

How to Set Boundaries With Your Gay Family Members

Pastors have been expressing a growing concern about how, during the holiday season, to relate to their children who are in a gay or lesbian relationship. The holidays are supposed to bring families together, but increasingly, they give rise to a very difficult dilemma for leaders who have taken a solid stand against the lifestyle, and yet their child shows up at the door with a same-sex partner. As pastors, people look to us to take the lead on showing love and hospitality, embracing those who do not know Christ. How can we still show the love of Christ during this Thanksgiving and Christmas season without compromising the standard of holiness? This scenario is not unfamiliar to me, a former lesbian who has been free for almost 20 years through the power of Jesus Christ.

In many ways, I am thankful that I am not a parent who has to face these challenges in this present day. As a pastor ordained under the Assemblies of God, however, my heart still goes out to those who have suddenly been thrust into a situation that is heart-wrenching and often bewildering.

I believe we can validate an individual without celebrating their lifestyle. There is a big difference between approving our children's behaviors and validating their worth as a human being. Our loved one, regardless of their lifestyle, should know that we love them unconditionally. As a parent, you can reassure them of their worth to you and to God by letting them know that they are a unique individual created in the image of God and that they have purpose that is God-given. You can also affirm the good qualities that you see in them such as their talents, accomplishments and the good traits of their character such as a giving heart, honesty, compassion.

As pastors, we must be watchful of who we surround ourselves

with and from whom we receive input regarding these difficult issues. We don't want to lose our effectiveness like Exodus International, who started out helping those that wanted to walk away from the lifestyle, but after a period of time began to support the gay agenda. "Don't let anyone deceive you. Associating with bad people will ruin decent people" (1 Cor. 15:33, GW).

So, what does that look like for families who want to love their child, friends or relatives but don't want to compromise the gospel? Parents have a tendency to take a course of action out of guilt or to please others. This type of compromise will eventually cause more pain than if we would have just refused to meet with the partner. All we need to say is "What you are doing does not line up with what we believe." If someone wanted to look at pornography in your home, we would say no. If someone wanted to have sex outside of marriage in our home, we would say no. We must take the same stand with the family member who is living a homosexual life. Let's stop sugarcoating this to avoid hurting someone's feelings. Let call it what it is: sin.

The Bible says in James 1:23-25 (MEV), "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man viewing his natural face in a mirror. He views himself, and goes his way, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man will be blessed in his deeds."

I believe that actions speak louder than words. If we spend time with our loved one's lover, we are sending the wrong message. Our mouth says, "I don't support your lifestyle," but our actions compromise our beliefs by going to dinner out of guilt. We hear this all the time: "My wife and I went, but they know we don't support their relationship." Your action has spoken above any words you spoke.

Satan has cleverly manipulated you by demonstrating that your belief is not strong enough to go against this hidden agenda. The enemy of your soul will put so much guilt and shame on you that you will wind up compromising as Eve did in Genesis 3. It does your loved one no good to try to be his or her friend. You are willing to throw God under the bus because this is your child or loved one. What does that say to God about where your heart is? Is it better to please your children above God?

Nowhere in Scripture can we find it acceptable to please our children over God. Once you give in, there is no turning back. Your children will continue to push their relationship on you once you open the door for them. Many may even give you an ultimatum to accept their lifestyle, or else they will remove you from their lives. Of course, that is a threat no parent wants to hear, so we try to find the middle ground when God offers none.

“[People] will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, slanderers, unrestrained, fierce, despisers of those who are good, traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:2-4).

One of the most sobering facts about life is that we have an enemy whose aim is to use pain and pleasure to make us blind, miserable and stupid. The Word of God calls him the devil, Satan the deceiver and the accuser of the world (Rev. 12:9-10).

“Be sober and watchful, because your adversary the devil walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Yet, in the most appalling and unwitting bondage, the whole world willingly follows “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2b).

Your actions can either help them or hurt your loved ones. You can help them by not giving in to their sin. We are either going to get some backbone or turn into a wishbone. When you make a stand for righteousness, you give God ample opportunity to work on that loved one. When you give into their rhetoric out of fear, you will wish later, as many do, that you had stood up for what you believe in your heart.

I believe when you give in to the homosexual person, their sin will cause them to stay out in the world longer than if you made a loving, yet resolute stand. God is calling His people to start standing up for His word and be the church He intended us to be. {eoa}

Janet Boynes founded Janet Boynes Ministries in Maple Grove, Minnesota, in 2006. She has authored two books: *Called Out—A Former Lesbian's Discovery of Freedom* and *Arise—The Journey from Fear to Faith*. She challenges individuals and the church to reach out with a message of hope and restoration to the homosexual community. Her articles have been featured on the front cover of *Charisma* magazine, *Called* magazine, *Power for Living*, *Bound* magazine and many more. Her life is proof that the love of God has the power to heal and restore the brokenness in our lives. It's been 19 years since she was called out of the lesbian lifestyle. Janet travels the U.S and overseas and shares her story of redemption. Her desire is to bring hope through the power of Jesus Christ.