

**If Your Friend Says, "I'm Gay" by Tim Wilkins**

If a friend confides, "I'm gay," it can precipitate an avalanche of emotions. Your initial and subsequent responses will accomplish one of two things - distance the friend from you or draw the friend toward you.

Here are five suggestions:

Express grief with, not anger toward, your friend--"Be angry, and do not sin," Ephesians 4:26 says. Grief and anger are natural; where we often need help is knowing when to express each. Grief is typically expressed alone while anger is often expressed directly at the gay friend. I suggest you switch these.

Grieve with your friend. "Mourn with those who mourn," Romans 12:15 counsels. Let your friend know you hurt with him, not because of him. Express anger toward the deception in homosexuality. Remember, in most cases, your friend has been battling this alone longer than you have known about it.

Display encouragement, not embarrassment--Embarrassment frustrates the healing process. A preoccupation with, "What will people say?," should be immaterial.

If it is difficult to discuss the issue, remember Richard Lovelace's advice in his book, *Homosexuality and the Church*: "Persons who are compulsively uneasy, fearful, or filled with hatred when relating to persons involved in sexual sin ... need a releasing work of the Holy Spirit, freeing their own sexual natures, building in them a sense of security which will permit them to express Christian love while standing firm against impurity." (p. 129).

Jesus was not embarrassed with the woman "at the well;" the one who was "taken in adultery;" and the one who anointed him (John 4 & 8, Luke 7). Jesus, for example, talked with the first woman as opposed to writing her a long letter as some do to their homosexual friends. Neither did Jesus send her a message through another person.

Communicate love physically; not just verbally--Recoiling from your friend exacerbates the problem. Why? A component of homosexuality is an inability to develop appropriate same-sex friendships. Place a firm hand on your friend's shoulder; give him or her a bear hug.

As I have said repeatedly, when I see Christ face-to-face, I am not going to extend my hand in business fashion and say, "Pleased to meet you."

Cultivate an "open-door policy" versus a "case-closed mentality"--If you communicate, "I refuse any more discussion on the matter," you are essentially saying, "I don't want to hear about your pain and confusion."

Buy good books on the subject and read. Though tempted to give them to your friend, don't - unless you get his or her permission.

Homosexuals understandably resent having books dumped on them. If the friend asks you to read something supporting homosexuality, do it; it won't hurt you. What better way to learn of the arguments that condone homosexuality and to be able to respond biblically and compassionately? Reading your friend's literature communicates earnestness and will make him or her more receptive to reading literature you recommend.

Talk with - not to - your friend, and resist lecturing. Your friendship is a two-way street; create an atmosphere where your friend could tell you anything and you never blink an eye - unless it is a time when you and your friend are weeping together.

Emphasize becoming Christ's disciple versus "how not to be gay"--Refuse the temptation to try and convert your homosexual friend to heterosexuality. "All you need to do is marry, settle down and everything will work out" is disastrous advice. Heterosexuality is NOT the goal - becoming more like Jesus is! As discipleship occurs, the same-sex attractions diminish and in many cases, but not all, opposite-sex attractions emerge.

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