



Courage & EnCourage  
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## ENCOURAGE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing Chapter

**When: Sunday, January 17, 2016 from 2:30 to 4:00pm**

**Where: Holy Spirit Catholic Church  
9565 Musch Rd.  
Brighton, Michigan 48116**

Directions: US-23 to Silver Lake Rd. Exit (exit #55) West on Silver Lake Rd. to Whitmore Lake Rd. (a short distance). South on Whitmore Lake Rd. to Winans Lake Rd.(a three way stop). West on Winans Lake Rd. approximately one mile to Musch Rd. Turn left or West on Musch Rd. to Holy Spirit Catholic Church. The Courage group meets earlier at 2:00pm in the new school that connects to the church in the Conference/Lending Library Room. The The EnCourage group meets in the Parish Activity Center. Look for Encourage and Courage Meeting Signs.

As most of you know, the Christmas celebration officially ends on Sunday the tenth, and since we are writing and sending this missive before the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, it is more than appropriate that we again wish you a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

We have enclosed with this month's letter a single article that we thought addressed many issues that parents and loved ones experience. The author, Joshua Glaser, captures the feelings and struggles that the issues of same-sex attraction bring to families. While the article is over ten years old, it remains very relevant for today. We urge you to take the time to read it.

We also urge you to investigate a wonderful prayer, *Parents Novena for Perseverance*, that is available from EnCourage member Victoria Leleand at [lelandhome@verizon.net](mailto:lelandhome@verizon.net) It is a powerful prayer that calls one to experience the depth of wisdom and tradition in the Catholic Church.

**Please** also remember that we unite to pray each Thursday to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in reparation for our sins and the sins against human sexuality such as same-sex behavior and abortion. Reparation is making amends for the wrongs committed through our sinful condition. Additionally, we pray as intercessors for all our loved ones who will, like the prodigal, someday return home. We generally follow the model given to us by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in the booklet *Holy*

***Hour of Reparation*** published by CMJ Marian Publishers. If you would like a copy of the booklet, we have a small supply in our office or you can order one by calling the publisher at 1-888-636-6799. Another beautiful prayer is the ***Chaplet of the Precious Blood*** that is available upon request. This beautiful chaplet has been modified to address the specific concerns of Courage and EnCourage members. We have chosen to add this powerful prayer to our Holy Hour of Reparation. Please remember, “that the necessity of reparation is especially urgent today and must be evident to everyone who considers the present plight of the world, ‘seated in wickedness’. The Sacred Heart of Jesus promised to St. Margaret Mary that He would reward abundantly with His graces all those who should render this honor to His Heart.” (Pope Pius XI Encyclical *Miserentissimus*)

**Please note:** If you cannot attend the January 17th meeting, our next regular Diocesan EnCourage meeting is Sunday, February 21, 2016. If you would prefer to receive our letter and enclosures via email rather than regular mail please let us know, or if you no longer want to receive our letter please inform us.

For more information regarding our meetings, or to talk about the issue of same-sex attraction in your lives or the lives of loved ones, call our Diocesan office at 517-342-2596 or email us at [courage@dioceseoflansing.org](mailto:courage@dioceseoflansing.org) We might also mention that the Diocese of Lansing supports this ministry even though more than half of our letters go well beyond our borders. Any financial help you can give us is greatly appreciated.

We look forward to meeting with you. Let us remember, however, to always respect the right of each to complete confidentiality.

Trusting in Jesus,



Bob and Susan Cavera

“Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4: 6-7

**Looking for Wheat  
When a Son or Daughter Says, "I'm Gay."  
By Joshua Glaser**

"Mom, Dad, there's something I need to tell you."

Bart was 21, a junior in college, home for winter break. He paused, breathed in. "I'm gay."

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

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

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

### **The Painful News**

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

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

## **Permission to Grieve**

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

Take a look at the five stages of grief: Shock (Denial), Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance. In the early stages, it can be especially difficult to discern if you are responding to your child in love or in an effort to escape the pain of grief. Are your daughter's friends really the problem or are you walking in denial? Is this righteous indignation at your son's behavior or anger because you feel powerless to restore life to normal? Accepting your need to grieve and allowing yourself to grieve will help you move from *reacting* to your son or daughter in an attempt to alleviate your own pain to *responding* to your son or daughter with his or her best interest in mind.

## **Grieve**

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

## **Remembering Your Child's Pain**

Let's look again at Bart. The bookends of what he shared are about how he has embraced homosexuality, but much of what he told his parents was about the long, painful years he walked alone with unwanted homosexual desires. (In fact, you can read between the lines and see that he walked through his grieving process.) What his parents were bearing and grappling with for the first time, he grappled with on his own for much of his life. So while Bart now feels relatively peaceful about the present and hopeful about the future, his parents suddenly feel the opposite. This disparity of emotion can be particularly troubling for parents.

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

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

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

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

### **Remembering the Wheat in the Weeds**

Is there any good about your son or daughter's current choices regarding homosexuality? As difficult as this may seem, there is. And where you can see, acknowledge, and affirm the good, you'll be able to more fully model Christ's heart toward your son or daughter. And you'll likely lay a former foundation on which to truly help you child.

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

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

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

the weeds are overtaking the field, perhaps he would ask you not to try to pull up the weeds just yet. Will you let Him show you what He sees?

### **Recognizing the Wheat**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Incidentally, feelings like relief, joy, peace, freedom - these suggest wheat to me, not weeds. I wonder if the euphoria sons and daughters experience when they "come out" has less to do with finally embracing themselves as homosexual and more to do with finally embracing themselves as men and women who are made for light, community, honesty, and acceptance, and to some degree, finding these. These things feel good because God has made us to walk in them. Acknowledging one's need for these, that too is wheat.

Third, ask Jesus, the Sower of the seed, for eyes to see beyond the weeds.

Seeing beyond a son or daughter's homosexuality can be difficult, especially when he or she is unrepentant. This was a trouble spot for the Pharisees. When someone transgressed the law, that's what we saw. They criticized Jesus when he didn't seem to see what they saw. Take the prostitute who washed Jesus' feet with their tears in Luke 7. The Pharisee saw her sin, and defined her accordingly. Not so with Jesus. Jesus saw her. And Jesus refuses to define your son or daughter as 'gay' or 'lesbian'.

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

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

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