



Those whom God has gifted with wisdom...
will not use their power to hurt or destroy...
Genuine wisdom is full of gentleness, mercy, and love...
Speak no words of vanity, no words of harsh command...
Speak instead words that will give light, knowledge, information,
words that will restore and build up.

—Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, p. 111

Safe Places

Newsletter

<http://www.buildingsafeplaces.org/>

December 2014

This is a season focused on the building of the family of God. It can also be one filled with stress for our immediate, earthly families. I hope that you are able to find peace and gentleness in what often becomes a rush of days.

We have two articles that focus on **Visions of God and the Church**. Reinder Bruinsma shares the second half of his article on the priorities of God. Dr. Bruinsma is presently based in his home country of the Netherlands and is living a project- and speaking-filled semi-retirement from his career as an Adventist pastor, conference president, educator, writer, and theologian.

Pharisees, Sabbaths, and Same-Sex Marriage is a transcript of the sermon preached in St. Salvator's Chapel, University of St. Andrews, Scotland, on November 2, 2014 by the Rev Benny Hazlehurst, Director of Accepting Evangelicals. We think it is a thoughtful presentation of some issues and are glad that it is printed here by permission.

Since Christmas is the celebration of the love in a decidedly non-traditional family, we decided to focus our **Research** section on families.

Our **Resources** section gives you an overview of some of what is available to you on our website (www.buildingsafeplaces.org). Because so many families have been helped by Carrol Grady's website, *someone-to-talk-to.net*, we asked her to write a little bit about its origins and the way families have utilized it.

In **Voices of the Heart**, Daneen Akers writes about her grandfather's experience at the Atlanta General Conference session. In interviews we have begun asking LGBTI Adventists, "What are five things you would like people to know about you?" Jonathan Cook's thoughts are the first of this particular series. We end with a video link to *We Are Seventh-day Adventists: Every Story Matters*.

The entire Building Safe Places—for Everyone project began with a simple request from an Adventist educator to have a chance to talk with other Adventists leaders about how to better care for their LGBTI Adventist constituents. We are delighted that we will be able to offer three of these conversations in the next four months: one in Nags Head, North Carolina; one in Palos Verdes, California; and one in Germany. You can learn more about these "First Conversations" meetings by accessing www.buildingsafeplaces.org and looking at Events and Training & Consultations. If you would like to attend one of them, you are most welcome to contact us at info@buildingsafeplaces.org.

As always, you are welcome to share this newsletter with anyone who might find it interesting or helpful. If you have questions or comments, please feel welcome to write us. If you would like to stop receiving Safe Places, you can contact us at the above address.

Meanwhile, we wish you gentle blessings,

Catherine Taylor and the Building Safe Places Team:

— Frieder Schmid, Ingrid Schmid, Dave Ferguson, Floyd Poenitz, and Ruud Kieboom.



Visions of God and the Church [1]

God's Kingdom (part 2)

The principle is clear. God's kingdom demands a new mentality: a mentality of caring for one another with pure and unselfish motives. It demands a renouncing of all forms of violence. It requires a mentality of love. It requires a focus on forgiveness.

[Read more on page 4](#)

Visions of God and the Church [2]

Pharisees, Sabbaths, and Same-Sex Marriage

So often Pharisees are portrayed as the “bad guys” in the Gospels. The legalistic “sticks in the mud” who upheld their religious traditions at all costs. But it is easy to forget that they were highly committed, faithful followers of God. They tried their best to be faithful to the Word of God as they understood it. They sought to “hold the line” against the secularising effect of Roman political power, in a time of rapid and bewildering change.

[Read more on page 7](#)

Recent Research [1]

Are two mothers better than one?

Children who are raised by same-sex parents do just as well in education and social and emotional development, as those raised by heterosexual couples, an Australian review of the research finds. In Australia 11% of gay men and 33% of lesbians have children—figures which will likely increase as barriers are reduced. The review of the research was conducted by Deb Dempsey and commissioned by the Australian Institute of Family Studies

[Read more on page 10](#)



Resources

[page 13](#)

Recent Research [2]

Children Raised by Lesbians Do Just Fine, Studies Show

Children raised by lesbian parents fare as well as they would in heterosexual households, new research suggests. The finding, which comes from a review of essentially all studies on the topic of same-sex parents and the health of their children, helps to tease out politics and science on this highly divisive issue. In general, kids in both heterosexual and lesbian households had similar levels of academic achievement, number of friends and overall well-being.

[Read more on page 11](#)

Stories of the Heart [1]:

Dr. Akers, General Conference Atlanta, and Seventh-Gay Adventists

Back in 2010 when we were in the middle of our two years of filming *Seventh-Gay Adventists*, Stephen went back to Atlanta for the General Conference session where he followed Pastor Marcos and another story that isn't in the final film. We were so close to being entirely out of funds that I couldn't go with him, and we asked my grandparents if he could stay in their hotel room with them to save money. They graciously agreed, even though, like many in our family, they were more than a little worried at that time about what this documentary about gay Adventists was going to turn out to be.

[Read more on page 14](#)

Stories of the Heart [2]:

Five Things

I really enjoy traveling. Just recently, my boyfriend and I went to France, Belgium, and The Netherlands. I like learning about other cultures. I am fascinated by the interconnectivity of the world. Travel and being in other cultures exposes me to issues I need to consider. I would like to take a year and travel around the world. When I joined Kinship I found out there are lots of people, all over the world, with whom I share similar experiences.

[Read more on page 16](#)

God's Kingdom (part 2)



By Reinder Bruinsma

The principle is clear. God's kingdom demands a new mentality: a mentality of caring for one another with pure and unselfish motives. It demands a renouncing of all forms of violence. It requires a mentality of love. It requires a focus on forgiveness.

It sounds good. Too good, it seems. For, really, this is beyond us. It is simply impossible.

A life full of love and of constant forgiveness?
Of never forgetting that we are a Christian?

Let's be real; that is impossible.

Indeed that is impossible. The Bible confirms this: No one is without sin. "Whoever says he is without sin," John tells us, "is a liar" (1 John 1:8).

The apostle Paul is of the same opinion: "We have all sinned and have lost our right to God's glory" (Romans 3:23). Jesus' word is as true as ever: "The person without sin may cast the first stone" (John 8:7). Nonetheless, the climax of what Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount is as simple as it is challenging: "*You must be perfect, like your Father in heaven is perfect*" (Matthew 5:48).



Perfection?

There have always been Christians (also in the Adventist Church) who claimed that perfection was within their reach. We still have these "perfectionists." Often they are extreme, fanatical people, and are not the kind of persons with whom we would want to share a holiday.

How can we ever be as perfect as our heavenly Father? What about our character defects?

And what about our past? And our thoughts? What about the things we know we should have done, but did not do?

Note that this text about perfection is at the end of a chapter about loving your neighbor—about forgiveness. Jesus says: Just as God is full of love, so you must be! Luke's gospel phrases it in these words: "*Be as compassionate as your heavenly Father is*" (Luke 6:36).

The gospel of Matthew uses the Greek word *teleios*. This word has to do with *telos*: a goal.

It points to growth, towards maturity, to working towards a goal. That is the road God wants us to travel. We find the word in a number of places in the New Testament, but it never means "sinlessness." In the Greek Bible that was used in Jesus' days (the Septuagint), we are told in Genesis 6:9 that Noah was *teleios*: "perfect." He did indeed live in close connection with God, but he was far from sinless. However, he had a goal; and, in spite of his failings, he was a citizen of God's kingdom.

So, Jesus says—first of all to His disciples, then later the apostles, but also to all of His disciples through the centuries—Be perfect. *Be full of compassion*. We know the stories of the apostles.

They were never perfect, in the sense of being sinless. But their later lives showed how they had grown and developed, how their lives had a clear *telos*, a definite purpose.



In her book, *Christ's Object Lessons* (pp. 65, 66), Ellen White compares our life with that of a plant. "A plant may be perfect in every stage of its growth. So this must be our goal in every stage of our spiritual growth—as we grow towards maturity in Christ, 'until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Eph. 4:13)."

Let me immediately add: As long as we are on this earth, we will be sinners. But, fortunately, the Bible does not only tell us what God *asks* from us, we also read about what he *gives*. He justifies us. Our salvation is guaranteed, because in Christ God deals with our sins, He looks at us through the spectacles of his grace, and through the lens of the redemption in Christ He sees perfect people.

Experience teaches us applying the norms of the kingdom is a matter of trial and error. It is always work in progress.

Let me illustrate this with a simple story. I am told it is a true story. A missionary family returned to their own country after a good number of years in the mission field. They rented a nice home and the wife of the missionary made sure that the house was made into a *home*! Everything seemed fine, until a problem family came to live next to them. Their garden next door soon was a wilderness with high heaps of garbage close to the house. And they made an awful lot of noise. They became the fear of the neighborhood.

This made the missionary wife very angry. She blamed God. For many years they had worked night and day for Him in a very difficult environment. They had prayed for a pleasant place to settle down. And look what they got.

Fairly soon, however, the missionary wife realized this was not the right reaction. She decided to start praying for her neighbors and she asked God, "Please, Lord, help me to love these people." She continued to be irritated by the lifestyle of the neighbors. But she decided to be pleasant. From time to time she even baked an apple pie for them.

What happened? The neighbors did not change, but she did. She was able to deal with the situation, even to love them, in spite of everything. Later she said she would not have wanted to miss this experience for anything. It had taught her to live with the norms of the kingdom. It helped her to grow towards the goal her heavenly father had for her.

Remember this lesson! Grow into this kind of perfection, this spiritual maturity that the citizens of God's kingdom are challenged to develop. Live a life that is rooted in compassion and love and in consideration for others. Loving others will change you. It enables you to reach the fullness, the maturity that comes with living "in Christ."

That is God's goal for you.



Pharisees, Sabbaths, and Same-Sex Marriage

Bible Readings – Genesis 2 and Matthew 23:1-12



By Benny Hazlehurst

I often find myself feeling sorry for the Pharisees. So often they are portrayed as the “bad guys” in the Gospels. The legalistic “sticks in the mud” who upheld their religious traditions at all costs. But it is easy to forget that they were highly committed, faithful followers of God. They tried their best to be faithful to the Word of God as they understood it. They sought to “hold the line” against the secularising effect of Roman political power, in a time of rapid and bewildering change.

Their problem was, however, that in their zeal to be faithful, they often got hold of the wrong end of the stick! Over and over again, we find them in conflict with Jesus because (quite simply) they kept missing the point. By focusing on enforcing the form and letter of the Law, they became incapable of engaging with the Spirit of God’s Law.

Food laws are a good example. Their focus on clean and unclean foods led to a theology which implied that it is what goes into your body which makes you unclean, whereas Jesus pointed out that it is not what goes into your stomach, but what comes out of your heart that makes you clean or unclean. They had gotten the wrong end of the stick.

The Sabbath is another example. The Pharisees spent so much time and energy upholding the Sabbath that they transformed something which God intended as a blessing and made it into a burden. The institution they upheld had become so rigid and unyielding that even healing someone on the Sabbath became an issue of contention.



So how did Christ respond to them? He refused to be held back by their rigid interpretation and pointed his hearers back to the purpose of the Sabbath. “The Sabbath was created for man, not man for the Sabbath,” He said. For the Pharisees, what God intended as a means to an end—that we should have time for rest and recreation—had become the end in itself. While the Pharisees saw the “end product” of Sabbath Law and made that pre-eminent, Jesus pointed to the intention of God in ordaining the Sabbath rest. The two are very different.



Today, we too can fall into the same trap when it comes to understanding marriage.

It is in the account of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 that we find our first paradigm for marriage. Although not the only place in Scripture which helps us form our theology of marriage, it is the foundation which is taken up by both Jesus, when questioned about divorce, and Paul in his advice to husbands and wives in Ephesians 5.

In the account we had read to us, we observe Adam and Eve coming together in joy to “complete” one another, becoming “one flesh” in a wonderful and unique way. If we simply follow this observation, then surely marriage must be between one man and one woman and precludes any possibility of same-gender marriage. “God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve” is the sound bite employed by some. And if we add to that the command in Genesis 1 to “Go forth and multiply” the traditional paradigm is complete—one man, one woman, for children.

Yet if we merely look at the “end product” in Genesis 2, without seeking to understand God’s intentions, we run the same risk as the Pharisees whose limited view of the Sabbath ended up so far out of kilter with what God had intended.

So let us look deeper into this passage.

As anyone who has studied Genesis 1 and 2 will know, we actually have not one, but two creation accounts in these opening chapters of the Bible; and the two are very different, both in form and in intention.

Genesis 1 is concerned with the action of creation. From “Let there be light” to the creation of land, plants, fish, and animals we take a step-by-step journey through the creative power of God, culminating in “Let us create humankind in our own image.” Last of all, men and women are

created in the image of God, to look after God’s creation and to be fruitful and multiply.

(It might also be worth noting here, that while being very successful at the second of these injunctions, we are woefully failing in the first).

Genesis 2, on the other hand, is very different. For example, the order of creation is different. Adam was created first and then placed alone in the Garden which God plants for him. Then the animals are created, each brought to him to name, and finally Eve is formed.

So why are both these differing accounts there, side by side, in the opening chapters of the Bible? Did the writers not notice the discrepancy between the two accounts? Is it a mistake?

The answer of course is “No.” The two accounts are there because they each tell us something different about God’s Creation.

Genesis 1 tells us of the majestic power of God on the macro scale—the wide sweeping brushstrokes of creation.

Genesis 2, on the other hand, brings us right down to the personal level. It is about relationship: our relationship with God, our relationship with the world, and our relationships with each other.

When we find Adam created first and placed in the garden of God’s blessing, he has everything he needs to feed his body and a pure untainted relationship with God to feed his spirit. Yet there is still something missing.

Then God says, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” There is still a need for another relationship to complete the paradigm of life in all its fullness.

So God created the animals, but still no suitable partner was found until finally God created Eve as the one who is “bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh” and Adam rejoices in the one who completed his need.

In their coming together that “one flesh” is reunited in what we call marriage and we can all relate to that yearning desire for the one who completes us—the one with whom we fall in love and express that love in faithful commitment. While we must recognise that not everyone finds their life partner, there is always that hope, that possibility, of meeting the person who “completes” us.

Genesis 2 is not about procreation either. The command to be fruitful and multiply is found in

the first account of creation, not in the story of Adam and Eve. And the key to understanding this second story of creation is found not in focusing on the end product—Adam and Eve—but in the central verse of the entire chapter, verse 18, when God says, “It is not good for the man (Adam) to be alone.”

Here we find the purpose of God in Genesis 2, the meeting of the need which he created in humankind for that special relationship which “completes” us in the same way that Eve completed Adam in the Garden.

But not everyone falls in love with someone of the opposite sex. What if the person who we fall in love with, who completes that God-given need within us, is of the same gender? Does that negate the fundamental human need which God addresses in Genesis 2?

Those who are drawn to people of the same gender still have the same God-given yearning for that relationship which will bring that sense of fulfilment, that sense of completeness, that reuniting of “one flesh” in God’s creation.



By focusing on the “end product” in Genesis 2 (male and female) rather than the need which God is addressing (relationship), we risk making the same mistake as the Pharisees did with the Sabbath, i.e., getting the wrong end of the stick.

When they elevated the Sabbath to monumental proportions because they thought it was something greater than our human needs, Jesus had to correct them by reminding them that the Sabbath was created to meet human needs, not to be an end in itself.

When we elevate marriage to the same monumental proportions and restrict it to our observation of Adam and Eve as male and female, we need to be reminded that marriage was ordained by God to meet a human need, not to be an end in itself. Some will find this radical and challenging, but it is just as Biblical as the challenges which Jesus brought to the Pharisees.

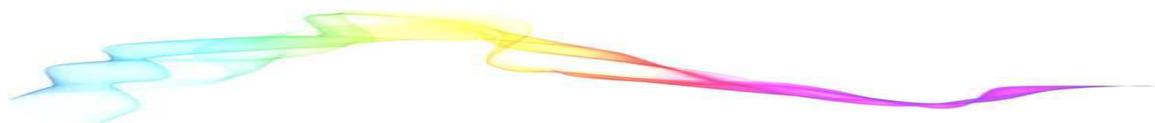
Is it not possible that the yearning to find the one who “completes” us is the same for everyone—gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender?

Is it not possible that God’s response to that yearning is also the same for everyone, irrespective of their sexuality: the opportunity of marriage for all, with the person who “completes” them, no matter what gender they are?

Until we are prepared to look deeper, and frame our theology of marriage around God’s purposes in Genesis 2, rather than just the “end product,” we too run the risk of following the Pharisees by completely missing the point.

Benny Hazlehurst

<http://benny2010.blogspot.co.uk/>



Same-Sex Parenting Does Not Harm Children, Research Review Finds

On our website (buildingsafeplaces.org) we share research about brain development, gender and orientation, the effects of isolation and homophobia on youth, parenting, etc. If you have questions or concerns, please feel welcome to write us at info@buildingsafeplaces.org.



Are two mothers better than one?

Children who are raised by same-sex parents do just as well in education and social and emotional development, as those raised by heterosexual couples, an Australian review of the research finds.

In Australia 11% of gay men and 33% of lesbians have children—figures which will likely increase as barriers are reduced.

The review of the research was conducted by Deb Dempsey and commissioned by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (Dempsey, 2014).

The research certainly does not support the view that children brought up by same-sex parents are harmed as a result.

Two mothers

Quite the contrary, children brought up by lesbians may benefit from having two mothers—often reporting better relationships with their children and displaying higher levels of involvement.

The reason for this could be...

“...due to the ‘double dose’ of ‘feminine’ parenting. Just as heterosexual mothers usually have greater care-giving responsibilities and display greater parenting skill than heterosexual fathers, lesbian mothers appear to bring this

gendered tendency to their parenting relationships.” (Dempsey, 2014).

While the review was broadly positive, some worries were expressed: children of same-sex parents are more likely to report concerns about bullying or other abuse based on the sexuality of their parents.

Set against this, the review finds that while there is fear of this type of bullying or abuse, it is not often actually experienced.

Equitable but not identical

Same-sex couples are also more likely to set an equitable example for their children. They are more likely to share the housework and to avoid privileging work over homelife.

While some studies have found negative effects on children of having same-sex parents (e.g. Regnerus, 2012), these have not taken into account the higher rates of separation amongst same-sex couples.

Experts no longer try to claim that outcomes of same-sex parenting are identical to heterosexual couples—along with some potential advantages

comes the social stigma and higher rates of separation.

Nevertheless, a report from the American Academy of Pediatrics points out:

“Over the past decade, 11 countries have recognized marriage equality and, thus, allow marriage between 2 partners of the same gender: Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, South Africa, and Sweden. There has been no evidence that children in these countries have experienced difficulties.”

Children Raised by Lesbians Do Just Fine, Studies Show

By Jeanna Bryner

February 8, 2010

Children raised by lesbian parents fare as well as they would in heterosexual households, new research suggests.

The finding, which comes from a review of essentially all studies on the topic of same-sex parents and the health of their children, helps to tease out politics and science on this highly divisive issue. In general, kids in both heterosexual and lesbian households had similar levels of academic achievement, number of friends and overall well-being.

Whether or not kids from homosexual households are more likely to have a non-heterosexual orientation is still unknown. But if there is a genetic component to sexual orientation, it would make sense that kids born to a lesbian mom, say, would be more likely than other kids to be homosexual, scientists say.

At the end of the day, what matters to kids is far deeper than parents' gender or sexual orientation, the research suggests.

Here are some highlights of the findings

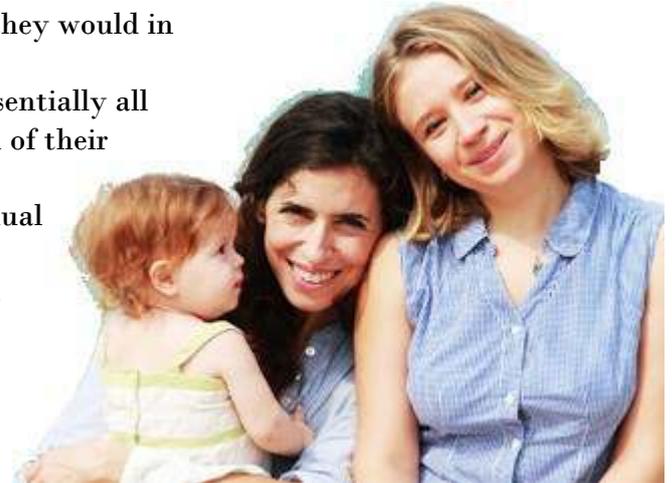
In a study of nearly 90 teens, half living with female same-sex couples and the others with heterosexual couples, both groups fared similarly in school. Teen boys in same-sex households had grade point averages of about 2.9, compared with 2.65 for their counterparts in heterosexual homes. Teen girls showed similar results, with a 2.8 for same-sex households and 2.9 for girls in heterosexual families.

In another study, teens were asked about delinquent activities, such as damaging others' property, shoplifting, and getting into fights, in the previous year. Teens in both same-sex and

heterosexual households got essentially the same average scores of about 1.8 on a scale from 1 to 10 (with higher scores meaning more delinquent behaviors).

A 2008 study comparing 78 lesbian families in the United States with their counterparts (lesbian households) in The Netherlands, showed American kids were more than twice as likely as the Dutch to be teased about their mothers' sexual orientation.

Stacey says she doesn't think kids growing up in lesbian households get teased more than other kids; it's just that when they do get teased, the



“The family type that is best for children is one that has responsible, committed, stable parenting,” said study researcher Judith Stacey of New York University. “Two parents are, on average, better than one, but one really good parent is better than two not-so-good ones.”

target is the non-traditional household, rather than some other aspect of their life or identity. (On another note, gay and lesbian teens are more likely than others to get bullied.)

Equal opportunity parenting

But just because two women seem to be able to parent just as well as a man and a woman doesn't mean that fathers aren't important.

"It's not that men don't matter; it's that men can be just as good as women at parenting," said Karen L. Fingerman of the Child Development & Family Studies at Purdue University, who was not involved in the current study. "The key seems to be that parents have someone who supports them in their parenting (i.e., another parent)."

Politics and science

The results, however, may surprise various individuals on different sides of the same-sex marriage and parenting debates.

For instance, in a 2003 Pew survey of more than 1,500 American adults, 56 percent agreed that gay marriage would undermine the traditional American family. Even so more than 50 percent agree that gay and lesbian couples can be as good parents as heterosexual couples, with 37 percent disagreeing.

In terms of adoption, about the same number of Americans say they favor adoption by same-sex couples (46 percent) as say they oppose it (48 percent), according to a Pew survey of more than 2,000 individuals conducted in 2008.

Those who oppose same-sex marriage, or civil unions, tout various arguments, one of which involves the harm done to children of same-sex couples, whether due to the lack of a father or mother figure or the promotion of homosexuality, the study researchers say.

"Significant policy decisions have been swayed by the misconception across party lines that children need both a mother and a father," said study researcher Timothy Biblarz, a sociologist at the University of Southern California. "Yet, there is almost no social science research to support this claim. One problem is that proponents of this view routinely ignore research on same-gender parents."

Children in same-sex households

To amass the most exhaustive and reliable data pool possible, Stacey and Biblarz analyzed all of the research they could dig up, which amounted

to more than 80 relevant studies. In general, they didn't find evidence for differences in parenting abilities between two moms

Studies of gay male families are still limited since the phenomenon of male couples choosing to be parents is relatively new, Stacey said. So results on children raised by gay men are not firm.

Fingerman and others aren't surprised by the findings.

"This is an interesting paper, and it doesn't surprise me," Fingerman told LiveScience. "If you think about humans historically and cross-culturally, very few cultures use the model we now consider 'normal' with one woman and one man raising one to three children," Fingerman said. "Humans have evolved to be malleable and adjustable, and a variety of models can meet children's social needs adequately."

What research there is, though, has been limited by statistics. In the United States, about 4 to 5 percent of adults are not heterosexual, Stacey said. And of those who are in relationships, only about 20 percent of same-sex couples are raising children under age 18, according to the 2000 Census. That means sample sizes are inevitably small, leading to study results that are less robust.

Also, to gather data on a reasonable number of same-sex couples raising children, researchers often take what are called convenient samples—they go to sperm banks or other facilities where they know they'll find homosexual parents. "The problem from [a] statistical point of view is that convenient sample studies don't amount to much," said sociologist Michael J. Rosenfeld of Stanford University, adding it's hard to extrapolate the results to the real world.

But his research, which used U.S. Census data and not convenient samples, looked at thousands of kids raised by same-sex parents and found no difference in grade retention (when a kid gets held back in school) after accounting for demographics, such as income.

"Grade retention is a pretty strong predictor of problems later in life including dropping out of high school and mortality," said Rosenfeld, who wasn't involved in the current research.

versus a mom and dad raising kids.

“[The research] pretty much shows that almost no study that has been done on this topic has confirmed this common sense assumption that gender is critical or that a father-mother household works better for kids than a same-sex household,” said Brian Powell, a sociologist at Indiana University, who also wasn't involved in this review.

Some detractors of same-sex parents contend the children will grow up to be homosexuals or at the very least confused about their sexuality or gender. Research doesn't support that idea, however.

“There really is no evidence that not having a mother or father produces any sort of gender confusion or insecure gender identity,” Stacey said. “It's a big mystery where gender dysphoria in

children comes from. But almost all transgender or gender non-conforming people have heterosexual parents.”

However, to date there aren't any studies that have tracked a large enough set of kids raised by gay or lesbian parents into adulthood to know their eventual sexual orientation and gender identity, the researchers say.

Another concern has been that boys raised without a “father figure” will not have an appropriate model for masculinity. A study from the U.K., however, suggested that 12-year-olds raised by mother-only families (lesbian or heterosexual) scored the same on masculinity factors as sons raised by a mother and a father. Interestingly, though, the mother-only boys also scored higher on femininity scales.



Are mom and dad different?

While there were few substantial differences between heterosexual and homosexual parents, some gender stereotypes were confirmed.

Compared with heterosexual couples, the review showed that on average, two mothers tended to play with their children more and were less likely to use physical discipline (relative to the time spent with kids). And like heterosexual parents, new parenthood among lesbians increased stress and conflict within the couple. Also, lesbian biological mothers typically assumed greater care-

giving responsibility than their partners, reflecting inequities also found between mothers and fathers.

“The bottom line is that the science shows that children raised by two same-gender parents do as well on average as children raised by two different-gender parents,” Biblarz said. “This is obviously inconsistent with the widespread claim that children must be raised by a mother and a father to do well.”

The scientists note they don't expect the results to change minds.



Resources

On our website, www.buildingsafeplaces.org, we have a growing number of resources: books, films, videos, pamphlets, websites, and quotes. They cover topics such as Bible study, research on a variety of biological and sociological issues, suicidality and self-harm, sex and gender, same-sex marriage, promoting health in the gay community, and building bridges. Please feel most welcome to let us know of resources you may have found or issues you would like addressed. You can reach us at safeplaces@buildingsafeplaces.org.

Below, Carrol Grady wrote a little bit about her development of one of the resources listed in the Websites section.

www.someone-to-talk-to.net



By Carrol Grady

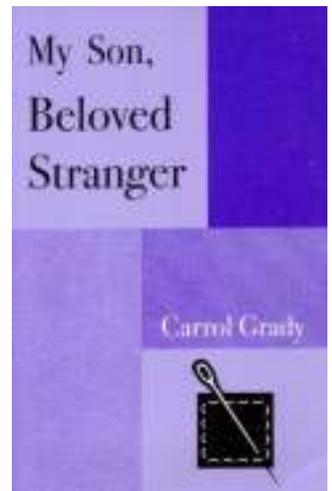
My husband and I served in pastoral positions and he was a departmental director in Hawaii, Southeast Asia Union, the Far Eastern Division, and the General Conference. We have three fine sons. One of them is gay.

Twenty years ago I wrote a book about our family's experience with homosexuality as we worked inside the Adventist church. Publication of *My Son, Beloved Stranger* quickly brought a request from Kinship members for something to help other parents accept and love their children. I started a newsletter, *Someone to Talk To*, which was received by more than 800 families. In 2000 I launched a website with the same name, www.someone-to-talk-to.net, which included my book, articles, stories, scientific research, and a series of Bible studies I wrote, as well as links to other sources.

I cannot count the number of emails I have received from people who told me my book describes their family's story. I can't remember the number of people who have told me they were suicidal and my website gave them hope. I recall one woman who joined our online support group looking for help for her gay brother. She soon admitted to herself that she was lesbian and

gradually came out to herself and the other members of our online support group. A daughter who had gone through her father's "coming out" told me that she left the church over its treatment of him but was happy to know that there was

someone in the church who understood. I have seen many parents go from being unable to accept their children after they came out, to being fully supportive and accepting. This process generally takes some time. Best of all, in helping others I have helped myself.





We are Seventh-day Adventists: Every Story Matters

Ashish's Story

<http://www.wearesdas.com/#/ashish/>

Dr. Akers, General Conference Atlanta, and Seventh-Gay Adventists



By Daneen Akers

Back in 2010 when we were in the middle of our two years of filming *Seventh-Gay Adventists*, Stephen went back to Atlanta for the General Conference session where he followed Pastor Marcos and another story that isn't in the final film. We were so close to being entirely out of funds that I couldn't go with him, and we asked my grandparents if he could stay in their hotel room with them to save money. They graciously agreed, even though, like many in our family, they were more than a little worried at that time about what this documentary about gay Adventists was going to turn out to be.

While in Atlanta for General Conference, Stephen had a very difficult experience. There were something like 80,000 Adventists there, and he kept running into people he had known from every stage of his life. When people invariably asked what he was filming, he kept seeing these reactions that sometimes overtly but sometimes subtly showed the disapproval and suspicion of people he loved and respected. People often stepped back—literally—to not be too close.

The words “love the sinner, but hate the sin” were repeated over and over by people he realized didn't actually know LGBT people like we now did. He called me in tears—he said the gap just felt too big.

My grandparents witnessed this. He broke down in their shared room after a few days, overwhelmed by the deep, deep prejudices and assumptions most of the people he encountered had. My grandparents, lifelong Adventists who

certainly had never anticipated their granddaughter and her husband bringing them into this conversation, rose to the occasion and listened.

The next day my grandpa saw several major Adventist ministerial directors and administrators. My grandpa began bringing up this topic in conversation, asking his colleagues what they would do if a gay couple wanted to be part of a congregation and raise their family in a local church—and even share their spiritual gifts. These were questions my grandpa had never thought about himself before—not through the lens of the sort of dialogue and stories we were proposing. And he found himself shocked and surprised as well by the lack of any real awareness or thoughtful policies.

It was a deeply bonding few days for Stephen and him, and Stephen always appreciated him putting himself out there with his colleagues to initiate the very beginnings of a dialogue. And it was my grandpa who told Stephen after those few days together in the General Conference context that we really should consider making this film entirely story-based. At that time we had a different vision of the film, but my grandpa kept telling Stephen that he realized now that most people had no real idea who gay Adventists were—himself included—and if we could make a film that shared stories and simply invited people to step into them, it could make a major impact on people like him. We continue to be grateful for that wisdom.

It was absolutely the right choice—not only because it’s effective, but because it’s grace.



Five Things



By Jonathan Cook

I really enjoy traveling. Just recently, my boyfriend and I went to France, Belgium, and The Netherlands. I like learning about other cultures. I am fascinated by the interconnectivity of the world. Travel and being in other cultures exposes me to issues I need to consider. I would like to take a year and travel around the world. When I joined Kinship I found out there are lots of people, all over the world, with whom I share similar experiences.

I am a musician with a BA in piano performance. Mixing my interest in music allows me to travel and interact with people who have been places I would like to see. I have friends who have performed all over the U.S. and Europe; performing is a place of commonality that ties us together. Being Adventists ties us to other kinds of cultures. Being LGBTI breaks down differences. We are not specific to any region or ethnic group. It just is. It pulls us together. I believe there are more things that we mortals have in common than things that separate us.

I am passionate about advocacy. When I was at Pacific Union College, I was in the first group that formed GASP—Gay and Straight People. I think it is a great name. I know the people who founded it. One of them, Jonathan, just graduated from medical school. I think this is the seventh year for GASP at PUC. Remarkable. We never knew if GASP would affect people’s lives, much less last. It was encouraging to have support. Faculty would put Safe Places logos on their doors so students would know they would have a safe place to talk. I think it is valuable for students to know there is someone to talk to. I thought there might be five people. By the time I was leaving PUC, this unofficial, non-advertised group had 60 or 70 people in the first meeting. I had been terrified to come out. I was surprised by so many

students who are willing to be out. Even so, I was the first openly gay student elected to the student senate at PUC. There may have been other gay students who were on the senate before me but they had not been able to be so open.

My partner and I met at PUC and dated from the time I was a freshman. We had no blueprint about how to be in a relationship as gay Adventists in a church school. We played it by ear. I would have liked to know how other gay people navigated an Adventist college system. We took our lives together one day at a time. In the beginning we were very discreet, driving an hour away from campus to go to dinner or a movie. We would act like we were really close friends and not dating. There were challenges. Sometimes we were outed by people... “So, how long have you been together?” We never had any bad experiences when we came out as a couple. In general, millennials are not as judgmental about same-sex relationships as the generations before them. Also, there was a ton of supportive faculty. My boyfriend is much more private about his personal life than I am. I don’t think GASP was easy for him. We had our rough patches. A lot of the things we would fight about were outside stresses. We would realize we weren’t fighting with each other; we were reacting to stress.

With my family, it was a little rough in the beginning. I heard a lot of the typical Old Testament-based arguments. Even with the disagreements, I always knew my parents loved me, even if they thought I was confused. They realize it is not a choice but a development.

I think I am a third-generation Adventist. My dad was born Seventh-day Adventist. My grandfather was an Adventist pastor for a short time. He left the church but raised my dad and my aunt as Adventists. I find myself re-evaluating my decision to be an Adventist every time I hear the church leadership do something damaging to the LGBTI community. I think I may be an agnostic Adventist, meaning I believe in God but I don't necessarily believe in what church officials say. I have definite doubt about the divide between faith and formalized religion. I like deconstructionist theory and queer theology and learn from Biblical stories. Some Adventists place Ellen White on a much higher plane than others. I think certain schools of Adventist thought hijacked Ellen. I like the notion of present truth. How can people apply Leviticus to us and not to their own behavior? I think spirituality is complex. Atheism is not edifying. I could get frustrated and just leave Christianity, but this has been a really important part of my life. I am happy that I have come back into this context and am finding myself. This is my culture; it is what I know. I want to make a change from within. Our voices matter. We have to speak up for the people who are afraid to. I cannot imagine being a gay Adventist in Kampala or Nairobi. I want to make a better place for gay Adventists to go.

I do not regularly attend a conventional Adventist church. I really liked going to Church 1.0 at the Kinship board meeting. I enjoyed the PUC church. It felt safe to me. Pastor Tim Mitchell is one of the big reasons I remained an Adventist. He was the PUC pastor from 2003 to 2013.

I am trying to remember how I found Kinship. I think it was through GASP and because of Dr. Aubyn Fulton. He talked me into joining Kinship.

I think Kinship has a great opportunity to engage people in college. It gives us a sense of being connected. I think I joined in 2010 or 2011. I became more active when I read things on *Spectrum* and responded. I was in contact with one of the editors of *Spectrum*. He introduced me to people in Kinship. I became involved with the responses to the gay issue in Uganda. This galvanized my energy. I want to keep church officials accountable to the people of these countries, for their own good. As Kinship's Director of Communications, I am here in a more official capacity.

I enjoy politics and the intersection of politics and religion. Kinship used to be about support. Now I think it is a mix of support and advocacy. As early as 1985 one of the *Connection* articles talked about marriage equality. It is fascinating for me to see how Kinship members were discussing marriage equality so soon in the history of the organization. I am amazed at how brave they were.

I would like to increase the role of Kinship with the Adventist church and our LGBTI members. I want us to be a bigger voice. I want to increase the grass roots movement. I want to keep the conversation moving forward.

My friend Terre asked me when I thought there would be a time that Kinship is not needed. I think that is a long time from now. I want more young people to know Kinship's sense of community with a group of people to support us and advocate for our best interests. I am amazed to be with people who are vulnerable with each other. I am looking forward to the Pomona Kampmeeting next year. I want other people to experience that part of our community. In general I am looking forward to learning from and building on all the different experiences of our members. I would like to see more interaction among all Kinship members throughout the world. Maybe we could sponsor a mission trip. I am looking forward to meeting as many LGBTI people with Adventist backgrounds as I can. I look forward to hearing their stories. I wish our church leaders would also be willing to do so.

