longing, but from afar, for male attention. We also see, in his writings, the failure to bond with members of the same sex and the early development of defensive detachment from males (shown by fear and excitement): The first gay feelings that I can remember having occurred back in the fourth grade when I was nine years old. I started to notice a boy with dark brown hair, wearing a dark blue jacket. I remember liking his smile at first. As I kept looking at him, I started to become attracted to him and to think how cute he was. Whenever I would be on the playground, I immediately started to look around for him. Once I had him in my sight, it was hard not to look at him. Being only a fourth grader, I didn’t know what was happening to me. All I knew was that I liked this new kid a lot. I remember being so scared of him—not because he was a bully or anything, but because I liked him so much. But make no mistake about this: A gender-nonconforming boy *can* be sensitive, kind, social, artistic, gentle—and heterosexual. He can be an artist, an actor, a dancer, a cook, a musician—and a heterosexual. These innate artistic skills are “who he is,” part of the wonderful range of human abilities. No one should try to discourage those abilities and traits. With appropriate masculine affirmation and support, however, they can all be developed within the context of normal heterosexual manhood.

Parental Reactions

Mothers of gender-confused boys may become overprotective, and, sometimes, in a playground situation, they may even interfere with the normal rough-and tumble aggression and competition that is so common among little boys. In the eyes of those other boys, the sons of interfering mothers get marked as sissies, and there is a natural tendency for boys to be especially rough on sissies. “Oh, come on, sweetheart,” Mom may say. “You don’t need to play with those troublemakers. You’re too good for those bullies.” Indeed, many adult homosexual clients have reported that their mothers’ well-meaning attempts to console them in just this manner. Many therapists who work with adult homosexuals have found that, when they were young, these men disliked roughhousing with the other little boys and mostly avoided their company. They much preferred the company of little girls, who were gentler and more social, like they were. But later, by midadolescence, these gender-disidentified boys suddenly did a switch: by then, other boys had become far *more* important—even fascinating and mysterious—in their eyes, while girls became unimportant.

Gender Rigidity in Children: A Normal and Healthy Developmental Stage

Exactly the opposite process occurs with their heterosexual classmates: while solidifying his male gender identity, the normally developing boy spurns the company of little girls. From about age six to age eleven, boys, especially, give up their close, opposite-sex pals. “I hate girls,”

the boys will say. “They’re dumb. We don’t want them in our club.” “Boys are so sickening!” the girls insist. Such children will, for a time, become very rigid and stereotypical in their gender roles. The idea of a *girl* joining the guys’ Boy Scout troop is outrageous. Boys’ tree houses bear signs saying, “No Girls Allowed.” This is not sexism; in fact, it is part of the healthy and normal gender-identification process! What is happening is that these healthy boys and girls are solidifying their gender identity, and in order to do that, they need to surround themselves with same-sex close friends. In this way, they will firmly establish their newly acquired sense of “boyiness” or “girliness.” This is an important prerequisite before they can reach out later, in adolescence, to the opposite sex. During this important developmental period, the opposite sex becomes mysterious, and this lays the foundation for the opposite sex’s future erotic and romantic attractiveness. (We become romantically attracted to the “other than me.”) Therefore, a period of exaggerated same-sex associations seems to be a necessary phase in the developmental process of deepening and clarifying our normal gender identity. Remember, as Richard Wyler said, isolation from the same-sex world is at the root of homosexuality: Our fear and hurt at feeling rejected by the male world often led us to disassociate ourselves from the masculine—the very thing we desired most. . . . But where did that leave us, as males ourselves? It left us in a Never-Never Land of gender confusion, not fully masculine but not really feminine either. We had disassociated not just from individual men we feared would hurt us, but from the entire heterosexual male world. A child’s sense of being a boy or girl, especially for little children, is more than just a vague idea. Gender holds deep emotional significance. When boys are asked if they are girls, and when girls are asked if they are boys, researchers find that many children have “quite a strong reaction, some finding it quite hilarious, while others seemed offended and irritated. Children who *don’t* do this are far less typical and healthy than children who *do*.” Then, by the teenage years, the tables turn. By now, the normally developing boy has begun to be attracted to the girls. They are not so unimportant now—they are suddenly much more interesting, difficult to understand, and even romantically mysterious. A gay psychologist says that “individuals become erotically or romantically attracted to those who were dissimilar or unfamiliar to them in childhood.” Thus, he says, the “exotic becomes erotic.” That is, the prehomosexual boy or girl experiences arousal in response to the perceived strangeness of his *same* sex. However, this feeling of strangeness around same-sex childhood peers seems to this gay psychologist to be perfectly normal!

The Fallout: After the Boy Distances Himself from the Father

Effeminate boys, even more than gender-normal boys, need from their dads what we reparative therapists call “the three A’s”: affection, attention, and approval. When they fail to get what they need, they interpret their father’s behavior as personal disinterest in and rejection of them. They feel a deep and powerfully hurtful affront to their sense of self. In defense against further hurt, they diminish Dad in their minds, rendering him unimportant or even nonexistent. Their actions say, “If he doesn’t want me, then I don’t want him either.” From that point on, they want little or nothing to do with their father. Most of all, they do not want to be like him. In effect, they are surrendering their natural masculine strivings. Then, when other boys shun the gender-confused boy (as indeed they will), they become more

deeply mired in loneliness, and this loneliness and rejection only confirm their belief in their not being “good enough.” This leads to the problem of idolizing other boys’ maleness. As Richard Wyler explains: Feeling deficient as males, we pined to be accepted and affirmed by others, especially those whose masculinity we admired most. We began to idolize the qualities in other males we judged to be lacking in ourselves. Idolizing them widened the gulf we imagined between ourselves and so-called “real men,” the Adonis-gods of our fantasies. In idolizing them, we increased our sense of our own masculine deficiency. It also de-humanized the men we idolized, putting them on a pedestal that deified them and made them unapproachable.

Normal boys actively and aggressively play with one another, while prehomosexual boys feel intimidated, so they sit on the curb and watch them. They wish they could join in, but they are held back by the sense that they are different and even “less than” other boys. They feel inadequate and ill equipped to join in. All too often, the next step is a depressive reaction. Consequently, they often become loners and dreamers and withdraw into a world of fantasy. Quite a few become enthralled with theater and acting and the chance to play a role as someone else. Some overcompensate by pushing themselves to excel in academics; others find it hard to pay attention in class and do poorly despite their above-average aptitude. Understandably, parents of such children are concerned when they see these signs. Simply using their own common sense, they know something is wrong. For parents these days, if they are unlucky enough to fall into the hands of psychologists who have accepted the premises of gay activism, they may find the experts telling them that what these boys are experiencing is inevitable and derives strictly from their “gay genes” or “gay brains.” The bad news is that so many well-educated people in positions of influence do not understand the facts about gender-identity confusion in children. The good news is that you, as the parent of a boy or girl, can have an influence on your child’s future sexual orientation. Don’t care if your child is straight or gay? There are no doubt thousands of other mental health practitioners who will support you in affirming your child’s prehomosexuality if you choose this path. One such practitioner is psychiatrist Justin Richardson. There is nothing wrong or problematic as such with a boy’s effeminacy, Richardson says, and it is only society’s disapproval that causes the boy’s problems. Dr. Richardson is an openly gay man. He believes a sensitive and artistic temperament is pivotal in laying the foundation for male homosexuality, but he also acknowledges (as does the American Psychological Association) that there are psychological and social influences that ultimately will solidify such a boy’s gender identity and future sexual orientation. How this boy becomes a “sissy” and a homosexual, Richardson acknowledges, also goes back to the personalities of the boy’s parents and how these personalities mesh or contrast with the boy’s own, thus influencing the depth and quality (or lack thereof) of the parent- child emotional bond. Another factor Richardson identifies is how the boy and his parents react to his developing male body. Still another factor is the ongoing influence of the boy’s playmates. All these are factors that Dr. Richardson identifies—*just as we do*—as influential in confirming or weakening the boy’s developing sense of masculine gender identification. But significantly, Richardson does not consider any of these influences pathological, because he does not view a homosexual outcome as pathological. In essence, he believes homosexuality “just is.” Is feeling unmasculine and being detached from one’s same-sex parent and boyhood peers problematic? Not so to Richardson, because gender itself, he believes, is a matter of indifference. He suggests

that parents should consider not only not discouraging their son's effeminacy but also actually communicating that they admire the boy's effeminacy as a mark of healthy nonconformity. In fact, Richardson goes so far as to say that an indifference to gender distinctions is a mark of intellectual superiority! We, on the other hand, are rather backward. We are stuck in "concrete" notions of gender—we believe that a boy who likes to wear dresses does indeed have a problem. There are other therapists, in contrast to Dr. Richardson, who believe that healthy development requires that a person's interior sense of gender identity and his biology must correspond. Mind, body, and spirit must work together in harmony. The gender-nonconforming boy might be artistic, creative, and relational, but in order to grow into his potential, he must also be confident that he belongs to the world of men. Once mothers and fathers recognize the real problems their gender-confused children face, agree to work together to help resolve them, and seek the guidance and expertise of a psychotherapist who believes that change is possible, there is hope. Growth into a heterosexual identity is indeed possible.

How Parents Respond

Despite parents' key roles in forming the gender identity of their sons and daughters, many of them are astonishingly unaware not only of their own behavior with an emotionally vulnerable son but also of their child's resulting deficits. They say, "Our son sometimes acts girlish. The other boys tease and exclude him. Is this just a phase?" Or they say, "Our daughter dresses like a boy and has no close female friends. Should we ignore it? Does this behavior mean our girl will turn out gay? What should we do?" Confronted with signs of their children's prehomosexual tendencies, most parents are surprised and confused. The vast majority of the mothers and fathers who consult Dr. Nicolosi are the parents of effeminate sons. These parents have been aware that there was a problem for quite some time—sometimes for years—before seeking professional advice. In reacting to their sons' effeminacy, most parents demonstrate three predictable phases:

1. Denial. "It's just a phase; he'll probably outgrow it," they say. Or they claim, "It's no big deal. He looks so cute—he's just trying to get attention when he dresses up like a little girl." Of course this denial stems, in part, from the fact that our culture has made it increasingly hard for parents to determine what gender development is normal and what is abnormal, what is worth worrying about and what is not. To make matters worse (as we'll soon see), many parents, by their lack of action, inadvertently reinforce the way their son is behaving. This, in turn, creates even more denial. The question is, does a normal little boy sometimes act like a little girl? The answer is, a certain amount of cross-gender play is tolerable. However, if your son does not give it up quickly, you will need to take a look not only at his behavior but also at yours.

2. Confusion. Parents often say, "Oh, this is part of the culture; there are cultural reasons for his confusion." One mother who was highly educated consulted Dr. Nicolosi regarding her son Shawn. The boy's effeminate behavior included wrapping himself in pink towels and spending hours trying on makeup. Worried, she spoke to his teacher, who assured her: "Don't worry; it's

perfectly healthy—he's getting in touch with his feminine side." But Shawn continued to draw pictures of fairy princesses, Snow White, and other feminine characters. He seemed obsessed with them and spent hours alone drawing and dressing up his sister's doll collection. His mom then spoke to the school guidance counselor, who warned her, "Don't intervene. What he's doing is in no way a problem. You don't want your son to be a stereotyped macho man, do you?" *Of course not*, she thought. But her basic maternal intuitions told her something was wrong. Next, she went to the school psychologist, who reiterated what the teacher and the counselor had said. "Don't worry about it," they told her. "There is absolutely nothing amiss." Finally, she heard about my work and came to see me. After listening to her story, I said, "The indicators are very clear. And if we don't make decisive interventions, your son will not have a normal gender identity and will probably become a homosexual."

3. Avoidance. Many parents who do finally consult a psychologist have been worried about their sons for months, and many of them for years, but have done nothing about it. They just postpone. "We thought it was an attention getting device and that we should ignore it." To the contrary, Dr. Richard Green has found that parents typically did notice the behavior but did not interfere or discourage it, thus implying that the child had their approval.¹ Some parents do, in fact, wonder if, by trying to intervene, they would be disrupting something that is normal for this particular boy, which would mean they were infringing on their son's personality or individuality. A troubled child may either intimidate his parents or evoke sympathy from them. One mother was quite pleased to see her son so happy dressing up and "playing pretend." "I don't want to hurt his feelings," she explained. "He seems so crushed when I ask him to give away his Barbie dolls. I just can't do it."

Some Boys Are More Girlish Than a Girl

The typical prehomosexual boy displays telltale signs of gender nonconformity and discomfort with males, of not fitting in. But the GID boy's nonconformity is even more extreme—in fact, it is so caricatured that it is actually more girlish than a girl's. There is an intense, obsessive quality to the boy's fascination with female characters that marks it as more than a natural affinity or playful curiosity. One mother of a GID son explained, "It's so scary! He gets almost hypnotized with this female stuff." And it's true. Some boys can become entranced and enter an almost altered state when watching female characters on television, or they sit transfixed in front of movies such as *Pocahontas* or *The Little Mermaid*. Another mother reported, "When I get dressed, my son sits on the bed and watches me in fascination. 'Oh, Mom,' he says, 'you're so beautiful!' I've got to admit, it feels a little creepy." There is this same intense fascination with neutered or genderless cartoon characters. One father said that his son, who is now involved in homosexuality and is refusing to consider change, had a boyhood obsession with Bozo the clown. At the time the parents thought it was cute, even if a little strange. But he held on to the obsession until the age of twelve. The truth is, these obsessive interests are boys' attempts to lose themselves in a fantasy world where they can imagine themselves as something other than male and where the challenges of gender do not exist.

Gender Is Not Just a Construct

The first step in intervention is for parents to educate themselves. This often means correcting false information. Gender—our sense of maleness and femaleness— is not merely an arbitrary social construct. It is, rather, a basic and essential way in which we humans participate in society and express ourselves within the real world. Reparative therapists see a secure gender identity as a primary avenue through which we grow to maturity. In contrast, a defining characteristic of the gay movement is the drive to destabilize the categories of sex and gender. A child psychiatrist at Emory University advised parents in a workshop that they should help their children break down gender stereotypes; when their children ask if a particular person is male or female, parents should respond that “there is no way to know unless they look under that person’s clothes.” We see this gender confusion played out in the gay world’s fascination with entertainment that involves cross-dressing, in the idea that a man who feels like a woman should be obliged by being addressed as “she,” in the idea that gay men can “mother” their children as well as a woman can, and in the drive to purge all language of gender-specific terminology. We also see this attitude in gay theology. The Reverend Mel White—pastor of a large gay church and the leader of Soulforce, a group that pickets religious denominational conventions to push for gay marriage—has repeatedly referred to the Christian God as “She.” The popular media’s preoccupation with gender bending has caused many parents to question their own intuitive perception of what constitutes a healthy gender role. Of course, there is nothing wrong with asking a boy to help Mom around the house, but we should be aware that for him to act and pretend to *be* Mom or to be a little girl helper is quite another matter and should be seen as clearly suggestive of a gender-identity problem. To be of help to concerned parents, the therapist must not only be informed about childhood indicators of future homosexuality, but must also be sensitive and respectful toward those parents who desire to maximize the possibility of their child growing up straight. If the parents share the therapist’s view of what is healthy and normal, they can establish a trusting and successful therapeutic alliance. But whenever the parents think that gender is just a social construct, Dr. Nicolosi tells them that they would be better served by seeking counseling with a different therapist—one who supports their perspective.

Marital Problems and the Prehomosexual Child

Rather often, couples who come to a therapist looking for help with their child are experiencing disharmony in their marital relationships. The wife will complain, “My husband is so hard to reach. He’s just not emotionally connected to me or the kids.” The husband will respond, “The truth is that she’s a major control freak! If she would just back off, I’d get more involved.” “And how am I supposed to not get involved if you’re not doing anything!” she’ll retort. “You do nothing, and that forces me to take the initiative.”

All too often, a bad marriage contributes to a son’s confusion. A boy’s concept of masculinity suffers when Mom conveys a negative perception of the male world (“Men are worthless. Who needs them? They can’t be trusted”). In families where there is a child with gender confusion, the mother may not have made it clear that she values masculinity—particularly, her husband’s masculinity. The late Irving Bieber, a prominent researcher, observed that some boys become

the victims of their parents' unhappy marital relationship. In a scenario in which Mom and Dad are battling, one way Dad can get even with Mom is by emotionally abandoning their son. Reading literature written by gay men and lesbians, we often see an expressed disillusionment with marriage as an institution, along with cynicism about the possibility of a benevolent male acting as head of a family. Gay men are often cheerleaders for the radical feminist movement, with its theme that men cannot be trusted with power. This is understandable; the family system and the father, in many cases, have personally disappointed them.

The Traditional Family Is "Not Good for Society"?

One prominent gay leader describes the cynicism about family life that is a common theme in gay literature. His words reveal his own cynicism about fathers and his disillusionment with the nuclear family: Not surprisingly, statistics about the state of the nuclear family show that children fare better in day-care centers than at home. . . . When Dan Quayle trumpeted the need for fathers in each home, he ignored the findings of the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse, according to which most sexual assaults in the home are the work of fathers or stepfathers.

One gay activist said, "The time has come to reject nostalgia for traditional family groupings and to seek new ways to realize the satisfaction they once brought. . . . [We must create] fresh new kinds of relationships, bearing no resemblance to past rituals, but opening doors to greater measures of individual happiness. This writer, like most other gay activists, demands an end to the repressive expectations of what gay activists call "the gender system." He looks forward to a brave new world where there would be a maximizing of "consensual physical contact" outside of marriage and people would find joy in lives that are not centered around parenthood and the "reproduction of one's gene pool." He scorns the Judeo-Christian ideal of the nuclear family in favor of unrestricted eroticism. He says, "None but the narrowest approach to love would insist, as fundamentalists and their ilk do, that monogamy is [a relationship's] only virtuous, fulfilling, and loving expression." Yet beyond this insistence by gay activists that fathers and traditional families do not matter, we hear the wise words of psychiatrist Richard Fitzgibbons: When fatherless boys grow up, there's often a tremendous hunger for male embrace because they weren't getting it at home. The gay hotlines get a lot of calls from men just hungry for another man to hold them. Some of them are married, and they're not all necessarily homosexual. Nicolosi says that we're going to see more and more homosexual experimentation by young people, gay and straight, who are still looking for the fatherly love that they didn't get when they were growing up.

A Closer Look at Mom

Without realizing it, mothers can become overinvolved in their sons' lives. In some cases, this behavior may have arisen because of a mother's need to attend to her son's childhood illnesses. In fact, a number of studies have shown a higher than average correlation between adult homosexuality and early childhood medical problems. Many of my Nicolosi's clients have

told him of childhood struggles with asthma, a heart condition, obesity, or poor eyesight that prevented them from joining the other boys in sports. All of these conditions set the boy up to see himself as different from—and inferior to—other boys. Mothers of homosexual men tend, in our experience, to be expressive, extroverted, emotionally accessible, engaging, and highly involved in the boy's life. The mother's problem might be that she is too invested; the boundaries between her and her son are not clear. Sometimes mothers overinvest in their sons for their own needs, because they have not found emotional intimacy in their marriage. Unlike the boys' fathers, who rarely notice, these mothers do see the boy's effeminacy, but they postpone intervention because they do not want to upset their sons. Nonetheless, most of the parents who seek professional help are far healthier and more psychologically attuned than those who do not.

The Classic Triadic Relationship

It can be painful for parents to hear from their counselor that one of them might be an "overinvolved mother" or a "distant father." While reading the following descriptions of parental personalities, you should remember, first, that we all make mistakes as parents. Second, our own personality limitations may have had little in the way of ill effects on one child in the family and yet, to our shock and dismay, they can prove seriously detrimental to our next child. Third, how we relate to our children typically reflects the types of relationships we had with our own parents. So we hope you will not feel blamed but will instead focus on opening up your heart and mind to considering how you might (or perhaps might not) fit to some degree into this parental model. Remember that we acknowledge that the vast majority of parents are well-intentioned and loving and want the best for their children. Repeatedly, researchers have found the classic triadic (three-way) relationship in the family backgrounds of homosexual men. In this situation, the mother often has a poor or limited relationship with her husband, so she shifts her emotional needs to her son. The father is usually nonexpressive and detached and often is critical as well. So in the triadic family pattern we have the detached father, the overinvolved mother, and the temperamentally sensitive, emotionally attuned boy who fills in for the father where the father falls short. The close emotional bond is between mother and son. She feels bad for her son: "I'm his only safe haven, and everyone else makes fun of him. His peers reject him; his father seems to have forgotten him; so I'm the only one who understands and accepts him exactly as he is." That last is the killer phrase: "as he is." It is as if "who the boy is" could include his androgynous fantasies, fear of other males, rejection of his own body, and discomfort with his masculine nature. At this point, education is necessary. Mothers need to understand that they can actively discourage distortions about gender without rejecting the boy himself. In fact, it is not a matter of rejection at all, but instead of offering adult guidance to prepare the boy for life in a gendered world—the world to which his anatomy has destined him—and of refusing to participate in his distortions about males and masculinity. On the other hand, many of the mothers who come to our counseling office are very concerned about their sons' poor gender esteem or effeminacy, and they want to help them reach normal gender maturity, no matter how challenging that work may become. They intuitively understand the problem their sons are having, and they are at a loss to know how to help their child and to

enlist their husbands in the process. A few mothers (particularly, narcissistic mothers) establish a relationship with such a profound blurring of boundaries that the boy is not able to clarify his own individual identity. Mothers who create such an intimate, symbiotic relationship will allow nothing to interrupt the mother-son bond. The longer the profound symbiotic relationship continues, the more feminine the boy. Of course, a mother who is upset by a boy's normal, rowdy behavior—and who reacts by encouraging him to be more passive and dependent (even though the boy's real need is for independence)—is putting her own needs before those of her son. The authors of *Someone I Love Is Gay* describe this maternal pattern: Sometimes the relationship is so close that it becomes unhealthy, even bordering on a state of “emotional adultery.” Typically, the son is his mother's confidante. She talks about her marital problems with him, rather than working them out with her husband. She looks to her son for emotional support and comfort when things go wrong. In some cases, the mother's behavior crosses the line into sensuality. Single mothers and women with abusive or emotionally distant husbands are particularly vulnerable to becoming overly dependent on their son. In some rare cases, mothers of homosexual boys wanted to be men themselves, and they sabotaged their sons' masculinity by putting themselves in competition with them. All in all, there is considerable research showing that families of gender-disturbed boys tend to be in turmoil. One study of 610 GID boys found a high level of family conflicts. Many clinicians have observed a higher rate of parental divorce, separation, and marital unhappiness in their homosexual clients' families, and many parents of GID children had undergone counseling before their child's gender-identity disorder came to clinical attention.

Psychologist Gregory Dickson points out a paradox regarding the intense mother-son relationship. The gender-conflicted boy usually feels an ongoing need for mothering, but because the mother-son relationship represents a barrier between himself and the male world, the boy feels both *angry* and *appreciative* toward her. He also feels both *misunderstood* and *most understood* by her. His mother knows him very deeply on one level, but there is another level where she can never go and which she has not fully acknowledged as an integral part of who he is as a male. So there results a paradoxical love-hate, approach-avoidance conflict.

Hasn't This Research About Parenting Influences Been Disproved?

In spite of what you hear from gay activists, no literature disproves the classical theories describing the way homosexuality develops. In fact, a 1996 book, *Freud Scientifically Reappraised: Testing the Theories and Therapy*, evaluated the prominent psychoanalytic theories in the light of the data now available through modern research. The authors did find conflicting results on the maternal relationship, but the research on fathers was clear: The reports concerning the male homosexual's view of his father are overwhelmingly supportive of Freud's hypothesis. With only a few exceptions, the male homosexual declares that father has been a negative influence in his life. . . . There is not a single even moderately well-controlled study that we have been able to locate in which male homosexuals refer to father positively or affectionately. On the contrary, they consistently regard him as an antagonist. He easily fills the unusually intense, competitive Oedipal role Freud ascribed to him. It is important to emphasize here that the overinvolved mother is used repeatedly by us here in this book as *the* example of

the mother of a gender-confused boy. Because the deeply involved mother is almost always the type to bring a child in for a consultation—and to actively work for change—she is the type of mother we have used to illustrate case scenarios. Indeed, the intimately involved mother is most likely to unwittingly encourage a son's gender nonconformity.

But not all mothers are overinvolved. In fact, among adult homosexual clients, a smaller percentage of their mothers were actually disengaged. This observation fits with the findings of *Freud Scientifically Reappraised*, in which the researchers analyzed the available studies and found that there is some inconsistency in findings about mothers. But—as those researchers agree—the one virtually unchanging variable is the poor relationship with fathers. Quite a wake-up call, we would say, for fathers who hope for heterosexuality for their sons!

Other Routes to Homosexuality?

Of course, the common syndrome of the triadic family, combined with temperamental boyhood gender nonconformity, should not be considered the only route to homosexuality. There are other pathways, which no doubt involve somewhat different parenting styles, the problem of early sexual seduction and the sexual habituation that can result from it, and the influence of cultural messages. Another, less common type of homosexuality (actually, this would be described as bisexuality) would involve the choice to seek out sexual and ego gratification in every form. The latter type of person is rarely described in the clinical literature because he or she would be unlikely to seek therapy to change. And remember, outward gender appearances can be deceptive. It is often said, "So-and-so can't possibly have a problem with gender esteem, he's so masculine," but then we look under the surface and see the same, familiar dynamics. An example is the movie star Rock Hudson, who died of AIDS in the 1980s. Hudson was a tall, handsome man who always played the quintessential romantic leading role. During the peak of his career, the public knew nothing of his homosexuality. But Hudson's autobiography reveals that he hated his father, who deserted the family, and did not get along any better with his stepfather, who beat him. When his mother worked as a live-in housekeeper, Rock and his mother shared a bed in the servant's quarters. Then, at the age of nine, Hudson was sexually molested by an older man (he says he encouraged and enjoyed the encounter). Throughout his life, Hudson became close and very comfortable with many of the women he starred with, but with almost none of the men, while he idealized and fell in love with some of his male directors. This masculine-appearing screen idol once told his lover, "There's a little girl in me that I just trample to death. . . . 'You will not come out!' "

Gay Public Figure Describes His Boyhood

Noted writer and gay activist Andrew Sullivan also reports a childhood pattern that fits the triadic model. His closest friends in school were girls, who were "sometimes soulmates" with whom he had "countless, endless conversations." And like many gay men, he became interested in acting and the theater. Sullivan describes the classic overinvolved mother and

uninterested father: “I had a very close relationship with my mother and a somewhat distant one with my father.” His father was undemonstrative, while it was his mother who, as he said, “filled my head with the possibilities of the world, who conversed with me as an adult, who helped me believe in my ability to do things in the wider world. It was her values that shaped and encouraged me. . . . In my adolescence I warred with my father and sided in my mother in the family fights . . . and in all of this, I suppose, I followed a typical pattern of homosexual development.” Judy Shepard, the mother of Matthew Shepard (the young gay man who was the victim of an infamous hate crime), tells the same, classic story. She described her son Matthew as “my friend, my soulmate, my confidant.”

Advice for Single Moms

In today’s complex world, the growing problem of single mothers (really, the problem of absent dads) poses a unique challenge for a boy’s gender-identity development. Whenever I speak to audiences of parents around the country, a mother will inevitably ask how she, as a single parent, can raise a healthy boy. The single mother can proceed in three ways:

1. *She can monitor the mother-son relationship.* Single mothers should be mindful not to develop an excessively close relationship with their sons. If a single mother has no emotionally secure relationship with a man, she may unconsciously seek to satisfy her emotional needs with her son, maintaining an unhealthy, overly intimate connection that may seemingly meet her own needs but that will not be in the best interests of her son. The gender-fragile boy, in particular, is typically bright and very verbal. Such a boy seems to be able to read his mother well, and sensing his mother’s codependency with him, he may learn to manipulate her emotions and consequently grow up as an undisciplined, overindulged, and (ultimately) immature and self-absorbed young man who is ill equipped to face the demands of the world.

2. *She can encourage masculine identification.* The single mother has to go the extra mile in affirming her son’s masculinity. From day one, she has to make him feel that his maleness is different from her femaleness and that that differentness is good, healthy, and a part of who he is. This masculine affirmation is especially important in cases where the father is permanently absent. A single mother can respect and maintain the memory of the father in a positive way, even though the father may never return, thus promoting the positive image of the “good father.” On the other hand, when men are often spoken of in a negative way in the home, a young boy may unconsciously adopt a feminine identity and effeminate mannerisms to make sure he remains safe from his mother’s rejection. Such efforts are admirable and helpful, but at the same time, in my opinion, a mother cannot do it by herself. In spite of her best efforts, she cannot model being a man, although she can do the next best thing. And that leads us to the third action a single mother can take:

3. *She can find a father figure.* Children can find a substitute for the absent father with an older brother, grandfather, or other male. It is important that the single mother support the boy’s masculine interests and that she encourage and endorse them. It is detrimental if the mother

conveys the message that she and her son can “just as well go it alone” because men are unnecessary elements within family life. Finding a father figure does not (as I am sure the vast majority of mothers well know) mean coming home from some singles’ watering hole every once in a while with a new male friend, allowing the man to spend the night, and then trying to get him to connect with the boy. This will be more confusing than beneficial. It is the consistent and reliable—and therefore long-term—relationship with a stable father figure that makes the difference. For this reason, Nicolosi suggests a family member: an older brother, an uncle, a grandfather. Do not be ashamed to express your concerns and ask for help. If a family member is not available, consider member from the church who can help such as Abouna and other male role models who are fathers. A devoted Sunday school teacher could make a powerful difference as a role model in a child’s life. Whenever possible, it is wise for single moms to request male teachers and mature, manly male tutors for their sons. As an adult client working to overcome his homosexuality recalled: Whenever I felt rejected by my friends, my mother tried to console me. But that just didn’t help. She was never a young guy, so nothing she could say could ever make me feel better. She’d say, “Oh, you don’t want to play with those bad kids anyway.” It would have been great if my father could have talked to me. Rather than the mother being the source of solace and consolation when the boy experiences rejection from peers, other males should provide the necessary consolation.

Fathers—Key Players in the Gender Game

“Danny,” one of Nicolosi’s adult homosexually oriented clients, felt rejected by his father as soon as he began to grow into young manhood. His mother fussed over him continually, worrying about his health, his appearance, his proper behavior, and his safety. But when his father was not ignoring Danny, he was verbally abusing him. Dan told Dr. Nicolosi about one incident that clearly illustrates the kind of family dynamics he grew up with. He described this scene: “Be sure you take a sweatshirt and a change of socks in your backpack, Danny,” his mom told him one school-day morning. “It’s cold and rainy today, and you know how I worry about you.” “Leave the kid alone, Mary, for goodness’ sake!” Danny’s dad shouted from the bedroom. “If he doesn’t have enough sense to stay warm and dry, the kid isn’t worth worrying about!” “Dad,” Danny retorted, “stop yelling at Mom.” Danny’s dad came roaring out of the bedroom. “Don’t think you can stand up to me, young man. You are a nothing!” Danny told me that his dad’s words caused him to begin to tremble, and when the older man saw that Dan was frightened, he bellowed again, “You are a nobody!” Gesturing at his son with his little finger pointed in the boy’s face, he continued, “You are *this* big. Don’t you *ever* think you can fight me!” Danny’s father belongs to that small minority of fathers who are explicitly punitive, even cruel. He needs a little boy around to be the weaker masculine figure—somebody he can intimidate to enhance his own sense of power. Boys like Danny have a hard time getting hold of what it means to be a male, because their mothers—the benevolent parents—protect them, but their fathers fight them off, put them down, and will not let them enter the masculine world. Danny was kept at bay as if he were growing up to be a competitor to his father. But his sad situation is, fortunately, not typical. The majority of fathers of pre-homosexual boys are simply uninvolved, emotionally distant and disconnected, especially from their sons.

Psychoanalysts have long recognized the importance of the father in the boy's development and in his separation from his mother. Some analysts have referred to the father as a "breath of fresh air" from over-involvement with the mother. Dad can be the knight in shining armor with whom the child can play, while being distinctively different from his mother.

A Dad's Love and Devotion

When they become aware of their sons' conflicts, many wonderful fathers translate their heartbreak into an all-out effort to do everything they can. Listen to this dad's devotion, expressed in a letter: My son Ben disclosed his sexuality to me just a few weeks ago. The two of us immediately told his mother. That was clearly the most painful event of my life. It has dominated my thinking almost every waking moment. Ben made it clear he had resolved himself to the situation, and he offered me no encouragement of any desire to change. My life was in total disarray and I simply could not believe it. Thank God I did not lose my temper and reject him. My state of mind was one of total shock, as prior to that date I had no idea or suspicions whatsoever. His mother had none as well. I was intensely motivated to research the subject of homosexuality and went to a university library for that purpose. I found very little on the subject that was not advocating the condition. Thankfully, through the Internet I discovered NARTH and the good books and articles of Nicolosi's organization. A short profile on my son: white, age twenty-seven; brother, age sixteen. Ben was not athletic in grade and high school; has always been closer to his mother; and friends in school were mostly girls. He was meticulous, artistic, and a good student. He was, and is, especially caring and considerate—the "perfect child." In recalling my son's childhood and adolescence, I can look back and see the void that was always there. I never realized it or even thought about it before. My son did not have the same interests as me, and after about age ten, I aborted efforts to direct him to areas of my interest. I realize now how much in error this was. That was the time I should have done whatever necessary to enhance my relationship with him. I abdicated his rearing to his mother, while I spent more time and effort with his younger brother. We do have a close family. I know my son loves me, and I feel he looks to me with envy. My feelings are that he has a feeling of inadequacy. Since studying the material dealing with homosexuality, I have devoted my time with him toward improving our relationship. Last week I had a one-on-one talk with him. During that conversation I tried to recall my many failures and shortcomings with him. I sincerely and humbly asked for his forgiveness. I told him I wanted to spend as much time with him as he would give me, and I told him I wanted to make up for my past failures. I hoped and prayed he would allow me to do so. After the conversation, my feeling was of relief, as I believe my request was meaningful to him. My objective is to fill the void I created. At the appropriate time, I will have another talk with him, give him some reading materials, and ask him to try therapy as a means to seek change. I pray every day he will be receptive. I have personally learned a great deal about the condition of homosexuality. It is easier for me to deal with this devastating situation with the knowledge I now have of the condition. My mission in life will never change: *freedom for my son.*

The Salient Father

When father and son come into the consultation room together, I consistently see misunderstanding, distance, avoidance, hurt—the attitudes of two strangers who somehow never understood each other. So that the boy can disidentify with his mother and identify with his father, the boy must perceive the father as worthy of emulation. He needs to see his father as salient (which is, remember, being benevolent and strong). Indeed, in my work with homosexual adults, the kinds of male figures my clients become infatuated with and emotionally dependent upon usually represent that ideal of the “good father”—benevolent, strong, confident men. The void created by the passivity of a father who is not seen by the son as salient will predispose the temperamentally sensitive, relational, timid boy to falling into a close-binding mother-son relationship to fill the vacuum. Subsequently, the father may observe something odd about his son, but he takes no steps to interfere with his son’s over-identification with the mother.

Dads, Do Not Let Your Sons Reject You

Many fathers of gender-confused sons simply give up and leave the boy to his mother. This is a big mistake. *Dad, do not let your son reject you and turn you away.* Your task is to pursue your son, push through his defensive detachment, and with steady and consistent efforts, to become an important person in his life. Make it your goal to heal the hurt he may have received from you at one time or another without your knowing how or understanding why. Rebuild the trust that was broken, even if you are not sure when, how, or why the relationship failed. The primary measure of your son’s healing will be his level of responsiveness to you. When parents report that their son now runs up to Daddy when he comes home from work, then I know that the basic goal of treatment has been accomplished. Now we simply need to reinforce and build upon that good relationship.

Parents’ Responses to Gender Nonconformity

Parents’ first response to their small son’s cross-gender behavior is typically neutral, and some are even affirming of it. In fact, some researchers have found that parents are unlikely to discourage their sons’ effeminate behavior. Because the parental response was either neutral or positive, some parents may be in unspoken collaboration with the child’s cross-gender behavior. In fact, some writers suspect that on some conscious or unconscious level, some mothers of small boys may actually communicate an expectation for effeminate behavior. Fathers of these boys typically have mixed feelings about therapy. Nicolosi’s impression has been that they usually come to therapy simply because the wife has brought them along. In fact, it has been repeatedly found, and most certainly in my own practice, that mothers are more likely to bring their children for treatment. Fathers, while they will give a verbal expression of concern about the boy, usually take a back seat to the wife’s involvement. Dr. Richard Green has noted a lack of parental concern—what he called parental “neutrality”—as the initial attitude toward effeminacy in about 80 percent of the cases of boys diagnosed with an overt problem of gender-identity disorder (GID). And when the parents’ concern did develop, mothers became more concerned than fathers in about 80 percent of the cases. Parents frequently do not know how to take their concern and translate it into systematic attempts to encourage gender-appropriate behavior. Many fathers are at a loss as to what is

happening inside their more sensitive sons. Generally, such a father tends not to be well attuned to the emotions of others, and when he is attuned, it is to another, more masculine-behaving son, who is easier to relate to and with whom he has more in common. The son who is gentle, passive, and relational—all characteristics of prehomosexuality—is a mystery to many fathers. Here is a case example from a psychiatrist of a young homosexual man with serious problems. His parents were well meaning and loving but out of touch with his struggles and unaware of the childhood ridicule he had suffered. Neither did they suspect their son's secret homosexuality. The psychiatrist reports: I had a new patient today, a college student, who had a fairly good, although not close, relationship with his father. But he never told his parents about the ridicule he experienced. Most kids who get ridiculed by their peers don't tell their parents, because they are so terribly embarrassed. This patient's parents were waiting outside to join in the session, but the fellow wouldn't even let me mention the degree of ridicule and isolation he had experienced, or the fear he now has of straight males. It's weak masculine identity and a tremendous sadness, and a tremendous fear of rejection, that makes these fellows very, very discouraged and hopeless and makes them very vulnerable to highly self-destructive behavior. Like what this young man said to me—because I had just asked him about unprotected sex—he said, “Yeah, I engage in it, I don't care.” There are fathers who are perfectly capable of being in tune with their sons—*once they recognize there is a problem*—and are willing to participate and take an active role in the healing process. This requires a father to recognize the problem, honestly reevaluate his parental role, and actively and consistently participate in his son's healthy future development. Needless to say, for boys with cooperative, concerned dads, healthy change is much more likely.

Dads Must Remain Committed

Maintaining the parental team is very important, but generally the most challenging problem is keeping the father involved on a consistent basis. In fact, the difficulty of maintaining Dad's active, daily participation is the most common obstacle to successful therapy. Remember, your son's effeminate behavior is a defense against identifying with the male role. You cannot take away the boy's security (his effeminacy) unless you provide something to take its place. Therefore, the treatment strategy is to draw the boy toward the masculine through a warm relationship with the father or father figure, rather than to simply rid him of the external markers of femininity.

Listen for Feelings

While we have been placing much of the focus of intervention on gender-appropriate *behavioral* change, we must not forget the true task, which is *emotional* bonding with the same-sex parent. And in this focus on achieving behavioral change, the child's feelings can easily be overlooked. This is a difficult time, and not just for Mom and Dad. The child is under pressure from parental efforts to modify habits and behavior which by now likely feel like a part of who he is. Understandably he will express negative feelings. He may even feel unloved or misunderstood. And he may, if parental intervention is too harsh, go into withdrawal and isolation, becoming emotionally detached from the rest of the family. Thus it is vitally important

that Mom and Dad express their concern and respect for his emotional reactions to this challenging new expectation of “being a boy.” Mother and father should encourage expression of whatever the child may feel, even when those feelings are negative or blaming. Encouragement to express hurt, anger, sadness, and disappointment is essential to keep him connected to you during this difficult transition time. Some fathers think they can get rid of the effeminacy through militant monitoring of external behaviors, but that is not the right approach. It is through bonding with the father and finding emotional security in the father-son relationship that the boy will feel capable of giving up his cross-gender fantasy. A weak father-son relationship typically poses the most serious obstacle to successful intervention. Here is an

Example: A six-year-old boy was brought in by his parents; we’ll call him “Joey.” The father seemed very concerned, telling the therapist that he did not want his son to be gay but did not know what to do about it. At the beginning of the second session, the therapist asked the parents, “How was the week?” The mother was on the edge of her seat and began to talk. Interrupting her, the therapist said, “Actually, let’s hear from Dad first. How was the week with Joey?” “Fine . . . I guess” was his reply. The mother prompted, “No, it wasn’t! Honey, tell him what happened.” He said, “What?” She said, “Don’t you remember?” “Oh, yeah . . . right,” he finally responded. “I don’t know . . . I’m watching TV and my son walks by me and gives me a look like, ‘Who do you think *you* are?’ ” With that, the dad looked at the floor and fell silent. The therapist prodded, “So what did you do about it?” “Nothing. What *could* I do?” He shrugged. The wife was staring at me, waiting for my response. “If Joey were my son,” I began, “and he walked by and gave me a look like that, I’d engage him. I’d say, ‘Come over here! What do you mean by that look?’ I’d reach out to him, grab him, and pull him over, maybe a little roughly but still affectionately, and let him know that the look was unacceptable. And I’d push for a connection. ‘Hey, kid,’ I’d say. ‘What’s wrong? Mad at me? What’d I do? C’mon, Joey, tell me what’s going on with you.’ ” At that, the mother exclaimed, “That’s *exactly* what I told him to do.” Like so many moms of prehomosexual boys, Joey’s mom knew intuitively what was needed, but *she* was not the one who needed to do it. It had to be Dad. As a whole, these types of fathers could be characterized as emotionally avoidant. Exploration of their histories revealed that they had typically had poor relationships with their own fathers. They tended to defer to their wives in emotional matters and appeared particularly dependent on them to be their guides, interpreters and spokespersons. While these men expressed sincere hope that their sons would transition to heterosexuality, nevertheless failed to live up to a long-term commitment to help them toward that goal.

In his first conjoint session, one father cried openly as his 15-year-old son expressed his deep disappointment with him; yet for months afterward, he would drive his son to his appointment without saying a word to him in the car. Further, while these fathers often appeared to be gregarious and popular, they tended not to have significant male friendships. The extent to which they lacked the ability for male emotional encounter was too consistent and pronounced to be dismissed as simply “typical of the American male.” Rather, my clinical impression of these fathers as a group was that there existed some significant limitation in their ability to engage emotionally with males. The trait common to fathers of homosexuals seemed to be an incapacity to summon the ability to correct relational problems with their sons. Rather than

actively extending themselves, they seemed characteristically inclined to retreat, avoid and feel hurt.

The Pain of Missed Opportunities

In “Not Crying for Dad,” an autobiographical story published in a gay anthology, we hear the sadness of a gay son who knows that on some level he is responsible for rejecting his own father—a man who wanted closeness with his son but, sadly, never found it. Author Philip Gambone describes the strange experience of being unable to cry at his father’s funeral. “I did not have much of a relationship with my father,” he says. “Gay friends tell me that this is simply the way it is with gay sons and their dads.”

Gambone goes on to describe a popular gay psychiatrist’s explanation for this commonly seen estrangement, which relies on the “born gay” assumption: “A father intuitively senses his son is homosexual and distances himself, rather than directly confronting the discomfort and shame he feels about this queer presence in the family.” Gambone admits his father was a good man. He seems puzzled that he could never feel love for his father or even cry at his funeral. “In his own quiet way,” Gambone says, “he never gave up on me. Through all the years that I remained silent about my homosexuality, he never wavered in the willing affability with which he greeted the guys—‘my roommates’—whom I brought home.” “I have scoured the memories of our relationship, looking for clues as to why I never totally felt at ease with my father,” he says. Sometimes Gambone wonders if the problem was his father’s unconscious homophobia (referring to the “born that way” theory in which the father is thought to reject the gender-nonconforming son, thus causing the estrangement), while at other times Gambone blames his mother’s and grandmother’s deliberate efforts to cause a father-son estrangement—“They were telling me to stay away from him.” Still, Gambone admits, “none of these generalizations feels adequate.” Looking back, he realizes that his father was really a kind and caring man who reached out to him and wanted the best for him, challenging his son to take more risks and to tackle the problems of life more aggressively. “In retrospect,” Gambone laments, “I wonder if I just wasn’t ready for the kind of intimacy my father had always been willing to have with me.”

As in the story written by the above author, many fathers feel rejected by their sons. However, we could say that at one time or another *all* fathers have felt rejected by their sons. The difference is that the father of the prehomosexual boy is likely the kind of man who accepts that rejection, who throws up his hands and fails to reach out to try to understand and break through the child’s resistance. (Or, as in Gambone’s case, the maternal relatives actively sabotage the father-son connection.) For whatever reason, the father fails to get past that block and instead settles for the alienation, the silence, and the rejection. In the years that follow, such inaction could cost both father and son dearly. “Dan,” a thirty-two-year-old client, describes this sadness about a lost opportunity: My father is like the Lincoln Monument: sitting up there rigid and aloof. I don’t want to give myself to him. There is a fear, but also an aversion to what he represents. I sound like such a kid when I say I am afraid of this “Big Bad Wolf” thing. But he doesn’t really know me, and I don’t know him. All I ever really wanted was my daddy. That’s all it is, and yet how mournfully I recognize that for all the years I’ve wasted, I can’t go back into my childhood. Neither will he ever be a different man. At seventy years old,

he'll never change. It's like, "Why should I bother to try to have a relationship with him?" I don't know him; he doesn't know me.

Three Types of Fathers

In his work with homosexually oriented men, Dr. Nicolosi has observed that the majority of fathers appear to be—for the most part—within the psychologically normal range. That being said, it is necessary to repeat that, as a group, these fathers are characterized by one serious limitation: the inability or unwillingness to counter their sons' defensive detachment and to reengage them back into the masculine sphere. Beyond that categorization, fathers appear to fall into three broad personality categories:

Immature. Such men are basically normal and healthy. However, during the critical developmental period (gender-identity phase) of their sons' lives, they were overextended and failed to see the consequences. Often, these were young men who had become fathers too soon and found themselves overwhelmed with marital, family, or financial burdens. As a result, their temperamentally vulnerable sons, if they had such sons, paid a price.

Narcissistic. Even a basically healthy man may have narcissistic personality features. But in the most extreme case of narcissism, a man sees his son as an extension of himself (as a "narcissistic self-object"), and he uses the boy to fulfill his own needs. The father acknowledges the boy only when he exhibits an attractive trait, appearance, skill, or personality type that the father personally values. If the boy has such traits, the father will put him up on a pedestal and treat the boy like he can do no wrong. If he lacks these traits, the boy, in effect, does not exist within the family. Such a father typically denies any responsibility for his son's problems. This is the most resistant type of father when confronted, and he is unlikely to cooperate in any kind of therapy.

Inadequate. These fathers may be great providers and thoroughly competent in the working world, but they generally are emotionally limited on an intimate social level and have little to give another person. They do not have the emotional resources to reach beyond themselves. Unlike narcissistic fathers who deny responsibility, these men may readily admit their failures and express remorse, but then no improvement takes place in the father-son relationship on a consistent basis. After a brief and often well-intentioned effort on the part of this father to comply, the relationship remains essentially unchanged. One client said, "My father was a nothing, a zero. My mother made all the decisions. She had the personality, and my father had very little to say. I don't even remember my father being home. If he was home, he was there physically, but that was about all." Emotionally limited fathers are generally dependent upon others, particularly their wives, to interpret social situations and tell them the right way to respond. On their own, they are unable to sustain a long-term commitment to remain involved and help their sons change.

Alex's Story

The following is an excerpt from the journal of “Alex,” a forty-two-year-old man in therapy for homosexuality. His father was a strong and forceful but negative figure, while his mother was apparently a codependent and fragile individual, with whom Alex became defensively aligned. My father taught us to be very, very respectful of him. He would not allow disrespect. And if he said to do something, you had better do it for your own good. He would punish us and make us afraid of him if we didn’t do what we were supposed to do. Sometimes he would hit us, and although it wasn’t very often, it was something that terrified me. He would also punish us by taking away privileges and making us go to bed without dinner. He had a way of making us all feel like we were no good. My dad was far from perfect, and as I grew older, I saw his imperfections. Still, he would push an image of himself as proud and righteous that would make us feel worthless in his sight. My mother practically worshiped the ground Dad walked on and loved him very much. And although she loved all us children very, very much, she loved my dad even more. And being very, very emotional, my mother couldn’t stand to be on bad terms with my dad. My mom wouldn’t stand up to my dad for us directly. She would try to make us do what was right so he wouldn’t get after us. But when my dad let go his anger, my mom wouldn’t do anything that I can remember to protect us from him. She was just as afraid of him as we kids were. In summary, the most important person in the successful treatment of the gender-confused boy is the father. The early psychoanalysts looked to the influence of smothering mothers on their homosexual sons; Mom’s excessive emotional closeness to her boy seemed to be the cause of the boy’s homosexuality. Today, however, the most significant figure in the formation of male homosexuality is thought by most reparative therapists to be the father. Why? Because mother-son closeness is not a problem *as long as the father models for the boy how to be in relationship with a woman*. The father supports the boy’s masculine identification so that the son can be close to, but not get lost in, the feminine. He shows the boy how to be close to a woman without sacrificing his masculine independence.

What Other Researchers Say

There is clinical evidence that in both boys and girls, clear cases of gender-identity disorder (GID) often result from intense frustration and stress within the family—either from some outside event, or from frustrating interactions between the child and his or her parents—that occurred during the early developmental period when the child should have been developing a coherent sense of self as male or female. Evidence is offered by the authors of *Gender Identity Disorder and Psychosexual Problems in Children and Adolescents*. The authors, Kenneth Zucker and Susan Bradley, describe the most common characteristics of GID boys: an avoidance of rough-and-tumble play, parents who failed to discourage cross-gender behaviors, and a detached father. Temperamentally, these authors say, the gender-disturbed child is likely to be particularly sensitive to his parents’ moods because he was born with a reactive and sensitive nature that does not handle stressful and challenging situations well. This probably is the same temperamental factor that makes gender-disturbed boys avoid rough-and-tumble play. Such boys generally feel inadequate as males, have problems interacting with their male peers, and tend to interpret any criticism as rejection. Other specific factors within this group of boys may be that they are unusually attractive, Zucker and Bradley say, and have highly

developed sensory sensitivities. Mothers of such boys, the authors say, sometimes feel particularly threatened by male aggression, and so they discourage boisterous behavior and normal aggression. Out of their own intense need to nurture and be nurtured, many of the mothers encouraged feminine-type, reciprocal nurturance behaviors in their sons.

Fathers, the authors note, tend to go along with their wives' tolerance of cross-gender behavior, despite their own inner uneasiness about what they see happening. This type of father, they say, has difficulty expressing feelings and feels emotionally inadequate himself. These inadequacies make it difficult for him to connect with and to actively help a troubled son. Such a father deals with family problems by withdrawing, working long hours and distancing himself. In such cases, the authors believe that "the parents' valuing of their son as a male and discouragement of cross-gender behaviors allows a gradual relinquishing of the defensive solution, and a building of confidence in a same-sex identity."

Father and Son—A Hands-On Relationship

Dr. Nicolosi recommends four examples of activities for fathers wanting to develop closer relations with their sons.

1. Physical aggression with Dad is a good way of breaking through the timidity and shyness associated with gender-disturbed boys. More important, it is an effective means through which dads can bond with their sons. This can be done on a living room rug or in a family room. The aim is to encourage a little of the "wild boy" to break through. By "playing weak" the dad allows the son to feel tough, strong, and aggressive.
2. Showering with Dad is good for small boys and can sometimes include brothers. This is best begun when the child is small, because boys approaching puberty will be shy about being naked with Dad for the first time. (Some fathers, too, may feel uncomfortable with this activity, depending on the attitude toward nudity in their childhood home.) Showering with Dad and other males in the house fosters a common, relaxed, anatomically based identity and breaks down the fascination and sense of mystery around male anatomy which will fuel male eroticism when puberty arrives.
3. Trips out of the house with just father and son are very helpful; even routine errands to the store or, say, fueling up the car (letting the son pump the gas). These quick trips can communicate a feeling of special togetherness. Buying the son ice cream and engaging him in discussion of something he enjoys makes the errand fun.
4. At bedtime, Dad should be the last person to tuck the son into bed. While Mom may participate, Dad should be the last one to say good night and turn out the lights. Especially for younger children, bedtime can bring feelings of vulnerability and anxiety that show themselves in dependence and even clinginess. The father should be the one to provide emotional comfort and reassurance after a period of quiet bedside prayer, Bible reading, or conversation. Some

gender-disturbed boys may be hesitant to take part in such father-son activities at first, but they remain important. My adult homosexual clients rarely report having shared these activities with their fathers. Fathers should be encouraged to have physical contact and to engage in physical activity with their sons. I place a great deal of emphasis on roughhousing, because the normal childhood connection with men is what usually was so lacking in my adult homosexual clients. Men and boys connect best through doing any sort of physical competition or shared activity, and if it is experienced as fun, it will facilitate father-son bonding. Rough-and-tumble play, like wrestling, is very important between father and son. If there is a physical disability affecting the father, this should not be detrimental to the son's development. If the father can display physical affection but cannot participate in rough-and-tumble play, perhaps that kind of activity can come from a brother or someone else. A lot of the men I counsel, when entering therapy as adults, describe getting sexually aroused by wrestling. They are unable to participate in that normal masculine sport without the intrusion of eroticism. In fact, many "Personals" ads in gay papers will solicit a "guy to wrestle with." What should be a normal, healthy, nonerotic competitive activity is twisted by gay men into an eroticized behavior. And the origin of this distortion is the unmet need for healthy masculine contact. As Richard Wyler tells us: The cultural message is clear: Real men don't touch. Unfortunately, this taboo often carries over to fathers and sons, even when boys are still very young, and to brothers and close friends. Men in our culture seem afraid of being perceived as homosexual, or even of "making" themselves or someone else homosexual by hugging, holding or touching them. But the very thing they fear is the thing they are creating—a society of touch-deprived boys who grow up longing to be held by a man. If the need to be touched and held isn't met in childhood, it doesn't just go away because a boy grows into a man. For us, the desire was so primal, and so long denied, that some of us sought sex with a man at times when all we really wanted was to be held. We just didn't know how else to receive the non-sexual touch we craved.

A boy's need for physical contact with his father cannot be overstated. One homosexual patient shared a childhood memory of longing for his father's loving touch: We'd visit my father during summer vacations in Appalachia. On those hot, sultry nights, he'd lie on the couch with his shirt off, reading those paperback adventure novels. I remember lying there next to him, touching his hairy stomach. I remember trying to get his attention without angering him, but he was engrossed in his reading. I am coming to realize that my homosexual activities have been all about my wanting to get in that kind of contact with my dad. Sometimes, in attempting to establish greater physical intimacy, these boys try to make physical contact with their fathers, but their dads say, "It doesn't feel quite right." A father may tell me that when his effeminate son hugs him, it's a little uncomfortable—almost romantic or seductive. "It feels the way a daughter would hug her father." I advise them to model a different kind of hugging and connection that is warm and real but also manly and respectful of gender and generational boundaries. A child's strongly negative reaction to attempts by you to affirm his authentic gender is an indication that professional counseling is called for. Signs that you should seek professional guidance and assistance include prolonged sadness, anger, hurt, resentment, anxiety, and fearful preoccupation.

Beyond Mom and Dad

Parents need not feel alone and unsupported in their efforts to assist their gender-disturbed child. Too often, shame or embarrassment will prevent them from soliciting the help of other significant people to become involved in their son's life. Let's take a moment to consider who, besides the mother and father, can help the boy. Younger siblings usually do not have much of an influence, but older ones do. Typically, a GID boy is very close to his older sister; he may even idolize her. If the sister is mature enough, she can be encouraged to support the parents' efforts. The older girl's strong influence on the boy can greatly assist his masculine confidence. Older brothers are also very important. In the course of his career, Freud worked with only a small group of homosexuals. But he did say that if a homosexual has an older brother, he will usually fear the older brother, and their relationship will be hostile. I have seen this confirmed over and over again. The homosexual usually perceives his older brother, like his father, with resentment and dread. Fear of other males can, in fact, become a strong preoccupation. Many clients recall, "I was Mom's son, but my brother was Dad's son." It is an unspoken division: "Dad and my brother were together over *there*, and me and Mom and my sister were over *here*." Therefore, it is important to get the older brother involved. I have been surprised at the cooperation of brothers as young as thirteen years old. Without explaining all your concerns, you can enlist an older brother's involvement, and he can be a powerful support in building the gender-confused boy's masculine confidence. "Your brother will make it hard for you to connect with him," you can say, "because he's shy and he's having trouble feeling comfortable with other guys. We need your help to get him over that."

Bringing relatives, friends, and neighbors into the intervention for a boy with weak gender esteem will broaden the field of players and keeps the parents from trying to do everything themselves. A few honest but discreet words about the situation (the boy is "having trouble feeling like one of the guys"), along with a request for male role-modeling and help in sports involvement, can make a big difference. An athletic coach can play an important, even pivotal role in the healing process. Parents will need to explain their particular concerns to the coach. A cooperative and sympathetic coach, whether for karate, swimming, soccer, Little League, or any other kind of sport, can add an extra positive dimension to the team effort that parents are trying to create. Boys need masculine figures in their lives who are strong but gentle, and patient and encouraging. Teachers also play key roles in the effort. Usually, when the school refers a boy to a psychologist for treatment, it is because the boy's behavior has created a class disruption. However, most gender-disturbed boys are the "good little boys" who never draw negative attention. Unfortunately, teachers are not trained to identify the subtle signs of gender confusion. Nonetheless, it is important for you to tell teachers about your concerns. It is not necessary to use the word "homosexual"; the phrase "gender issues" or even "low gender esteem" is sufficient. Even if she has some politically correct notions, the teacher's best instincts and common sense will often overrule, and she will work with you. It is amazing how many teachers will readily cooperate with concerned parents. Begin by explaining, "We want our son to be better connected with boys. The need for friendships with other boys cannot be overemphasized. Apart from the obvious importance of Dad, followed by Mom and the family, other boys may well prove to be the people most indispensable to his healing process."

CONCLUSION: There are many preventive measures that can be taken to prevent homosexuality in boys and girls. For boys, these include i) a loving and caring relationship with the father, ii) a non-dominant mother, iii) boys playing with and blending in with other boys at an early age and developing male childhood friendships, iv) avoidance of having too close of relationships with the opposite sex at an early age, v) doing rough and tumble things with the dad and other boys, such as sports, wrestling, and other physical activities, vi) parents need to nurture their son and look for early warning signs like effeminacy and doing girlish things. Boys that are extra sensitive and artistic are vulnerable and need the utmost care and loving relationship from their fathers.

VERSE TO REMEMBER: “Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

9. REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DATING UNIT

SERVANT PREPARATION:

LESSON PREPARATION

OBJECTIVES

Lesson Objective: To review questions for the entire unit so that the Sunday School kids know key facts in dating and homosexuality.

Dating Unit questions

1. The term Friendship comes from the work:
 - a. “Philia” Which means friend

- b. "Philia" Which means love
- c. "Philos" which means friendly
- d. "Philos" which means dear

2. Jonathan was an:

- a. Example of a good friend for Jonadab
- b. Example of a bad friend for Amnon
- c. Example of a bad friend for Saul
- d. Example of a good friend for David

3. Amnon was an:

- a. Example of a bad friend for Jonadab
- b. Example of a good friend for Jonathan
- c. Example of a bad friend for Saul
- d. Example of a good friend for David

4. True Christian Friends do not

- a. Love Sacrificially
- b. Accept Unconditionally
- c. Love Blindly
- d. Have Boundaries

5. What does the verse "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" mean?

- a. We should completely trust our friends.
- b. We should encourage our friends
- c. We shouldn't envy our friends
- d. We should build our friends even by criticism.

6. One of the principles to establishing and maintaining a Godly friendship of the opposite sex :

- a. Trust self-control.
- b. Having good intentions.
- c. Don't trust self-control.
- d. Fulfill your needs.

7. One of the deceptions while building a relationship with opposite sex

- a. View the other person as a brother or sister
- b. Having good intentions.

- c. Define unneeded boundaries
- d. Keep busy serving

8. One of the consequences to disobeying God's laws and falling into sin

- a. Feelings of Rejection
- b. Losing self-control
- c. Feeling that friends need me.
- d. Focus only on work/Studies and forget about friends.

9. Dating tends to skip

- a. The Commitment Stage of the relationship.
- b. The Friendship stage of a relationship
- c. The Intimacy stage of a relationship.
- d. The Love stage of a relationship.

10. Dating often mistakes:

- a. Commitment for love.
- b. Emotions for desires.
- c. Physical relationship for love.
- d. Commitment for physical relationship.

11. Dating often isolates a couple from

- a. Each Other
- b. Other vital relationships
- c. Work
- d. Some of their friends

12. Every Relationship is an Opportunity to

- a. Model Christ's Love
- b. Build healthy relationship
- c. Test your self-control.
- d. Find your future partner.

13. Some of the consequences of falling into a sinful relationship with the opposite sex
exclude

- a. Deep guilt and regret
- b. Loss of power
- c. Loss of self-esteem
- d. Feelings of rejection

14. Some of the habits of highly defective dating include all but the following:

- a. Skipping the friendship stage of a relationship
- b. Moving the relationship too fast
- c. Dating mistakes a physical relationship for love
- d. Dating isolates a couple from vital relationships

15. God's gift of singleness is

- a. The gift of the monastic life and ascetic life
- b. A season of our lives with boundless opportunities for growth, learning, and service
- c. A time period of fasting and abstinence from people before marriage
- d. None of the above

16. The verse ""Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth,
Before the difficult days come" was said by

- a. David in the Psalms
- b. Jesus on the Gospel of St. John
- c. Solomon in Ecclesiastes
- d. Moses in the book of Leviticus

17. Two habits of highly defective dating include

- a. Dating tends to isolate you from other girls
- b. Dating tends to make your grades go down at school
- c. Dating becomes an end in itself
- d. Dating creates an artificial environment for evaluating character

18. One reason that the Coptic Orthodox church does not believe in dating because

- a. The church does not want to deal with too many problems

- b. The church in general feels that teenagers, college students, or anyone in general who is not emotionally, spiritually, and financially ready for marriage should not date.
- c. The church feels that dating can lead to marriage too soon.
- d. The church feels that people who date will never be pure.

19. Circle all of the correct answers: A serious relationship between a man and a woman in the Coptic Orthodox church

- a. Must be approved by the parents
- b. Must be approved by the father's of confession of the man and the woman
- c. Must be approved by the Board of Deacons
- d. All of the above

20. Some of the five new attitudes towards dating include

- a. Every relationship is an opportunity to model Christ's love
- b. My unmarried years should be well spent looking for a spouse
- c. I can have a dating relationship but with no physical stuff
- d. I cannot "own" someone outside of marriage
- e. I cannot prevent the situations that compromise the body and mind

21. The verse "If you love Me, you will keep my commandments" is in

- a. John 1:1
- b. John 14:15
- c. Matthew 22:15
- d. Luke 6:8
- e. None of the above

22. God's love is defined as

- a. Fulfillment of my needs
- b. Providing comfort for me
- c. A very emotional feeling
- d. Selfless and sacrificial

23. Christian purity is defined as

- a. No sex
- b. A way of the life of righteousness
- c. No swearing or cussing
- d. Celibacy and tranquility

24. The sins of David were

- a. Adultery and Robbery
- b. Murder and Covetousness
- c. Murder and Stealing
- d. Adultery and Idolatry
- e. None of the above

25. True or False: Guys struggle more with their sex drives and physical attributes while girls struggle more with their emotions

26. True or False: Most guys struggle with controlling their eyes

27. True or False: Girls need to dress modestly and wear appropriate clothing only in church in order to not stir up feelings in a guy.

28. The joy of intimacy is:

- a. Reward of commitment.
- b. Required for healthy relationship.
- c. The Reward of Friendship.
- d. The Way to show love.

29. Intimacy without commitment is Intimacy without friendship is:

- a. Superficial Defrauding
- b. Misleading.... selfishness
- c. Defrauding Superficial
- d. Selfishness Misleading

30. Homosexuality is a:

- a. Sin

- b. Disease
- c. Genetic disorder
- d. A & B

31. What does the Bible say about Homosexuality:

- a. A sin needs repentance.
- b. A Disease.
- c. A Normal behavior.
- d. A lifestyle.

32. What will happen to homosexuals according to the Bible

- a. Should be excommunicated
- b. Should be stoned.
- c. Shouldn't take communion
- d. Will not inherit the kingdom of God

33. Where in the Bible is homosexuality mentioned to be a sin:

- a. Corinthians 6:9-10
- b. Roman 1:24-27
- c. Leviticus 20:13
- d. All of the above.

34. From a Scientific perspective:

- a. Homosexuality was proven to be genetic.
- b. Homosexuality was proven to be not genetic.
- c. No evidence to prove that homosexuality is genetic.
- d. Homosexuality is not problem or disorder.

35. The most common cause of homosexuality is:

- a. Dysfunctional Parent Child Relationship in the home.
- b. Failure in opposite sex relationship
- c. They envy of the same sex friends.
- d. Dysfunctional wife husband Relationship in the home.

36. Homosexuality is a:

- a. Gender Identity disorder.
- b. Sexual interest disorder.
- c. Rejection of opposite sex.
- d. Envy to opposite sex.

37. Self-acceptance in homosexuality:

- a. Means the person accepts his homosexual desires.
- b. Means that the person should accept his thoughts.
- c. Means that the person should accept his thoughts but not approve of them.
- d. To feel a healthy self-esteem and accept your way of life

38. Androgyny is:

- a. The condition where the person has a combination of masculine and feminine characteristics.
- b. The condition where the person has a diluted or neutered version of both genders.
- c. Is a disease linked to homosexuality
- d. A homosexual hormone in the body

39. Which one of the below is not Part of male homosexual treatment

- a. Making Peace with the Father
- b. Dating a female lady.
- c. Identifying Masculinity
- d. Self-Acceptance.

40. Gender Empowerment is:

- a. Rejecting Androgyny.
- b. Emphasizes Gender differences
- c. Emphasizes the right Gender characteristics
- d. Applying an x ray.

41. Feeling masculine for a male homosexual

- a. Makes same-sex attractions more distracting.
- b. Increases the androgen hormone.

- c. Makes same-sex attractions less distracting.
 - d. Decreases the androgen hormone.
42. The verse “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” was said by
- a. St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10
 - b. St. James 2:6-8
 - c. St. Peter in 2 Peter 3:4-6
 - d. St. Paul in Romans 6:7-9
43. Male homosexuality is primarily a
- a. Gender identification problem
 - b. A sexual deviant behavior
 - c. A problem caused by society
 - d. An alternative lifestyle
 - e. All of the above
44. Male homosexuality is primarily
- a. A problem that emerges from being bullied at school
 - b. A problem resulting from a bad relationship between father and son
 - c. A problem that emerges because the boy is sensitive and likes art
 - d. A lifestyle practiced mostly in the US
 - e. All of the above

Answers:

- 1. B
- 2. D
- 3. A
- 4. C

5. D
6. C
7. B
8. A
9. B
10. C
11. B
12. A
13. B
14. B
15. A
16. C
17. C and D
18. B
19. A and B
20. A and D
21. B
22. D
23. B
24. E
25. True
26. True
27. False
28. A
29. C
30. D
31. A
32. D
33. D
34. C
35. A
36. A
37. C
38. A
39. B
40. B
41. C
42. A

43. A

44. B

