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Remaining Faithful in Fearful Times

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EDITORIAL TEAM

John Freeman

Irene Maguire

Amy Tyson

CONTRIBUTORS

Mark Sanders

Caitlin McCaffrey

Ellen Mary Dykas

Joan McConnell

Jim Barr

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Harvest USA brings the truth and mercy of Jesus Christ by:

- Helping individuals and families affected by sexual struggles
- Providing resources that address biblical sexuality to individuals and churches

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HARVESTUSA.ORG

National Office Philadelphia
715 Twining Road, Suite 200
Dresher, PA 19025
215.482.0111
info@harvestusa.org

FROM THE
President's
Desk

If our culture was a mountain, it may feel like we're sinking into the heart of the sea. Today's sexual revolution is affecting us all, leaving us with many questions and concerns. We must fight even harder to be still before God, keeping our eyes fixed on Christ. Yes, we are called to respond, but our responses must come from a heart of faith in the God who told the Israelites at the Red Sea, with Egypt at their backs, *"Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today"* (Ex. 14:13).

Harvest USA wants this magazine to speak boldly to the issues of our day with clarity and compassion. God's Word provides us with everything we need to face new challenges with the love and truth that the gospel of Jesus Christ not only demands but, through the Holy Spirit, graciously provides.

We begin this issue by looking at an ancient tale: older generations struggling to understand the youth of their day. Baby boomers, Gen Xers, and even millennials might find the gap in our understanding of Gen Z only widening; sexual norms are changing significantly faster among Gen Z. Still, the love of Christ compels us not to cast off these young ones with disregard. Instead, we must patiently learn about them—their context, struggles, and worldview. In doing so, we might discover particular opportunities to showcase the glories of our Savior.

We'll consider the controversial and personally challenging question of using preferred pronouns. While these are new questions we never expected to need answers for, the principles of Scripture are a light unto our path and must be our guide in all matters, including pronouns. Rather

than giving simplistic advice, we go deep into God's Word, the motivations of our hearts, and what it means to walk in faithfulness even when the cost is high.

Next, how can the church be faithful, discerning, and unwavering in our witness to a world broken by the devastating impact of sin—particularly on sexuality and gender? In the chaos, we can be tempted to either throw up our hands in despair or, patience depleted, take matters into our own hands. But God is not surprised or shaken. He remains on the throne, and his mission for the church is the same today as it was 2,000 years ago. He still calls us to make disciples of all nations—and he will bring all his sheep into the fold.

Lastly, we tenderly come alongside parents for whom these issues have become deeply personal as they wrestle with the uncertainties of their child embracing an LGBTQ+ identity. Every Christian faces trials we'd never have chosen, but few are as devastating as the pain of watching your child walk away from Jesus and into sin with no repentance in sight. But God doesn't leave us destitute in our suffering. He graciously, in Christ, provides us all we need to move forward with hope, strength, and confidence that God is good and *working* for our good.

With affection in Christ,
Mark Sanders



President of Harvest USA





Gen Z: SEXUALITY, GENDER, AND THE Beauty of Christ

CAITLIN MCCAFFREY, DIRECTOR OF WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Much ink has been spilled about those born between 1997 and 2012, also known as Generation Z. In the call to make disciples, how can Christ's church understand and care for the unique strengths and challenges facing this up-and-coming generation?

Based on a profile from aggregated data, the Barna research group described Gen Z as optimistic, engaged, malleable, curious, authentic, inclusive, and collaborative.¹ Gen Z is also one of the most spiritually open and curious generations.

The Stats: GEN Z AND SEXUALITY

Interestingly, Gen Z is having less sex than previous generations. In 2011, 47% of high school students reported ever having sex. By 2021, that number had decreased to 30%.² For this generation, relationships are increasingly a place to pursue self-actualization and self-expression, whereas previous generations may have viewed relationships as a venue for sex, cohabitation, or marriage.

For Gen Z, a relationship can be a place to experiment with a new identity. There are increasingly specific ways to identify oneself with regard to sexuality, gender expression, and romance. The 1983 hit song "Obsession" by pop group Animotion boldly cries, "What do you want me to be, to make you sleep with me?" Gen Z, however, has inverted this standard, now declaring that "who I sleep with is an expression of how I choose to identify."

Gen Z has the highest rate of identifying as LGBTQ+ (only 50% identifying as exclusively heterosexual) and is more likely to reject a gender binary and embrace gender fluidity. The role of women is noteworthy: fewer and fewer women over the past decade have reported their attraction is exclusively to the opposite sex, while these numbers have remained stable for the same data set among Gen Z men. Gen Z women are leading the way in pursuing higher rates of casual sex and same-sex sexual expression.³

Finally, increases in the availability of pornography and technologically-mediated sexual experiences have likely led to falling rates of relationships, marriage, and sex among Generation Z.

CALLED TO GUARD the Good Deposit

In 2 Timothy, the Apostle Paul describes the gospel as a deposit entrusted to him; he is guarding it and giving it to his younger disciple, Timothy. Paul says:

But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Jesus Christ. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.
(2 Tim. 1:12b-14)

To be sure, Jesus himself is the one in whom Paul has believed, and the Holy Spirit himself is the one who will guard the good deposit of the gospel. Notice that Paul does not lay out a detailed plan for guarding the deposit. Instead, he places his confidence in Jesus, who keeps and protects the gospel amid persecution, false teachers, evildoers, and shifting cultures.

If we ignore our culture's view of sexuality and gender, we cannot faithfully proclaim the gospel of our King Jesus, who claims authority over all things. So how can we, like Paul, rely on Jesus as we are entrusted with the good deposit of the gospel regarding sexuality and gender to the next generation? Here are some practical considerations.

START WITH Patience & Compassion

Gen Z has been steeped in postmodernism since birth. They do not know a time when same-sex relationships and gender fluidity were not celebrated. This generation is unmoored from basic premises that older generations may

take for granted. Gen Z must sincerely ask questions like, "What, exactly, is a woman? What makes certain sexual practices morally wrong if they're between two consenting adults?" Be compassionate and patient. Being mired in confusion about basic truths is a form of suffering.

Gen Z has the highest incidence of anxiety disorders, social fears, and mental health struggles of all recent generations; pursue patience and humility in discipleship relationships. Growing up in a digital age has ushered in a new level of fragility and pain. The church should both challenge and offer compassion for these weaknesses.

For this generation,
relationships are increasingly
a place to pursue
self-actualization and
self-expression

Assume BIBLICAL ILLITERACY

Gen Z is the most biblically illiterate generation⁴ in a post-Christian world. Start with the basics! Don't assume foundational truths about God, creation, sin, or the cross. I recently heard about an interaction between my friend and a young man, where the young man marveled that Jesus was "the guy on the cross necklace." He genuinely did not know that the cross connected to Jesus; he had always seen it as merely a symbol on a necklace and other apparel. Rather than mocking or decrying Gen Z for their biblical illiteracy, take it as a call to disciple them with God's Word in hand. Model belief in the sufficiency of Scripture by searching for truth *alongside* your Gen Z friends. Dive into the deep questions with them.

SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE: Name Sin

Have clarity based on God’s Word. It’s not loving or winsome to fail to tell someone of the dangers of sin for their soul. Gen Z is sometimes called “the open generation” because of their openness to spiritual things. Gen Z has uniquely displayed an understanding that, fundamentally, something *inside* of them is broken and they need help from *outside* themselves to repair it.⁵ This understanding reveals why therapeutic and mental health treatments have increased among Gen Z and why transgender ideology has taken root. Gen Z is prepared to look outside themselves for a solution to their felt needs.

The gospel is poised to reply to this worldview. Jesus is the only Savior. Speak the truth about humanity’s need for him because of our sin nature. Sin is not merely the bad things we do; it is a power at work in us that requires radical salvation from outside ourselves (Rom. 7:23–24) and ongoing, daily repentance in the life of faith. Teach the *whole* gospel—it is good news for sinners like us.



REGARD NO ONE ACCORDING to the Flesh

2 Corinthians 5:16 calls us to “regard no one according to the flesh.” Are you obeying this in your perceptions and opinions of Gen Z—including those inside your church family? An obvious temptation for older generations is to throw stones of judgment and ridicule rather than come alongside our younger brothers and sisters. There is even a well-documented feud online between Gen Z and millennials, where mockery is commonplace. This ought not to be in the household of faith! Regarding Gen Z according to the flesh might look like:

- Assuming the worst of them—cynicism
- Attributing their shortcomings and sins solely to their age
- Lacking patience in their weakness
- Assuming that you could never connect with them because of their age

For my fellow millennials, Gen Xers, baby boomers, and beyond, I urge you to repent of these views and answer the call to Christ-honoring discipleship in gentleness and love.

TELL A Better Story

Do not merely teach the “don’ts” of sexual practice. Remember to declare the beauty of God’s design for sexuality and gender. We have a better story to tell! Imagine if you asked me to describe magnificent Sequoia National Park—with its vast canyons, ancient trees, and breathtaking rock formations—but instead, I went into detail about the border, fence, and entry gate. Did I really describe what Sequoia National Park is like? Certainly not! But this has become common in the church’s teaching on sex. We major on the rules and how to avoid breaking them while God is declaring something beautiful about himself in the very design and shape of sexuality for singles and married people. When was the last time your heart was captivated by rules?

Faithfulness to commands about sexual practice should come from worship of the God who designed it all, because it points to him! Start by engaging Gen Z in the grand story of God’s love, which—in part—is imaged in his design for sexuality and gender.

DISCIPLESHIP: JESUS’S PLAN FOR Building His Church

Older saints, remember: there is nothing new under the sun (Eccles. 1:9). While green hair, gender fluidity, and niche online jokes may appear new to you, you will find that, at the heart level, you are more alike than different from your Gen Z counterparts.

“No temptation has overtaken you but that which is common to man” (1 Cor. 10:13) and therefore common within the ordinary life of the local church through all generations. Don’t be scared away by the seeming novelty of this thoughtful, sensitive, and open generation.

You’ve been entrusted with the gospel. What will you do?



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5. On the surface, this may seem to contradict our culture’s focus on self-actualization. However, things like joining online affinity groups, cosmetic surgery, and gender transition are all unique markers of an effort to seek affirmation and identity confirmation from outside the self. I interviewed many college leaders who mentioned that, while the trend in the ‘90s was to “look within,” they are now seeing this focus inverted.

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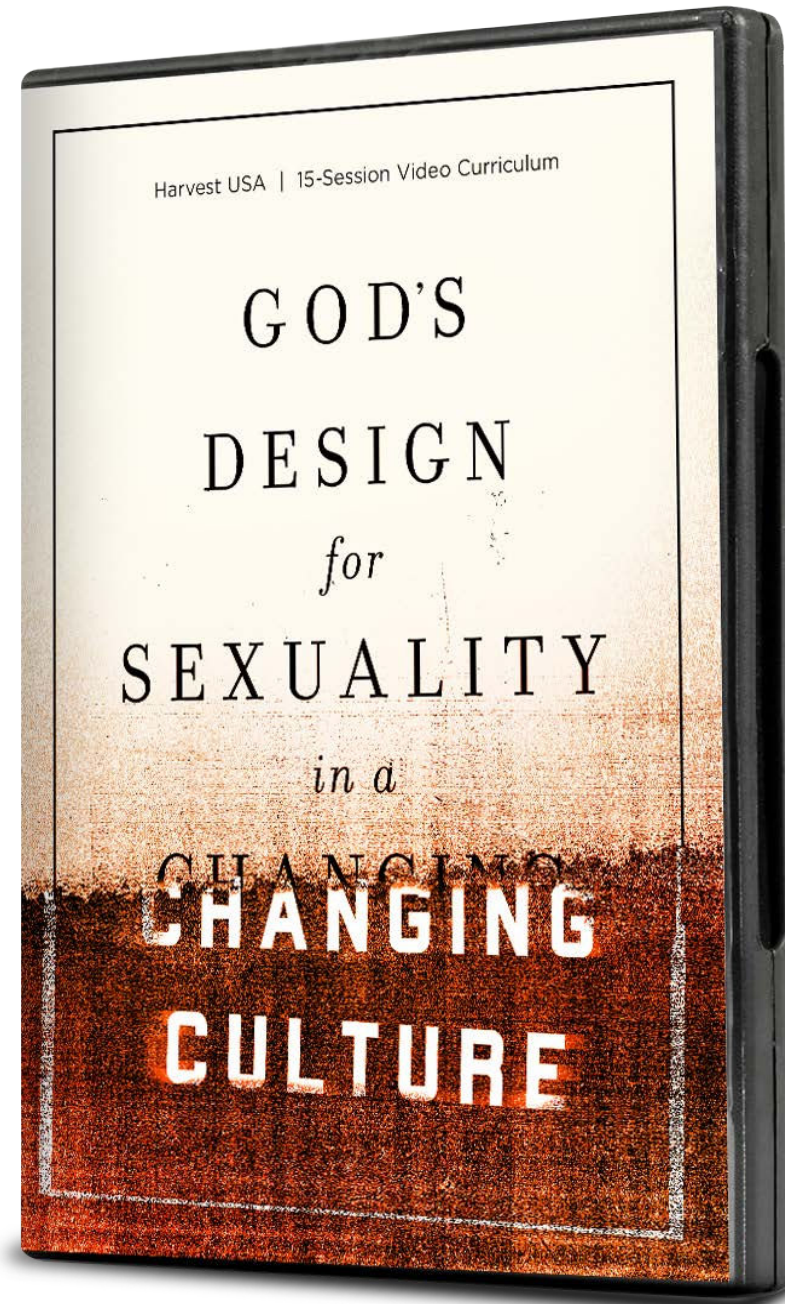
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"God's Design for Sexuality in a Changing Culture is a sturdy resource that will equip churches to be ambassadors of truth, grace, and freedom in a culture that's awash in sexual confusion."

— ANDREW T. WALKER

Director of Policy Studies,
The Ethics and Religious Liberty
Commission, author of *God and
the Transgender Debate*



MEET THE STAFF Jim Barr



NAME

Jim Barr

HOMETOWN

I was born in Pennsylvania, raised in Massachusetts, and spent more than 35 years in Virginia, where my wife and I raised our family. We're now empty nesters living in a Philadelphia suburb.

POSITION AT HARVEST USA

Director of Ministry Partnerships and Stewardship

DESCRIPTION OF WORK AT HARVEST USA

One important aspect of my work is updating our supporters; their prayers and giving are crucial. I want them to know how people are finding help, how marriages are being restored, and how churches are being strengthened because of their partnership. Additionally, I seek opportunities to share with people, particularly pastors, about Harvest USA and our gospel-based resources.

Fundamentally, this is more than a job. My life and marriage were wonderfully changed through Harvest USA. I want to expand awareness of the ministry so that more men, women, and families can discover the healing and hope of Christ's loving mercy.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SCRIPTURE?

That's like asking which of my children is my favorite—can't do it! But I've always been intrigued by Eugene Peterson's translation of John 1:14 in *The Message*: "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood." God actually became a man and intimately knows our joys and sorrows.

HOW DID YOU GET TO HARVEST USA?

When we moved to Philadelphia, I visited the Harvest USA office seeking help for my pornography struggle. After years of shame, I found lasting freedom through their discipleship program. The change was so profound that I volunteered to mentor another men's group and provided counsel and accountability for others at my church. When Harvest USA contacted me about working here, I saw an opportunity to use my past professional experience and testimony to advance the work of Harvest USA and help others.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT LIVING IN PHILADELPHIA?

Along with the world-renowned museums, the Liberty Bell, and the iconic statue of Rocky Balboa, we've enjoyed visiting historic estates in "America's Garden Capital." The 1,800-acre Wissahickon Valley Park, with its hiking trails, beautiful stone bridges, and even an historic covered bridge, is our go-to destination for getting back to nature.

CAN YOU TELL US AN INTERESTING FACT ABOUT YOURSELF?

When our seven children were young, I made a big pancake breakfast for everyone almost weekly. One of my kids determined that I made 50 to 60 pancakes each time—so at some point (according to their calculations), I'd made more than 40,000 pancakes over 20-plus years!



Preferred Pronouns:

RESPONDING WITH FAITHFULNESS AND HUMILITY

ELLEN MARY DYKAS

DIRECTOR OF EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY TO WOMEN

Bill stared, speechless, across the coffee table at his wife. Their 14-year-old daughter, Rebecca, had just laughed at them as she left the room.

"I know you don't like calling me 'Beck,' but the least you could do is use my right pronouns! Besides, if I tell my school counselor that you won't, you could be in a lot of trouble."

Because of his long-time employment with the city, Bill was well aware of the guidelines for all municipal employees regarding respecting gender and related speech. He had read the list of possible discipline and penalties. He felt his chest tighten as he surveyed all the potential consequences of the situation.

Jenny slowly got to her feet and collected her husband's half-empty coffee mug. "Bill," she sighed, "it's such a small thing; just tiny words that bother her right now. She'll probably outgrow it all anyhow. I really don't see why you're making so much out of it. Isn't it a small price for keeping the peace? Do you want to lose your daughter, your job—everything?"

This scenario, scary as it is, is playing out right now in many homes today. Families, friends, coworkers, and most of us are facing the challenge of faithfully loving

Christ and people as the LGBTQ+ revolution rolls on. How do we remain steadfast both to God's Word and the call to humbly engage those who oppose a biblical worldview?

This Is Our Creator's World

God's people are called to a global mission of discipling and loving the lost, that he may be loved and worshiped among all nations (see Ps. 67, Matt. 28:18–20, Phil. 2:9–10). Regardless of society's sway, we can only be truly loving and offer authentic relationships by living faithfully for Jesus (1 John 5:2–3). And faithfulness to Christ compels us to speak truthfully in his name regarding all things—including pronouns.

Two truths are foundational when others demand that we use pronouns contrary to biological sex. First, God creates and identifies us as male or female image-bearers (Gen. 1:26–27). Science and human anatomy testify to two sexes. Second, faithfulness is fueled by compassion. Suffering is often in the backstory of the gender dysphoric and those enraged by resistance to preferred pronouns. None of us are just sinners or obeyers; *we're sufferers too*. Our Savior came to free us from sin *and* heal broken hearts, to expose

darkness *and* comfort the distressed (Isa. 61:1–4; Matt. 9:36; John 10:11, 14:6). Jesus came for people, not merely to address "issues."

This article won't give answers for every faith-stretching situation you'll face.¹ However, consider it a pathway for remaining steadfast to God's Word, fueled by humble love for image-bearers questioning their biological sex.

Surrender to the Loving Creator and Lord

For by [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.
(Colossians 1:16)

All means *all*. ALL aspects of creation were made by and for Jesus. The triune God determined how our bodies, minds, and hearts are to function, including language, identity, maleness, femaleness, sexuality, and the way Christ-followers are to love.

Though people try to recreate themselves, redefining gender and sculpting a self-determined identity, God remains the only Creator *and Lord*. Yielding to Christ is crucial as we consider our response to the current pronoun controversy and all things LGBTQ+.

It is right to expose false teaching, through which the enemy schemes and deceives (see John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:1–3; 1 Pet. 5:8–9). But we must strive to view no one

YIELDING TO CHRIST IS CRUCIAL
*as we consider our response to the
current pronoun controversy
and all things LGBTQ+.*

from a worldly point of view, including those ensnared in unbiblical gender ideology. Seeing others through the lens of the gospel is crucial when image-bearers demand we embrace preferred pronouns which don't sync with reality. Christians: the gospel of Christ commands that we not only say and do the right things, but that we do so as Jesus would himself.

We're called to use words to build others up and reflect Christ, not to make a point or win an argument so as to say, "I'm right!" There is no God-blessed way to proclaim Christ's excellencies while allowing malicious communication to spew from our hearts. Our words—even those that must be confrontational—are to be life-giving and healing (Eph. 4:29; Prov. 12:18) as they point to Jesus. We love as we speak God's truth, and we communicate truth *truthfully* through loving motivations and attitudes.

Understand the Entanglement of Deceit

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. (James 1:14–16)

James locates temptation in our desires. When someone insists on pronouns not grounded in their biological sex, enticed desires are at play—to feel or be unique, to numb internal distress, to refuse to be controlled by anyone else's truth, to not be forced into a view of personhood that trounces personal preference, and so on. But beliefs and decisions born from sinful desires lead to more distress and confusion, not life.²

Deception is at work when a man believes he is a woman or a female is convinced that having a double mastectomy and taking hormones will make her male, supposedly aligning her body with her internal compass. Deception convinces boys and girls that resculpted bodies can produce self-actualization and peace and alleviate their

internal distress. These are lies rooted in Satan, the father of lies, himself. Deception is “a pushing down of the truth, a narcotic we inject so as to avoid painful realities as if they aren't true” and “a way we numb pain and survive suffering.”³

We've all been deceived and have deceived others to get what we want or avoid pain. Understanding these things about human beings isn't condescending, shaming, transphobic, or unloving; it's truthful wisdom, anchoring us in our Savior's mission to heal broken hearts and bring comforting, rescuing light to the disorienting darkness of deception.

Love People and Keep Pronouns in Their Proper Place

Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him. (Colossians 3:9–10)

Some leaders in Christianity advocate for pronoun hospitality, saying it's right to respect someone's gender affiliations and the language they use to self-identify. They argue that this avoids pushing someone away from Jesus, creating opportunities for friendship and discipleship.

I appreciate pushback on those ideas. Rosaria Butterfield writes, “[These positions] make no Christian sense. Does . . . crafting a relationship on falsehood . . . give the gospel a better hearing? And is that how people are converted?”⁴ Imagine the confusion of beginning a relationship ‘for the sake of Christ’ through use of pronouns that aren't truthful, only to ‘repent’ yourself when that person understands God's freeing truth that gender always syncs with biological sex?! Additionally, Scripture doesn't encourage us to show hospitality through deception but as a way to love people—image-bearers. Pronouns must be kept in their proper place.

What About . . . ?

Relationships shouldn't be based on falsehood, yet we must discern nuances in specific circumstances. When Christ is in his proper place in our lives as Creator and Lord, pronouns will be in theirs. Pronouns matter, and our words are significant; we will be held accountable for them. So how do we hold to God's truth and wisely navigate varying circumstances?

- A parent is threatened by an LGBTQ+-affirming mental health facility that, by law, has the authority to refuse a 14-year-old daughter's release without parental written commitment to use male pronouns.
- Ultimatums are given by a family member: *If you don't use my preferred pronouns, I may kill myself.*
- A single woman refusing to use dishonest pronouns in her workplace is threatened with loss of employment, thereby endangering the adoption of her infant foster daughter.

In all of these scenarios, there are nuances and clear commands to obey. How do we respond when it seems that using or refusing to use personal pronouns results in breaking God's commands (speaking what isn't true, or abandoning parental

oversight of a child, for example)? Here are three ways to pray and think through faithful responses.

1. **Humbly acknowledge your motivational desires.** It's scary to be threatened with loss of relationships, employment, or reputation because of pronouns. Be honest about which desires have primary motivation in your life: fear, unrighteous anger, avoidance of relational stress, humble faithfulness to Christ, something else?

The gospel can divide families, friendships, neighbors, and businesses (Matt. 10:34–39). Our motivation must be faithfulness to Christ and his Word. Protecting relationships, even with family, isn't something a faithful believer does at all costs. No, we remain faithful to Jesus at all costs, refusing to be swayed, spin Scripture, or take steps toward falling away in



Does . . . crafting a relationship on falsehood . . . **GIVE THE GOSPEL A BETTER HEARING?**

—Rosaria Butterfield

response to the “hard sayings” of the gospel (see John 6:60–66). Cry out to God and friends for help to remain loyal to God and his Word. None of us can do this in our own power—we need the Spirit! Ask God to give you courageous humility to speak truthfully and have nothing to do with deceptive, self-serving words (Phil. 2:3).

2. **When in doubt, don’t disobey clear commands in God’s Word.** Parents may feel they must choose between the lesser of two evils, such as giving up parental authority or agreeing to use preferred pronouns. It’s terrifying to hear a suicidal inclination or threat; your Father knows this and will guide you to protect both spiritual and physical life. Seek to honor him and be motivated by a desire to be faithful. It’s a serious matter to move against your conscience. If your conscience won’t let you do something, don’t (see Rom. 14:23).

How can you be clear with your convictions and communicate the mercy of Christ? How can you display a humble posture of loyalty to him *and* show dignity and relational care to a fellow image-bearer? Can you avoid pronouns all together? “In most cases, pronouns are third person references used to indicate people not present, so their feelings are not at stake...don’t yield to pressure to adopt pronoun use that reflects a peculiar, controversial, and divisive political view that you do not hold. That’s lying.”⁵

Some of you have faced circumstances (or will soon) that make it seem impossible to be faithful to all your responsibilities. Your Shepherd will cause his voice to be clear. But even if—when—you get it wrong, you’re still safe in the Lord’s embrace because our hope rests in *Christ’s* victorious, merciful faithfulness.

3. **Trust God with the consequences of your obedience.** We can trust ourselves or God (Jer. 17:5–10).

Either way, a harvest always comes in (Rom. 8:5–8; Gal. 6:7–9). Christ-followers honor him by daily investment in the kingdom of God through street-level obedience and faith, trusting him with the consequences.

Decisions regarding using or refusing pronouns *will* have an impact. Always. In the short term, you may suffer the painful loss of relationships or employment. You may be mocked for your loyalty to Jesus. Maybe you’ll be called an oppressor, hater, or transphobic. Jesus is sympathetic; he, too, was maligned and misrepresented. However, when he is in his proper place as Lord in our hearts, we can rest knowing all aspects of our lives are under his loving, strong protection. That doesn’t mean pain-free living, but it does lead to the “perfect peace” that steadies you in this life (Isa. 26:3–4).

We All Need Christ

You, me, and the person insisting on falsehood surrounding pronouns all need the same thing. We need to remember that our hope is not in this life, and our identity is not something we create or maintain for ourselves. No! We are given hope, identity, and healing only in Christ.

How is God calling you to be steadfast, immovable, and abounding in faithfulness to him? Is he inviting you to trust him with scary circumstances and decisions which seem to have no positive outcome?

Look to Christ and obey him. Keep him in his rightful place, remembering he protects and provides for you, no matter what. Before we know it, our earthly lives will be over. Then, all these present circumstances will be a source of praise to our King, who strengthened us to faithfully and humbly count the cost and empowered us, in Christ, to be steadfast under trial.



Your **partnership** makes it possible for us to offer gospel hope to individuals and families affected by sexual struggles and create resources on biblical sexuality for families and churches.

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1. See our blog for articles that cover a wide range of topics: <https://harvestusa.org/blog/>.
2. Check out this website for one young woman’s courageous walk of faith, <https://www.rainbowredemptionproject.com/>.
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What Should the Church Be in This Sexual Revolution?

MARK SANDERS
President of Harvest USA

We are living in an unprecedented time in American history. Never before has it felt so scary to identify as a Christian. A few decades ago, being a faithful church member—perhaps an elder or deacon—meant you got the job over the equally qualified but church-unaffiliated competition. Not so today. In our current cultural climate, identifying with Christ comes with tangible costs and few upsides. It used to be that society’s greatest objection to the gospel was the doctrine of eternal punishment in hell. Now Christians are considered dangerous bigots because of our biblical convictions on sexuality and gender.

Churches are choosing to respond to these cultural shifts in a plethora of ways. Tragically, many have acquiesced to cultural pressure, proudly waving the rainbow flag and twisting the Scriptures to condone what God hates. Others have taken the polar-opposite approach, advocating with a very combative tone for a Christian nationalism to “take our country back.” Between these poles are countless other approaches. These issues are challenging to navigate.

Regarding the church’s role in society and how we should respond to increasing hostility to God’s Word, there are dangers on all sides—I don’t have the market cornered on wisdom and discernment. But I will offer four principles we can use when asking, “What should the church be in this sexual revolution?”

1. Humbly Repentant

Every church must ask, “What are the logs lodged in our own eyes?” We cannot rightly call the world to repent if we have not dealt with our own house first. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:12, “For what have I to do with judging

outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?” In the context of grave sexual sin in the Corinthian church, Paul is making two simultaneous statements here:

“*Don’t* expect the unbelieving world to act like believers.”

“*Expect* believers to live up to the testimony they profess.”

We all long for a revival of true gospel living—both in our land and around the world. Church history shows that when the Holy Spirit does an unusual work in bringing multitudes of people to Christ in dramatic ways, those seasons are precipitated by a deep, contrite repentance in the church. Revival starts from within the church, not from without.

How many of us, when we look at the sexual chaos in the world, immediately search our own hearts with the prayer of David:

*Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting!* (Psalm 139:23–24)

There is much repentance needed for sexual sin within the body of Christ. The scourge of pornography continues to wreak havoc in so many church communities adopting a “don’t ask, don’t tell” attitude to sexual sin. Too many churches are passive in their approach to these shepherding needs. In this state, are we ready for the refugees from this sexual revolution who will come to our doors seeking help?

May our corporate prayer be guided by Hosea 10:12:

*Sow for yourselves righteousness;
reap steadfast love;
break up your fallow ground,
for it is the time to seek the Lord,
that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.*

2. Theologically Unwavering

The more I wrestle with the complexities of pastoral care for sexual strugglers, the more convinced I become that we need more theology, not less. There can be an attitude in the church that pits sound doctrine against compassionate care for strugglers. We can all fall into the dangerous fallacy of thinking that we can be more compassionate than God himself¹—that we know how to heal someone better than the “Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (2 Cor. 1:3).

Brothers and sisters, the world does not need a filtered gospel. Only the whole counsel of God, rightly divided, will lead us to true maturity in Christ. Of course, pastoral wisdom knows how to apply God’s Word in apt ways and appropriate times. We should never use Scripture to bludgeon people but instead seek to conform our speech to the standard of Proverbs 15:23: “To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is.”

However, there are countless examples of well-meaning pastors and counselors compromising the truth of God’s Word because they believe that, in some way, speaking the truth would not be loving but harmful. In subtle and subversive ways, we are in danger of making our logic and feelings the standards to which Scripture must submit and not the other way around. Heresy does not happen with one giant leap, but with small, consistent compromises over years and decades.

3. Pastorally Present

From the outside, it might look like the world is celebrating their victories in indoctrinating our children, canceling dissenting voices, and pushing policies that make it increasingly difficult for Christians to live peaceful, quiet lives. But underneath their veneer of rejoicing is tremendous agony and chaos. Sin only brings forth death, never life. Behind the promise of sexual freedom and liberty is the bondage of lives enslaved to corruption. While you may think things cannot possibly get any worse, the full consequences of the path the world is taking have only started to surface. Consider the thousands of children making the life-altering choice to mutilate their bodies irreversibly. Consider the torrent of despair, regret, and hopelessness that could engulf an entire generation in the coming decades.

Yet this is when the church shows herself to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Jesus ministered on the earth when disease, demonic oppression, and societal unrest were rampant. In that context he sent his disciples out into the world, giving them “authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction” (Matt. 10:1)—the very same ministry he himself performed.

Now Jesus is sending us, his church, out into a chaotic world—to a broken people who are like sheep without a shepherd—and he’s sending us with the authority of the gospel: “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). We need to be ready to be a hospital for the many who will come with the scars and sicknesses of sin. The world might proclaim a message of victory

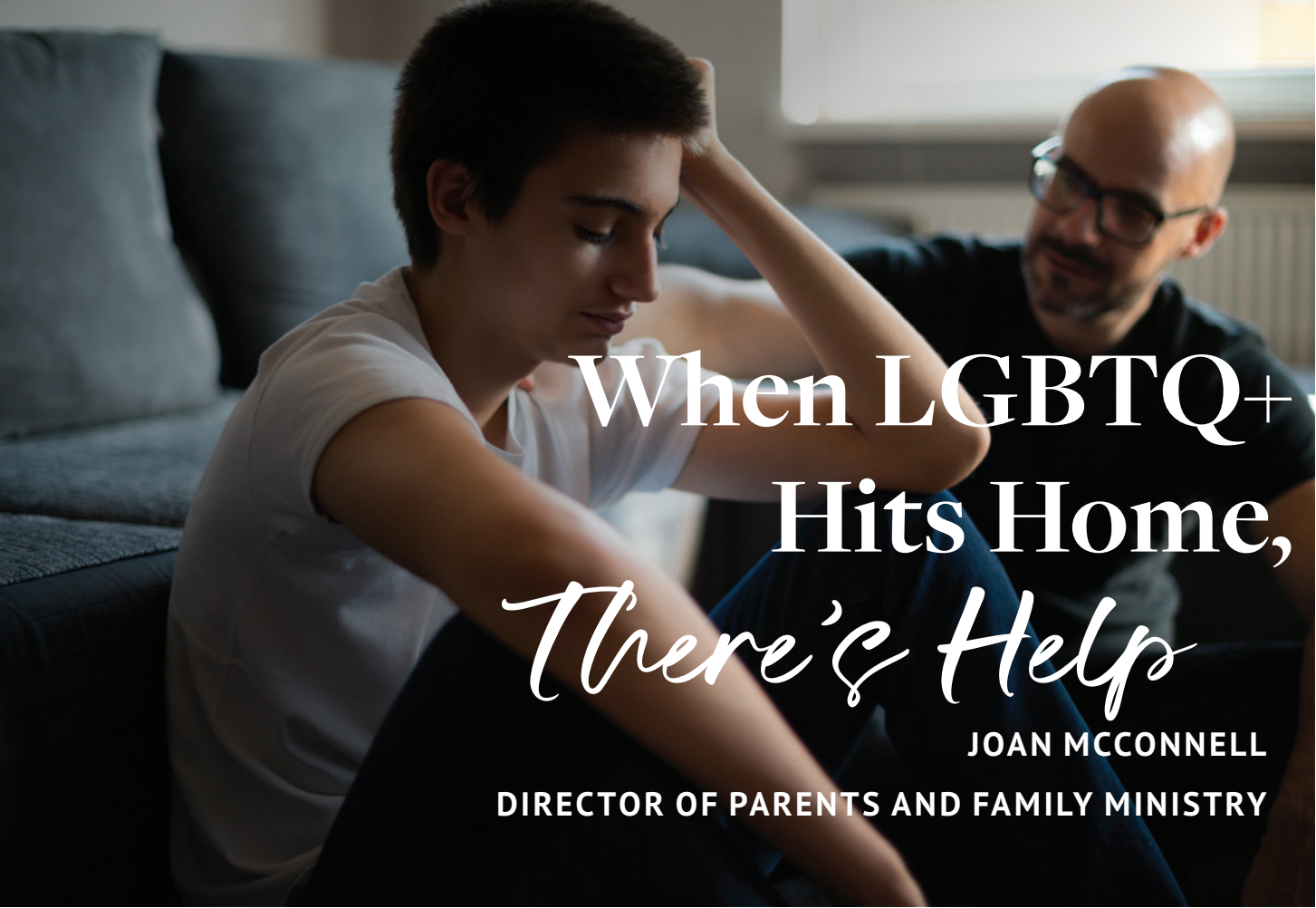
we must be bold
in the truth and in our
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over the church, but in reality, they are hurting and desperately need the hope of a Kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28).

4. Fearlessly Bold

For these reasons, we must be bold in the truth and in our willingness to associate with people who are different from us. As we continue sliding into a post-Christian culture, we will increasingly be reminded that we are citizens of another city, living now as pilgrims and exiles. For however long we reside in Babylon, we are to take every opportunity to work for the good of the city, as God directed the exiles of Judah to do (Jer. 29:7). Just as many of the societal blessings we currently experience are the fruit of Christian principles established by Christ-like citizens from centuries ago, so God has put his people in various levels of authority and influence in society today. We have an ongoing responsibility to seek the welfare of our neighbors—not only for today, but for the coming generations who will inherit the society we build.

Our boldness to stand on the truth and promises of God’s Word is not contingent upon the broader culture’s response to our faithful witness. We know not whether God will turn our nation away from the destructive lies it has embraced with unabashed pride. It is remarkable to see many European countries outlawing gender-transition surgery for minors, and God, in his common grace, can bring similar changes to our nation as well. But whatever the outcome for citizens of the United States or any country, the truth remains that the gates of hell will not prevail against Christ’s church. It is because of this promise that we continue to move forward with great expectation that strongholds will continue to be torn down as we cast “down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).



When LGBTQ+ Hits Home, *There's Help*

JOAN MCCONNELL

DIRECTOR OF PARENTS AND FAMILY MINISTRY

*O Lord, you are my God;
I will exalt you; I will praise your name,
for you have done wonderful things,
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.*

Isaiah 25:1

Watching my dear child embrace a gay life for nearly twenty years has forced me to do some serious thinking, the kind of thinking I never anticipated—thinking that grabs, dismantles, and rebuilds all areas of my life. Unexpected concepts and questions have pushed me beyond my easy assumptions and comfort zone. Walking this road reminds me of high school chemistry.

This Isn't Supposed to Happen, Is It?

My dad believed firmly in the liberal arts approach to education: exposure to various disciplines regardless of preferences or abilities, including math, languages,

piano—and high school chemistry. Suddenly I met theories, equations, elements, and properties, all a hopeless jumble in my unscientific mind. The further the classroom instruction progressed, the more lost I became. I wasn't used to complete bewilderment or failure, but both seemed unavoidable in chemistry.

Scripture says that my heavenly Father holds my times in his hand (Ps. 31:15), suggesting safety and comfort. What does it mean, however, when we are baffled by clear evidence of human fallenness? Does God recognize what he has allowed into my world through my child's LGBTQ+ identification and choices? Has the situation created by my child's conduct slipped past the Lord? Understanding why

I’m in this place can feel as hopeless as understanding high school chemistry.

Yet amid this bewildering situation, the Lord is still present and working. Am I ready to explore and learn how God can bring good out of fallenness—how he intends to teach me his grace as I struggle regarding my dear child?

You Expect Me to Know How to Handle This?

Today’s culture would say I was “traumatized” daily by chemistry class. That may have been accurate, but, in those days, it did not serve as an excuse or escape. Once or twice a week, we students went to the lab to demonstrate what we’d learned. This practice simply underscored my inability. Do you ever feel that way as you navigate life’s circumstances?

Though it may be next to impossible to comprehend, my heavenly Father planned my child’s journey to be part of my journey as well. I must trust that its baffling inclusion in my Father’s lesson plans for my life is not an “oops.” It’s not something he must scramble to accommodate. No, it is within his plan for me—a plan formed “of old, faithful and sure” (Isa. 25:1). Scripture and God’s sovereignty leave no room for any other explanation.

But how can the effects of something so opposite, so disappointing, so counter to God’s design be part of his “faithful plans”? The answer to that question is something I will observe in a lifelong lab class. My Father’s assignments may surprise, puzzle, and stretch me, but they will always be “faithful and sure,” just as he is.

Can Somebody Please Help Me?

My chemistry teacher was not compassionate toward untalented students like me. I needed serious, capable, outside help. As the Lord would have it, my lab station was across from two successful students who rescued my chemistry career (I still remember their names and faces!). These cheerful lab partners kept my head—and grade—above water. Their input was *dependable, accurate, available, and gladly given*. I was dependent on them; I had no other option. And yes, despite myself, I was slowly learning. I still remember what a precipitate is!

Similarly, when our Father sends us, daily, into the lab of loving and relating to our children identifying as LGBTQ+, he constantly offers the support and rescue we need for the realities of our dear child’s situation. Those supports are the same, whether we are new to a baffling journey or have spent decades, by his grace, being faithful examples and loving intercessors.

Our Father provides:

- His presence—attributes, blessings, power, faithfulness
- His Word—truth, authority, guidance
- Prayer—openness, urgency, humility, trust
- Fellowship within the body of Christ—support, comfort, instruction

These are heavy-duty, custom-made resources from our heavenly Father. *Use them!*

The Lord’s provision of these robust supports makes it clear that it is foolish to deny the reality of the journey or undertake it alone. While ongoing wisdom for our journey finds its source in God (James 1:5), life-level support and essential encouragement also come from our brothers and sisters. Be sure to seek and connect with them (Eccles. 4:9, 10).

How Do I Survive the Day-In, Day-Out Stuff?

At the end of our lab assignments, each student had to write conclusions regarding the experiments. Likewise, both now and in the future, we can *always* benefit from recalling these basics:

- Our Father’s lesson plans rarely match ours.
- Our dear child’s journey is a purposeful part of our Father’s growth-plan for us, too.
- Our ability is insufficient, and it is hard to trust God.
- Our Father sends all the help we need.

Our Lord’s instruction and his promise to accompany us on our personal journey, which parallels that of our dear child, will become two of the “wonderful things” he does (Isa. 25:1) and for which we will be able to praise him.



Shattered Dreams, New Hope

- Available as a free digital download or can be purchased in print format
- Designed to provide help and hope to Christian parents whose child identifies as LGBTQ+ and does not desire to live in accordance with God's Word
- Questions are included, suitable for both personal reflection and guiding group discussion

"If you are a parent of a child who identifies as LGBTQ+, this gospel-centric curriculum will encourage, equip, and empower you to be an ambassador for Christ as you point your prodigal to the only One who redeems and offers life in abundance!"



— CHRISTOPHER YUAN
International Speaker and Author
of *Out of a Far Country*

PARENTS AND FAMILY MINISTRY

Help for parents when a child embraces an LGBTQ+ identity.

We seek to serve you by providing:

SUPPORT

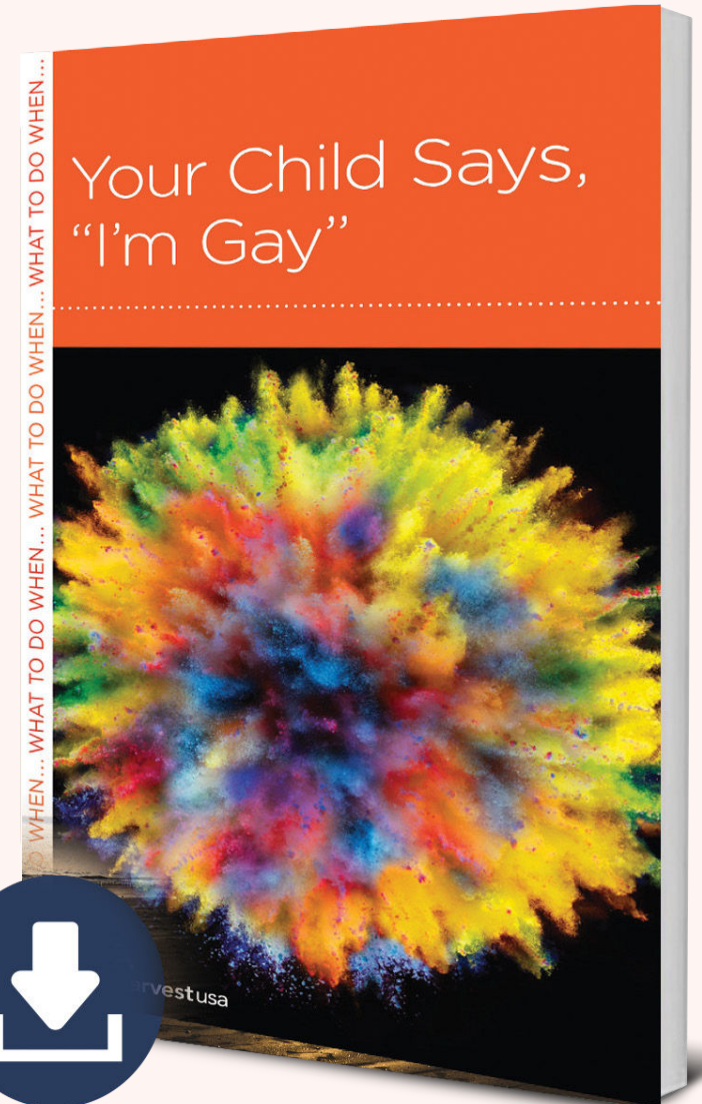
Our support groups for parents meet regularly (in-person and online) to offer encouragement and help in the context of a supportive community with other parents who understand this journey.

RESOURCES

Our biblical resources for parents encourage you to think biblically about sexual identity and gender struggles and help you move toward your child in love and compassion. You can also find blogs and other helpful articles on our webpage.

TRAINING

Shattered Dreams, New Hope seminars offer training for churches and parents who want to begin support groups for other parents.



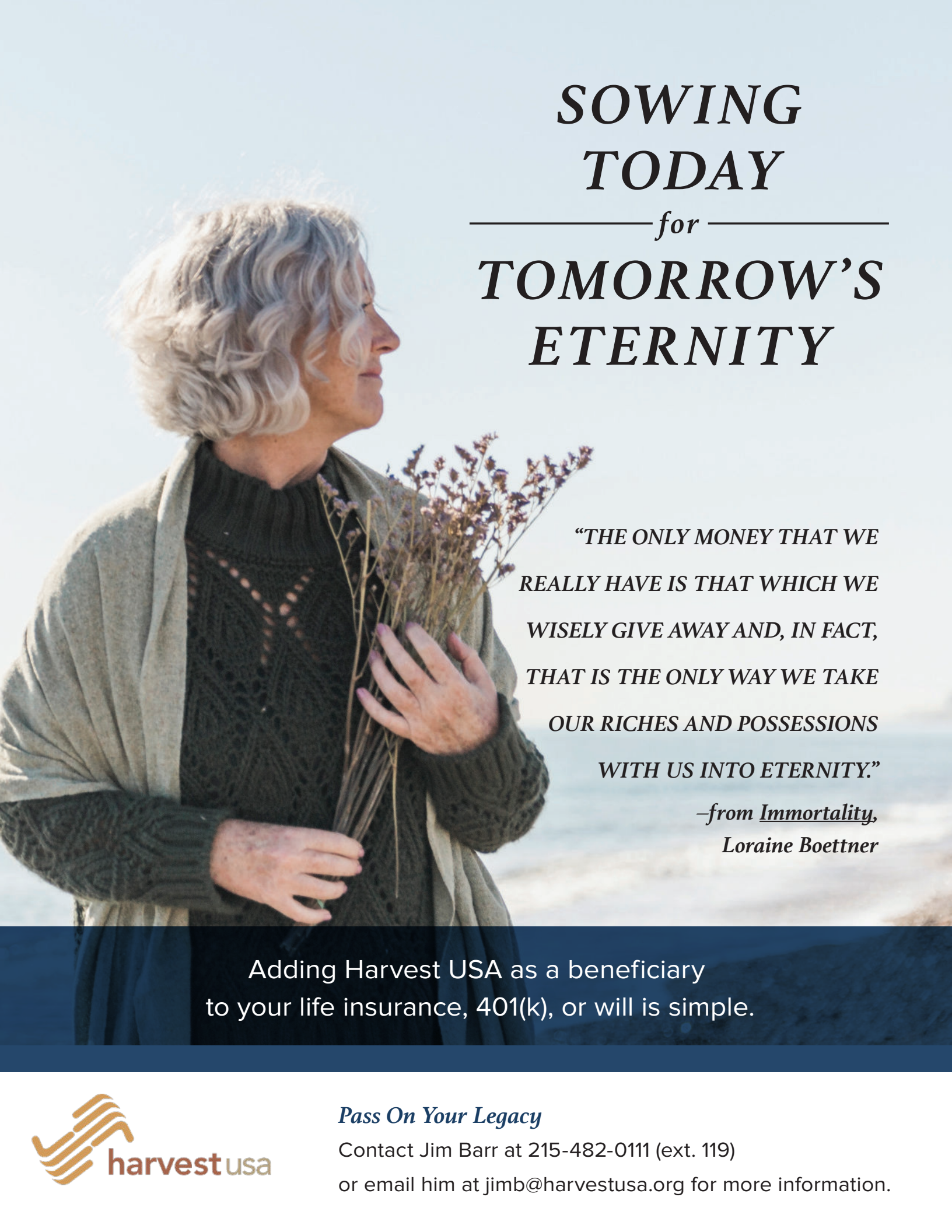
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Questions?

Contact Joan McConnell, Harvest USA's Director of Parents and Family Ministry, at joan@harvestusa.org



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for

TOMORROW'S ETERNITY

*"THE ONLY MONEY THAT WE
REALLY HAVE IS THAT WHICH WE
WISELY GIVE AWAY AND, IN FACT,
THAT IS THE ONLY WAY WE TAKE
OUR RICHES AND POSSESSIONS
WITH US INTO ETERNITY."*

*—from Immortality,
Loraine Boettner*

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Contact Jim Barr at 215-482-0111 (ext. 119)

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