

How to Respond When Your Child Says They're Gay

The tears in her eyes confirmed what I had suspected. My daughter was pulling away from me ... I was turning out to be just like everyone else.

Shortly before our family became Christians, my daughter's revelation that she thought she was gay came as a devastating shock. While my husband and I were finally happy after making a commitment to a God whom we had always believed in but had never taken the time to know, we began as new converts with a secret that lay heavy on our hearts.

When my daughter asked me how God felt about gay people, I did my best to put together what the Bible said about homosexuality, and what it stated seemed very clear. New at church and still very emotional by what had been revealed, I was unable to approach anyone in church leadership, too embarrassed to ask questions, mortified at what people would think.

Then again, I wasn't sure what I thought of "us" anymore. If my daughter was gay, then how could the "happily-ever-after life" I thought I had been living ever been real? The shards and rubble that were left of it no longer resembled anything familiar.

At 17, my daughter was already well aware of what people in general thought about the gay community and because the Bible had been the basis for many of their opinions, she began doubting the "God loves everybody" statements that I tried to encourage her with. To be honest, I wasn't really sure if He loved my daughter.

A year after joining the church, my husband and I enrolled in a Bible study program. After a few months of basic doctrinal

instruction, and armed with some Bible verses, I drew up the courage to broach the subject of repentance with my daughter. Repenting, I told her, meant asking God forgiveness and then actually turning her life towards God and away from anything to do with her former behavior.

My daughter listened carefully to everything I said and didn't say a word. Although the silence that followed was long and uncomfortable, I felt relieved because I had told her everything that she needed to know. I was trying to save her soul and whether it hurt or not wasn't important.

She of all people didn't deserve to go to hell, and there was no way I was going to let someone so precious to me just slip away. Grieving for her while she was still very much alive was like living a nightmare. I had told her that God wanted only the best for her and that by creating a man and a woman He had set the ground rules for a perfect, "beautiful life" and that He wouldn't accept anything else.

When I finally looked up, I found her crying silently to herself. While she hadn't protested or fought back, she wasn't reaching for me either and I could almost feel her pulling away, closing a door and shutting me out forever.

Suddenly all the reasons for having to hurt her for her own good seemed no longer valid. I thought that I was doing what was right before God by telling her that if she didn't change she would go to hell, but something was terribly wrong. I suddenly realized that all I had done was deliver an ultimatum on behalf of a God she had already heard about.

The judgmental, condemning, stern and uncompromising God, the God to be feared and the God who could strike you down where you stood if you tried to defy Him. What did she need a God like *that* for? Wouldn't she have been better off without Him?

From that moment on, the more I spoke, the deeper I sank. While she struggled to understand herself and deal with the

reaction that society had toward “people like her,” it was as if I had announced that she could no longer be part of our lives, like she could only look in at us from where she was: alone and abandoned, “outside” of God’s acceptance.

I felt so torn up inside. How could this be doing what God wanted? When I had given my life to God, I had been so full of hope, but now I wondered if I really had what it took to be a good Christian. Would God just throw us away if we didn’t conform? If God had chosen us all before we were even born, how was it that He could give up on someone as gentle and beautiful as my daughter? Did we really need Him if this is what He was like? Nothing made any sense anymore, and I felt like I was at the point of losing my daughter, losing God and losing my mind.

Slowly, however, somewhere in the midst of my confusion, the ranting and raving seemed to ebb, and I realized that I was lying to myself. Completely exhausted, I finally and reluctantly had to admit to myself that I still really *did* need God. As frightening as He might be, there had to be something more to Him ... there just *had* to be. For some inexplicable reason, I kept holding on to that conviction and now, almost six years later, I am glad that I did.

As my husband and I continued in Bible study, we began to understand God’s true character as it was revealed in His Word. Slowly God evolved in our lives and took His place as “Father” in our hearts. Verse after verse revealed an incredible parent who was eternally steadfast in the unconditional love He had for His children; *all of His children*.

His promises spoke of unspeakable riches, ready for the taking if we would just take the time to learn why He wanted to give them to us. In time, the truth of what Christ had accomplished on the cross became something that literally changed our whole lives. Instead of walking around defeated and sad, we began to

wield the victory that was God's precious gift to us as Christians. Using the declarations, prayers and instructions in the Bible, we began to arm ourselves with the spiritual weapons available.

As a mother, getting my daughter "right with God" even before she knew anything about Him had been all wrong. What I hadn't provided for my daughter that day was what she needed first and foremost: the assurance of God's unconditional love for her. It was God's love that needed to be like a lighthouse beacon—clear, sure and welcoming. When I had told her previously that God loved everyone, including gays, my conviction had been as thin as the stickers that the "God is Love" affirmations were usually printed on.

God's love had been everything *but* clear, sure and welcoming when I had marched into her already fragile life, armed to change her no matter what. I had leveled biblical concepts of deliverance and demonic oppression at her prematurely, without any exhortation or information, and had pulled the trigger. As sincere as my intentions may have been, the results could have been nothing short of lethal.

Since that time, God has been placed at the bottom of my daughter's list of life's priorities, but at least He's still on the list. Realizing that my fumbled attempts to minister to her about her "challenge" had been based on my love for her, the relationship I have with my daughter has continued to be open and loving.

We know that in time, the Holy Spirit will provide all the courage my daughter needs to approach church again. Hopefully she will be afforded the dignity and respect she needs from church fellowship as she, just like any other Christian, works on her own particular challenges. Newfound love must have a nurturing and caring environment for it to grow. Rooted in compassionate love for all individuals, regardless of *who* they

are, and providing ongoing education and monitored growth can only ensure that the church actually helps each individual realize the blessed life that God has always intended for them.

My husband and I have accepted now that unless her desire to seek God for herself is sincere, my daughter's relationship with God will be meaningless. Love cannot be forced, but once it has been ignited nothing can stop its dramatic effects. Nothing is impossible for God. As parents of a gay daughter, we must continue on with unquestionable faith and respect for *His* timing. The same love that conquers all is also the fountain from which patience and perseverance spring and it will be that same love that sees us through to the end, no matter what.

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