



A Monthly E-Newsletter For CenterPeace Parents Volume 11 April 2022

THE MISSING PEACE ... WHAT WE ARE ALL LOOKING FOR

A BLOG BY SALLY GARY

"Tough Questions - Part 1 of 2"

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Some amazing things happened over this past weekend. For the first time in my life, I baptized someone in front of the entire congregation on a Sunday morning. I'd been privileged to baptize someone on two other occasions, but it was at another time, with just a small group of people gathered, so this was a different experience.

This baptism was also different because I've known the person longer and spent more quality time with her over the past few months, while she's been our summer intern for CenterPeace. I first met Jordyn when she was 14 years old. Jordyn had recently come out to her parents as gay, and while they didn't turn her away, they were deeply troubled by the revelation of her sexuality. Her mom wrote the pastor at their church, confiding in him and asking for resources to help them better understand. Their pastor was acquainted with CenterPeace and immediately contacted me. Within the year we managed to organize a trip to Jordyn's home church to conduct one of our weekend Peacemaker workshops. A Peacemaker workshop includes spending time with church leaders, and with the entire congregation, so that everyone would learn better ways of understanding and relating to Jordyn.



While I was there, Jordyn's parents asked if I could spend some time with Jordyn one on one. Since Jordyn was only 14 and not much of a coffee drinker yet, I opted to meet with her in a frozen yogurt shop. Over bowls of salted caramel frozen yogurt and chocolate syrup, Jordyn asked me one of the hardest questions I'd ever been asked.

"So does this mean I have to spend the rest of my life by myself?"

It was the way she said it that got me. Not one ounce of hostility or cynicism, as you might expect from an adolescent. Her question was sincere, heartfelt, respectful of a traditional Christian view of sexuality that requires those of us who are gay to remain celibate for life. A million thoughts raced through my head, primarily the fact that when you're 14, the rest of your life seems like an eternity, but also the rush of hormones we experience during puberty compounds everything. I was also mulling over the expectation so many fellow believers would have – that I would answer her question with a resounding "yes."

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"So does this mean I have to spend the rest of my life by myself?"

THE MISSING PEACE ... (cont'd from page 1)

But I didn't.

"Jordyn, I don't know the answer to that," I said. "I don't know what God has in store for you."



I could have told her she'd have community to sustain her, to be there with her through all of life's struggles, like some churches I know. But that's not always true. Churches still exist who wouldn't welcome anyone who is gay, no matter what sexual ethic they upheld. Other churches might let you come in but forget about being involved in any aspect of the work of the church, especially if you want to help with children or the youth group. The fact is, there are still so many Christians who buy into the myths about LGBTQ+ people, that even when most of a congregation is at least better informed or fully affirming, it's still risky to the unity of a church to permit LGBTQ+ people to serve in some places. And honestly, even in the most hospitable churches, like mine in Dallas, it doesn't begin to fill the needs for connection, companionship, and intimacy like a relationship with one other person to share life with does.

So, what do I tell her?

Do I encourage her to go ahead and rely upon a church whose idea of providing community is one to three assemblies each week, with an occasional potluck and monthly small group meetings in homes? What happens during the other parts of the week?

Do I encourage her to seek out like-minded, single, celibate friends who may be willing to commit, at least for a season of life, to a

communal living arrangement? What happens when that season of life ends? Or what if you're in an area with limited options for housemates? Do I tell her what people have told me when I've expressed the difficulties of living alone – that it's no different from being heterosexual and single – when I know full well that it IS different? It's different because single straight people always have the opportunity to meet someone, fall in love with that person, and decide to marry. That option's always available for someone who is heterosexual.

But it's not an option for us.

You see, we, too, have met someone and fallen in love, but knew we could never marry that person without totally disrupting our world. Yes, marriage equality is a reality now, but for so many of us, still, in order to fit into our world – a world in which we are told in multiple ways that it's impossible to simply be gay and Christian, let alone enter into a relationship with someone of the same gender – we can't even imagine having someone to share our lives with us.

That's a hard reality to face when you're just 14 years old and there are very few people, if any, in your church who want to talk about how hard that is to live out.

So the fact that five years later Jordyn still wanted to be baptized, wants to follow Christ, wants to be a part of a faith community, is astonishing. You'll have to ask Jordyn just exactly how that happened, but I think she might say that having a family who has supported her, and a growing network of LGBTQ+ people modeling life as a Christ-follower before her has helped.

And we as the Body of Christ must begin to sincerely explore how we will provide deeper community – the intimacy God designed each of us to need – for the Jordyns in our midst.

Read ["The Rest of the Story - Part 2 of 2."](#)

Sally's blog page can be found [here](#).

WHO SINNED? JOHN 9 PARENTS

By Andy Harbert

John chapter 9 narrates the story of Jesus healing the man who had been blind from birth. It has many of the common elements of gospel stories: dumb questions from the disciples, a healing by Jesus, and the Pharisees' unhappy reaction to the healing. But there is one unique part of this story with which I especially connect: the hapless parents who are questioned by the Pharisees about their freshly healed son. This Bible story isn't about gay people or their families, but if you have a gay child, perhaps you too can see parts of the story in your own family's journey.



I wonder what those parents would have thought if they had heard the disciples' question: "who sinned...this child or his parents?" If you are like me, you know how it feels to overhear a very similar question asked by a brother or sister in Christ during Bible class about gay people, and then later, in private, torture yourself endlessly with those same questions. Like those parents 2000 years ago, you probably also know what it's like to be the target of questions about whether your son was really born this way.

Perhaps you share with me the exhaustion of being thrust into the middle of a very public, loud and heated debate about your son and people "like him." Maybe you recall the joy of hearing your son, while standing in the baptismal waters, declare "Lord, I believe" and you worry about how long child-like faith can hold up when the keepers of the faith dismiss gay people as "steeped in sin."

Can you sympathize with the fears of those John 9 parents? The fear that if you accept your child just as he is, you too may be "thrown out of the synagogue" (or church or family) because you dare to believe that the Son of God might have sufficient grace for you and your son. You might even know what it is like to shake your fist at God and demand answers, only to hear that this is all part of a plan that will someday put the works of God on display. When your plans and God's do not

align, you have to learn to actually trust God, maybe for the first time in your life. When our son Joey came out as gay, I was sure of "the plan" and positive about what needed healing: Joey. But despite my best efforts, God didn't uphold his end of the bargain, and Joey remained gay. Fortunately, like the John 9 story, grace and healing showed up in our story, too. They first came to repair the damage that my best efforts had caused within our relationship with our son. Then God rolled up His sleeves to work on the one guy in the story who didn't think he needed healing: me. I count myself as a Pharisee in recovery. I wish that my heart and head would recover as quickly as the blind man's eyes did, but I guess some of us require more mud and spit than others.

I sometimes wonder how things turned out for those parents of the blind man. They lived under a religious system that took the joy of the miracle of their son and replaced it with fear. In our journey with Joey, I grieve over all of the times fear drove away love and joy. Moving forward, all I know to do is to keep trying every day to lean into God's grace. I find that the more I understand my total dependence on that limitless grace, the more I am able to release my fear and frustrations and trust my journey and that of my family into the hands of the one in control.

The gospels are replete with stories of Jesus reaching out to everyone. He sat among the despised and honored, the rejected and the revered. Jesus is still inviting all of us to feast with him today. Parents, LGBTQ+ people, pastors and allies, this conference is for you. Because the message of the gospel is clear – each of us has a place at the table. Together. It is Christ's table, not ours, and Jesus does the inviting.

2022 Speakers



Staci Frenes



Joel Hollier



Megan DeFranza



Sally Gary



Matthew Vines



Candace Hardnett

[Register now](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Watch for Future Dates!



PeacePrints Retreats

A safe place for parents to express their feelings with fellow believers in Christ

[More information on PeacePrints](#)

Group Spiritual Direction for Parents

A place to help grow your awareness of God's work in your and your family's life and to share this spiritual journey with others

[More information on Group Spiritual Direction](#)

[Read an interview with Dan Reynolds on the impact of "Believer" and his LoveLoud concerts](#)

HBO DOCUMENTARY REVIEW: "BELIEVER"

Deeply personal and equally moving, "Believer" documents Imagine Dragons lead singer Dan Reynolds' crusading campaign on behalf of LGBTQ rights, in direct conflict with the teachings of the Mormon Church under which he was raised.

... it's Reynolds' awakening regarding the church's hostility to gay marriage, and promotion of "solutions" like "mixed-orientation marriages" (prodding gay and lesbian members to wed straight people of the opposite gender) and celibacy, which prompts him to stay and fight rather than simply leave.

Filming in 2017, Reynolds – shown tooling around mixing the band's hit "Thunder" – decides, naturally, to put on a show: an awareness-raising concert called the LoveLoud Festival. Director Don Argott chronicles every step in the planning and build-up to that event, but the waterworks really open during the show itself, from seeing parents embrace their children to LGBTQ adults talking about what a difference such an event would have made when they were young and feeling isolated.

The documentary – which in addition to the rock songs boasts a musical score from movie composer Hans Zimmer – also features Tyler Glenn, the lead singer of Neon Trees, who has his own issues with the church, being gay and Mormon.

[Read full review by CNN Entertainment, June 22, 2018](#)



A recommended resource list can be found on the [CenterPeace Resource Page](#)

