

How Do I Talk to My LGBT Identified Relative this Christmas?

This article was written by Dan Hitz, Executive Director of Reconciliation Ministries, a member ministry of Restored Hope Network. Dan began his own journey out of homosexuality in 1984, and has served as ministry director since 2003. You can find more articles on sexual recovery and family dynamics in the archives section of our website at www.recmin.org.



Many of us are looking forward to getting together with our extended families as we celebrate the birth of our Savior and anticipate the New Year. Gathering with our families can be warm and rewarding for many of us. It can also be a source of anxiety for others. As Christians, we want our loved ones with us in eternity. We often see the bondage that many of our loved ones are in and we want to offer them the same hope of redemption that we have found in Christ. **One of the questions I get the most often is, “How do I talk to my gay relative about Jesus?”** The question may be

motivated out of a love and genuine eternal concern for our relatives; however, the answer isn't quite that easy. Nor will a fruitful conversation be had as quickly as we would like. Hopefully this article will provide some helpful tips on developing the type of relationship that might give you the ability to approach such an emotionally charged subject successfully. For ease of writing, I'll use the example of talking to a gay nephew. The principles equally apply to anyone engaged in sinful activity, including an unmarried man and woman living together, although I rarely get asked about them. Homosexuality is a much more frequent focus.

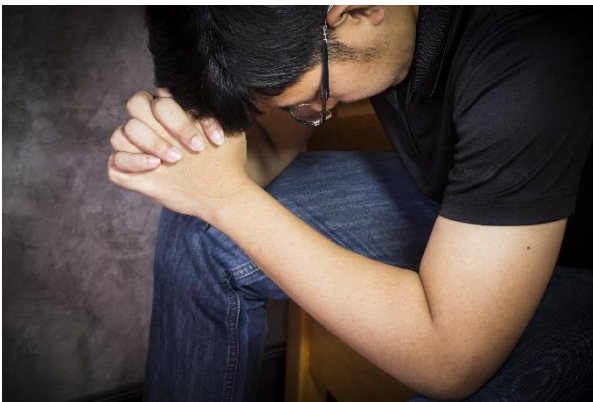
The first question I usually ask when someone asks me how to talk to their gay-identified nephew about Jesus is, “What type of relationship do you have with him right now?” The deeper your present relationship with a loved one, the more likely that the person will let you into his life. If you haven't talked to your nephew in several years, I would encourage you to prayerfully take the time to get to know him for who he is in the totality of his personhood. He may very well see homosexuality as a complete identity, fully enmeshed in every aspect of his life; but the reality is that who we are as children of God involves far more than who we are attracted to. If possible, take the time to learn more about what interests him, and spend time focusing on those topics instead of his sexuality. **If you haven't taken the time to build a sincere relationship with someone, don't expect to be able to address a vulnerable topic about anything that someone holds dear to their heart and is ready to defend at all costs.** A loving relationship can go a long way to build a bridge of understanding.

Another factor to consider is that the family Christmas party probably isn't the time to have “the conversation” anyway. I love gathering with my extended family and catching up on their lives, but the details that we can share between Aunt Millie's travel updates and watching Baby Billy's first few steps usually aren't that deep. The deep conversations are best kept for quiet, individual gatherings over coffee or dinner. That's the time that we can share vulnerable details about our own lives. Yes, we will need to share from a place of our own vulnerability if we ever expect to build enough trust with someone to help him feel safe enough to share his own heart issues. No one wants to feel like a project. Your nephew will be able to tell if you're talking to him because you want to fix him in order to relieve your own sense of Christian duty, or if you truly care about him and have his best interests at heart. That kind of relationship depth usually doesn't happen in large groups of relatives building ginger bread houses or singing karaoke. Such activities don't usually involve intimate conversations, but they can build relationship.

One of the irritants that the LGBT community has is that homosexuality and transgender issues often get singled out by the Christian community, while they ignore the unmarried man and woman who are having sex, or the single guy who is looking at pornography throughout the

week. I can understand their irritation. If we as Christians ignore other types of sexual sin, but we focus on homosexuality, it will alienate those we are trying to reach in the LGBT community. We in the Christian community need to be consistent here. God created sexuality as a beautiful expression of love within the boundaries of marriage between one biologically born male and one biologically born female. Are we praying as diligently for heterosexual sinners as we are for homosexual ones? Are we maintaining Biblical sexual purity in our own lives? Those are very important questions as we pray for our LGBT identified loved ones.

Before you talk to your LGBT identified relative, take the time to understand what he or she is going through. There are a lot of good resources available to help you understand what someone who deals with LGBT issues experiences emotionally, physically and spiritually. It isn't just a simple matter of stopping the behavior. LGBT issues are fruit issues on a tree with very deep root issues. Taking the time to educate yourself about the building blocks of the issues and the struggles that LGBT individuals go through will go a long way to deepen the relationship. You will likely hear some things coming from the heart of your nephew that are difficult to hear. You will hear many things that you don't agree with. Don't try to correct everything all at once, that will shut him down. Taking the time to hear his heart will go a long way to build trust and relationship. You can talk about different perspectives and doctrine later, after you have established relationship.



LGBT individuals who have grown up in the church have a variety of reactions to God. Many times strugglers have cried out to God night after night to change them, yet they wake up the next morning still attracted to the same sex. Sometimes this leads them to reject God altogether. They see Him as the One who declared homosexuality to be an abomination, made them gay, didn't change them, and therefore must be setting them up for failure and damnation. Other times they decide that since God didn't change them, He must be okay with their same-sex attraction and they revise their theology to

embrace homosexuality. **Blessed are those who come to the place of full surrender to God – those who say regardless of whether my sexual attractions ever change, I will submit my sexuality to God and live for Him.** You can have a huge impact on that decision if you take the time to build relationship and understand their heart; even when it gets messy.

You can find excellent Biblical resources on homosexuality and transgender issues on the **Pure Passion TV** website at www.purepassion.us. Other great resources are available through **Restored Hope Network** (www.restoredhopenetwork.org) and the archives section of the **Reconciliation Ministries** website (www.www.recmin.org/newsletter-archives). Author Joe Dallas provides practical advice on how to respond when someone you love is gay in his book, *When Homosexuality Hits Home*. He has an excellent blog about sexuality on his website at www.joedallas.com. Dallas is my favorite author on Biblical sexuality. He is able to explain complex issues with an easy to understand writing style.

When the Lord does open the door for a deep conversation with your gay-identified nephew, it is critical that you speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Even if you've taken the time to build trust and relationship with your nephew, this will still be a sensitive conversation to have. He will likely be waiting to hear the same condemning tones from you that he has heard through his own experiences, or at least condemned openly in the gay blogosphere. As you begin this conversation, make sure your nephew knows that you love him as he is, even if you disagree on theology. The families that have navigated through this difficult journey the best are those who chose to continue loving their LGBT-identified son or daughter unconditionally, while they continue to uphold their Biblical convictions.



Remember, both your nephew and his same-sex partner are eternal souls who need Jesus. Compromise doesn't bring people to repentance. Loving your gay-identified nephew unconditionally and upholding Biblical convictions will be difficult at times. This may include not being able to honor a request from your nephew and his male partner to stay overnight in the same bedroom, or a request to attend a gay wedding; but if there has been an obvious display of Christ-like love, the relationship has the best chance of surviving the disappointments that will

ultimately come as you uphold your Biblical convictions. Keep in mind that we are living for eternity. Your relationship will be challenging at times. Resist the temptation to compromise your Christian convictions at the expense of encouraging your LGBT identified loved one to come to true repentance. True love is doing what is best for another person in light of eternity, regardless of the personal consequences involved.

Your gay-identified nephew may push against your convictions at times. Sometimes he does it because he is disappointed and angry. Sometimes he does it to see if you'll cave in and compromise. It is important that he sees that you are consistent and responding in love. You are offering him the best witness of God's offer of redemption as he sees your faithfulness to God's Word and your love towards him, even when it is difficult.

I realize there are some who will be reading this article and who realize that they have taken the wrong approach and alienated their nephew, niece, son or daughter. If that is the case, pray for an opportunity to sincerely apologize to him or her for your wrong attitude. You can ask for forgiveness, and the opportunity to start over. If the opportunity is granted, reconciliation will likely take a long time and you'll experience turbulence as you go. Don't give up. Trust that the Holy Spirit will be working on both of you as you continue walking in relationship with humility. If forgiveness isn't granted, continue to love him as you have the opportunity and pray that the Lord will work in your hearts.

Above all else, pray consistently for your LGBT-identified relative. Remember, homosexuality and transgender issues are the fruit on a big tree with a huge root system. It will take the Holy Spirit to convict and do a deep work in your loved one's heart. Pray that the Lord sends people to speak to your nephew that he can receive spiritual truth from. You might be too close to mom and dad to open up fully to, but you can pray that the Lord will send someone that he trusts that he can talk with. In the meantime, continue to pray, build relationship, and speak the truth in love as the Lord opens the door.

© 2017 [Reconciliation Ministries of Michigan, Inc.](#) This article may be reproduced and distributed as long as no fee is charged and credit is given. Images used under license with www.shutterstock.com.

Support is Available



Healing Hearts is a confidential Christian support group for parents and families of those struggling with homosexuality and transgender issues. The group meets on the second Sunday of each month and is open to anyone 18 and over who wants to learn how to love their LGBT-identified loved one without compromising their Christian convictions. The next meeting will be held at **Renewal Church** on **Sunday, January 14th** from **2:00 - 4:00 pm**. [Renewal](#) is located at **11174 East 13 Mile Road** in **Warren**. For more information on upcoming meetings call **Dan Hitz** at **586.739.5114**.

Contact our leaders for support...

Mike & Renee - 313-937-3422 - rcboyle@sbcglobal.net
Scott & Edie - 586-775-0504 - tabeaRD75@aol.com