



Courage & EnCourage
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ENCOURAGE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing Chapter

When: **Sunday April 22, 2012 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 and quickly left again at the entrance to the parking area. Proceed to the church. We meet in the "Shroud Room" adjacent to the sanctuary. Look for Encourage Meeting signs.

Please note: We have moved our meeting location from the portable classroom on the hill to the **Shroud Room** in the main church. We will post signs at both locations, even though we are not that hard to find. Another change worthy of note this month is that our April meeting is on the fourth Sunday, April 22nd. We moved the meeting from our usual third Sunday to accommodate Mercy Sunday. **Please make a note of these two important changes for April.**

We have enclosed with this letter an article from a Regeneration Ministries newsletter on responding to loved ones who often choose family events to "come out" to the family. It is a difficult time for everyone and we thought the article helpful in understanding an appropriate response.

Additionally, we have enclosed a prayer card for our country that we would encourage you to use daily. Recently we shared the prayer with some friends, who felt the need so important and timely, that they purchased enough cards for their entire parish. For those of you who receive our letter via regular mail, we have simply enclosed the prayer card. Those of you who receive our letter via email, we have reprinted the prayer below.

A Prayer For Our Country

**O Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy
at this most critical time, we entrust the
United States of America to your loving care.**

Most Holy Mother, we beg you to reclaim this land for the glory of your Son. Overwhelmed with the burden of the sins of our nation, we cry to you from the depths of our hearts and seek refuge in your motherly protection.

Look down with mercy upon us and touch the hearts of our people. Open our minds to the great worth of human life and in the responsibilities that accompany human freedom.

Free us from the falsehoods that lead to the evil of abortion and threaten the sacctity of family life. Grant our country the wisdom to proclaim that God's law is the foundation on which this nation was founded, and that He alone is the True Source of our cherished rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

O Merciful Mother, give us the courage to reject the culture of death and the strength to build a new Culture of Life. Amen

*Men of the Sacred Hearts
586-446-3521*

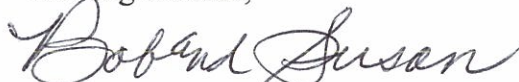
Remember please that we unite to pray each Thursday to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in reparation for our sins and the sins against human sexuality such as same-sex behavior and abortion.

If you cannot attend the April 22nd meeting, our next regular meeting will be May 20th. We would love to see you.

For more information regarding our meetings, or to talk about the issue of same-sex attraction in your lives, call our Diocesan office at 517-342-2596 or email us at caverart@comcast.net

The 2012 National Annual Courage/Encourage Conference is July 19-22 at Mount St. Mary's College and Seminary, Emmitsburg, Maryland. Make plans now to attend.

Trusting in Jesus,


Bob and Susan Cavera

Looking for Wheat

When a Son or Daughter Says, “I’m Gay.”

By Joshua Glaser

“Mom, Dad, there’s something I need to tell you.”

Bart was 21, a junior in college, home for winter break. He paused, breathed in. “I’m gay.”

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

He’d felt different as long as he could remember. When his friends started noticing girls, he was watching other guys. For years, he’d tried to change, to be “normal.” He’d prayed, begged God in tears to help him. But his attractions didn’t change. He tried dating, which is when he 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’ve 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 hearing and grappling with for the first time, he grappled with on his own for much of his life. So while Bart now feels relatively peaceful about the present and hopeful about the future, his parents suddenly feel the opposite. This disparity of emotion can be particularly troubling for parents.

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

- "How can you say you're happier than you 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 your child.

Jesus tells a parable about the kingdom in Matthew 13:24-29 of a man who sowed good wheat seed in a field. In the same field, an enemy came at night and secretly sowed weeds. Time passed, and eventually as expected, wheat began to appear. But then so did the weeds. Seeing the weeds, the man's servants wanted to 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 gay son or daughter has shared this with you, he or she has overcome a huge hurdle that once kept you at a distance. And though you may not approve of his homosexual choices, you can approve of his courage and willingness to finally talk to you. You can affirm that she valued your relationship enough to entrust this to you. He or she has come near to you. This is wheat.

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

Second, look near the weeds. In particular, look near the weeds that seem to be bringing your son or daughter the most joy and peace right now. If the joy and peace is authentic, my guess is there’s wheat nearby. Bart 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 her tears in Luke 7. The Pharisee saw her sin, and defined her accordingly. Not so with Jesus. Jesus saw her. And Jesus refuses to define your son or daughter as ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’.

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

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

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An Excellent Recommended Resource;

The Hurting Parent: Help and Hope for Parents of Prodigals

“Whether you are a hurting parent, a friend or family member, or a pastor or counselor, this classic resource will minister to you.” It is a must read for all parents. Available through Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan or Amazon.