

Praise For

## **If I Tell You I'm Gay, Will You Still Love Me?**

While the culture may celebrate the coming out of so many men and women, Christian parents are often devastated and confused when a son or daughter announces “I’m gay.” They need to hear from someone who’s been there, and Ann Mobley’s book provides them a comforting shoulder to weep on and some godly wisdom to rely on. I especially appreciate her tone, and her vulnerability, in putting this hugely needed work together. It couldn’t be timelier.

Joe Dallas, Author of  
*When Homosexuality Hits Home* and *The Game Plan*

I would strongly encourage every pastor—indeed every staff member, teacher, ministry leader, youth worker and certainly every parent—to keep this book on their desk. It is very readable, drawing you in from the first page. It maintains a level of interest throughout and contains a wealth of extremely valuable information and insight for dealing not only with this very complex subject, but with those who are impacted by it. Get this book. Get several copies of this book so you will have it available when someone you know needs it—and sooner or later that will happen.

Bob Stith, Former National Strategist for Gender Issues  
The Southern Baptist Convention

Ann Mobley is truly a woman of grace and knowledge. She embodies and conveys both the biblical wisdom and godly compassion needed to address this important topic. She combines her spiritual insight with a solid understanding of the psychological aspects of homosexuality to present an excellent resource for Christian families.

Julie Harren Hamilton, Ph.D.  
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

It was my great joy to read Ann's book. I think the Lord will use *If I Tell You I'm Gay, Will You Still Love Me?* to encourage loved ones and give a measure of hope. It is instructive, insightful, and practical. I must not leave out compassionate. It is that as well.

Dr. Monte Shinkle, Senior Pastor  
Concord Baptist Church, Jefferson City, MO

If I Tell You I'm  
**GAY,**  
Will You Still  
**Love Me?**

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One Mother's Journey to Truth and Grace

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Ann Mobley



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The four partners of author’s son are identified only by first names, and three of those names are pseudonyms. True first name is used of one partner by permission of his mother. Name of sexual abuser is also a pseudonym.

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To my son Dan

For his courage and willingness to allow me to share our journey so openly and his encouragement to write this book: “Because other parents need to know it’s okay to love their gay kid.”



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As a first-time author, one important piece of advice I received was to have competent people read my work and give me honest feedback. I was blessed to have two very capable people fill that important role for me, each contributing unique gifts and skills. Francis Allston gave liberally of his limited time to review each chapter as I completed it and offered keen insight and honest feedback. Carol Eighmey, in addition to reviewing each chapter, offered her experienced editing skills, scrutinizing each page of the manuscript not just once, but several times to assure it was worded well and was “clean” for the first submission to the publisher. She continued to give additional time to assist me through the important final editing phases. I am deeply grateful to both these good friends for their valuable contributions.

The apostle Paul in his letters to the early church often voiced his need for their prayers. I, too, felt my own deep need for prayer support on my book journey, and a number of faithful praying friends, scattered around the country, became my Book Prayer Support Group. They never abandoned me or grew weary over the long process, but continued to lift my specific needs to the throne room of our Father. Thank you, dear friends, not only for offering

up your prayers, but also for your ongoing encouragement to keep pressing forward to completion and publication of this book. You played an integral role in this book becoming a reality.

To all others who have blessed me with well-timed words or tangible support, I am deeply grateful.

In his well-known book *Experiencing God*, Dr. Henry Blackaby coined the phrase “a god-sized assignment” for a task given by God that could only be accomplished by his enabling and provision. That phrase aptly describes how I viewed writing this book.

Most importantly, my greatest acknowledgment must be to my gracious Father, who equipped me with everything good so I could do his will (Hebrews 13:21 ESV) and continued to manifest his faithfulness throughout this endeavor in so many ways. Ultimately, to him belongs all the glory and praise.

# Introduction

The moral landscape of America has changed dramatically since 1992 when my son informed me of his gay identity. Homosexual advocates have made great inroads into the culture of America, moving closer to their stated goal of same-sex behavior and relationships being viewed as natural and normal and therefore accepted on an equal status, legally and socially, with opposite-sex relationships.

The myth of the undocumented “gay gene” is now firmly entrenched in the minds of most of the general public as an established fact—that same-sex orientation is sealed in concrete by nature because of genetic or biological factors and cannot be changed. Therefore, to imply in any way that homosexual behavior is unnatural and immoral is seen as intolerant, cruel, and unchristian.

In addition, there is a growing and concerted effort to indoctrinate our children and youth in the public schools that same-sex practices and relationships are normal and acceptable sexual expressions, and any opposition or variance to that view is labeled bigoted and hateful.

The escalating visibility and acceptance of homosexuality in our culture underscores a growing need to address the homosexual issue from a biblical perspective. Increasing numbers of Christian parents are hearing the troubling words from their son or daughter, “There’s something I have to tell you. I’m gay,” and will face the dilemma of how they should respond to their gay child. It will become more difficult for Christian parents to stand against the cultural tide of tolerance and affirmation of homosexuality while at the same time it is increasingly crucial that they stay true to the biblical position of

loving the homosexual but calling homosexual behavior wrong and sinful before God.

The message of the sinfulness of homosexual conduct cannot be abandoned because, contrary to what is being preached by the homosexual community, it is actually a message of love, not hate, for the homosexual. It is good news for all sinners that God so loved the world that he gave his Son, Jesus Christ, to come to Earth to provide forgiveness and salvation from our sins. It is good news because Jesus Christ can bring change and hope to individuals trapped in sinful behaviors and enable them to be the persons God created them to be as they walk each day in a personal relationship with him.

Today and for the future, Christian parents must be informed and equipped to understand the homosexual condition while still upholding the biblical position on homosexual behavior and also demonstrating love to their gay-identified son or daughter. This same readiness is likewise needed by churches and individual Christians to enable them to respond in an informed and grace-filled way to those who struggle with same-sex attractions or are engaged in homosexual practices.

My prayer is that God will use this book to help others better understand gay people, display compassion without compromising the truth of Scripture, and love them with God's unconditional love.

# Chapter 1

## **A Shocking Disclosure**

“If we could begin to grasp, to truly understand, the depth and immeasurable magnitude of God’s great love for us, we would be able to face any situation that might come into our lives.” How confidently I spoke those words with deep passion and heartfelt conviction at the conclusion of the Bible study I taught at my church that Sunday morning. But I was totally unaware of how that statement would be tested in my own life that very afternoon. There was no warning—not even a whisper of apprehension—that the day would be anything but a regular Easter Sunday.

The day had begun with the eager anticipation of all that Easter Sundays typically hold: special church services filled with glorious, celebrative music and joyful greetings of “Christ is risen!” to fellow worshippers, followed by the happy response, “He is risen indeed!” I have always loved Easter Sundays, with their joyous commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and all the wonderful hope it holds for believers.

My young adult son Dan no longer attended church regularly, but on Easter he would faithfully join me for morning worship service and then come to my house for dinner afterward. Our family was now just the two of us since my husband and Dan’s father, Jerry, died unexpectedly on Easter several years earlier after a brief illness, when Dan was only twelve. That loss was compounded three and a half years later when my older son Nathan was killed in a motorcycle accident.

Dan had moved out of our home at twenty-three to share an apartment with a friend—or so I thought. Now twenty-five, Dan and I had a close, loving relationship and enjoyed spending time together. I was proud of the responsible young man he had become and thankful that, as he had grown into manhood, we had not drifted apart but instead maintained a strong, emotionally healthy mother/son relationship.

I wanted our Easter dinner to be special, so I prepared the traditional ham along with other foods I knew Dan enjoyed and made his favorite dessert. After dessert and coffee, we lingered at the dining room table. During the brief silence, I was praying about how to bring up a difficult subject I wanted to discuss with him, but before I could say anything, he began speaking in a halting, trembling voice.

“Mom, there’s something I have to tell you . . . I’m gay.”

At first, I couldn’t respond. I sat there in stunned disbelief, thinking surely Dan hadn’t said what I thought I had heard.

Tears streamed down Dan’s face as he continued. “I’m tired of lying to you and deceiving you. I’ve wanted to tell you for a long time, but I was so afraid you wouldn’t love me anymore, and Mom, I couldn’t handle that. You’re all I’ve got.”

I didn’t realize at that moment how important my initial response to my son’s confession would be. But when I saw the pain so evident on his face, I quickly moved to where he was sitting at the end of the table, put my arms around him, and drew him next to my heart. Struggling to keep my own emotions under control, I assured him, “Danny, you’re my son, and I love you. Nothing is ever going to change that.”

We moved to the living room where we could talk more comfortably. For Dan, a floodgate had been opened, and a torrent of words, emotions, unexpressed struggles, and confessions he had long kept stored up came pouring out. He began telling me things I wished I wasn’t hearing, but as hard as it was to hear, I was glad he felt he could now be honest with me.

He explained that when he moved out of our home two years earlier, he had told me he would be sharing an apartment and expenses

with a good friend, Matt. But Matt was more than a friend—he was Dan’s homosexual lover. I knew he and Matt had later upgraded from the apartment to a large house with a swimming pool and three more guys had moved in with them. I had naively assumed more roommates made it possible for Dan and Matt to afford the larger home and pool. But now Dan was telling me all five of the young men were gay, and two of them were couples.

The others in the house kept urging Dan, “You have to come out to your mother. You’re the only one whose parents don’t know.” But Dan’s response had been “You don’t understand the relationship I have with my mom. We’re close, and I couldn’t stand her turning away from me.” So he continued putting off telling me.

Dan confessed he always thought he was different from other boys, and that he felt isolated as a child and teenager. He reminded me that his close friends growing up were usually girls because he felt more comfortable with them.

He pointed out interests and activities he had engaged in when he was younger, interests he considered feminine in nature and explained how, in his mind, these were more evidence he was gay. He had enjoyed creating ceramics, making and selling candles, even learning how to crochet a small throw rug, and now he was discovering he liked to cook. At that point, I interrupted him.

“Wait a minute!” I exclaimed. “Just because you like to cook is no indication you’re gay. Most of the great chefs are male, not female, and what about our friend Frank? He likes to cook. In fact, he fixes dinner every night for his family. That doesn’t make him gay. He’s definitely a man’s man. There’s not a feminine bone in his body!”

“But, Mom, I’m physically attracted to guys, not girls. I have these strong, physical desires toward men.” Only by God’s grace was I able to respond in a calm manner to that statement.

“Son, just because you have those feelings and desires doesn’t make it right to act on them. God designed sex for the marriage union between a man and a woman, and any other sexual union is wrong. Your dad and I had a good marriage, and that included a good sexual

relationship. When he died, my sexual desires didn't die with him. I still had those desires, but that didn't mean I could go out and find someone to have sex with to satisfy those desires."

Dan didn't have an answer to that. I wondered later if his lack of response was because he was trying to assimilate this new thought or because he was not accustomed to thinking about his mother and father having a good sex life.

He confessed he had struggled with homosexual feelings and desires for a long time. He believed he was born gay and could not change. This was just who he was, and he had to accept it. Then Dan looked me straight in the face and exclaimed, "Mom, I love Matt! I'm happy now, and I know we're going to be together forever." I could tell he really believed that.

Dan also confirmed that afternoon what I had begun to suspect and had planned to talk to him about earlier at the dinner table. At the age of thirteen, he had been sexually molested and drawn into a sexual relationship by a trusted friend of our family. The molestation began just a few months after the death of Dan's father and had continued for most of his teenage years.

We continued to talk for several hours. Outwardly, I appeared calm and in control, but inwardly, throughout the whole conversation, I felt numb and detached. The situation seemed surreal, like I was floating somewhere up close to the ceiling, looking down on this mother and her son talking, but that mother wasn't me. It was some other mother and her son.

In contrast, Dan's whole demeanor had changed. He looked relieved, like a huge burden had been lifted off him. As he prepared to leave, we hugged and said "I love you" to each other. Then I watched him walk out the door.

Still feeling removed from the reality of what had just transpired, I proceeded to place a couple of phone calls as though this had been any other typical Sunday afternoon. I made a planned call to long-time friends in another city and carried on a normal conversation, never mentioning to them what I had just learned about my son.

Next I placed my customary Sunday afternoon call to my elderly mother in Missouri and, throughout our long conversation, never gave any indication of the devastating news I had received earlier about my son and her grandson. I could not yet wrap my mind around this unexpected development. I was still in a state of shock, disbelief, and denial.

Glancing at the clock, I suddenly realized what time it was and that I was going to be late for the Easter Cantata the choir was presenting that night at church. I quickly drove to the church, and since the program had already begun, I slipped into a back row and sat by myself. Strangely, up to this point, I had not shed any tears over the events of the day, but the first strains of familiar Easter anthems triggered the well of emotions I had so painstakingly capped that afternoon, and I could sense them persistently pushing their way up inside of me. I knew I had to get out of there before I totally lost it.

Quickly, I slipped out of the pew and into the foyer of the church, but as I pushed open the doors to the street, I discovered rain was pouring down like solid sheets of water. *How appropriate*, I thought.

The downpour matched the torrential flood of emotions threatening to engulf me. Instead of going outside, I went to the area of the building where the church offices were located so I could use the phone in my office. (I was the business administrator at the church, and thankfully, my office was not far from the sanctuary.)

I called my best friend Jan, and as soon as I heard her voice, the tears began to flow. I struggled to get words out so she could understand, and I finally managed to say, "I need to come to your house."

I went back to the exterior doors of the church and stepped out into the pouring rain. Water was rushing down the street, cresting at the top of the curb. I took off my shoes and waded across the street to the parking lot and my car. By the time I climbed into the car, I was drenched, but it didn't matter.

The sheets of rain slamming against the windshield and the unrelenting tears streaming down my cheeks conspired to blind me, but I managed to arrive at Jan's house safely. When she answered the

door, I fell sobbing into her arms. Without a word of explanation from me, she knew what had happened.

About five years earlier, a mutual friend of ours had arrived at my door emotionally devastated because she had just learned her son was gay and that, as a young boy, he had been sexually molested by a trusted friend of the family and then drawn into homosexual activity with him. We had cried together, and then I just listened as she poured out her heartache over this revelation from her son. He was adamant that he would not testify against his abuser if the family tried to press charges, so legal action was not an option. At that time, I felt poorly equipped to give advice because I was so uninformed about the whole subject of “being gay.” All I could do was empathize with her and promise to pray.

At the time my friend learned her son was gay, Dan was one of his friends. As the two grew into young adults, they stayed in contact and occasionally attended the same event. However, unbeknownst to me, my friend’s son had said something to her in a recent conversation that led her to believe Dan was also gay. Uncertain as to whether she should tell me this troubling information, she decided as an alternative to share it with Jan. Not wanting to pass along what might only be secondhand speculation, Jan had instead prayed that if it were true, Dan himself would be the one to tell me.

Meanwhile, I had been troubled by a growing suspicion and concern that a close friend of our family had sexually molested Dan when he was a teenager. Wanting Jan’s prayer support, I told her that I planned to question Dan that Easter Sunday about my concerns and asked her to be praying. What I didn’t know was that she was already praying that if Dan was gay, he would tell me that afternoon. So when I appeared at Jan’s door that Sunday night, she instinctively knew that God, in his sovereignty, had answered both of her prayers.

Between sobs, I haltingly shared with Jan my conversation with Dan from earlier that day. As I poured out my heart to her, I truly wanted to die. I could not see any hope in the future—only pain, loss, and unbearable loneliness. What I did not know and could not have

even contemplated at that moment was that God did have a future for me, a future filled with his love and faithfulness. He was already working behind the scenes to provide encouragement and hope. This was especially evident that Sunday night when I arrived home.

On the previous Thursday, I discovered on the bookshelves in my guest room a book written by Elizabeth Elliott that I had not yet read. For years, I had regarded Mrs. Elliott as a spiritual mentor. God had used her books and other writings to minister to and encourage me at several crucial points in my life. I was surprised to find I had a book of hers I had not yet read since I usually read them as soon as I bought them. I placed the book on the nightstand by my bed, thinking, *I want to start reading this book.*

Returning home from Jan's that Sunday night, my mind was a jumble of thoughts and fears, and I doubted I would be able to go to sleep. As I prepared for bed, I saw the book by Mrs. Elliott on my nightstand, *A Path Through Suffering: Discovering the Relationship between God's Mercy and Our Pain*. I picked it up, and as I thumbed through it, glancing at the chapter titles, I knew God had saved that book for me to read at that particular time.

The theme of the book was how God allows dark, death-like situations into our lives so we can know through experience the life of Christ within us—the scriptural principle of life out of death. As I flipped through the book, a page where Mrs. Elliott emphasized the importance of learning to relinquish things to God caught my attention. The chapter was appropriately titled “Open Hands.” I began reading:

It is not the external circumstances themselves that enable us to reproduce the pattern of His death, but our willingness to accept the circumstances for His sake.

Relinquishment is always a part of the process of maturing. When Christian parents have done all that can be done to shape their children for God, the time comes when the hands must let go.

The child, now a responsible adult, must be released. For any parent this is painful, even when the child is moving in the direction the parents prayed for.

When on the other hand, the child has obviously rejected what the parents have taught, the severing is painful in the extreme. All has been done that could be done and all has been done in vain. Nevertheless the time comes to let go, as it came for the father of the prodigal when he turned his wayward son over to God. He must have foreseen the direction he would take, but he prayed for him and waited every day for his return. God cared for that young man as the father could never have done, brought him to bankruptcy (another severe mercy), and returned him to his father, repentant and willing even to be a mere servant . . . <sup>1</sup>

I felt Elizabeth Elliott was personally sitting there talking to me, and through her, God was gently saying, “You’ve got to turn loose of Dan and trust me to work in his life.”

The fear of losing him and of what lay ahead was overwhelming. The future looked dark, empty, and fearful—and I felt so alone. But God had already foreseen my fears, and at the top of the next page in the book, I read, “Do not fear what you are about to suffer . . .” (Revelation 2:10 NASB). Those words were so appropriate and so personal.

By my bedside that night, my heavenly Father assured me that I was not alone; he had promised he would never leave me or forsake me (Hebrews 13:5b NIV). Just as he had done in past painful situations, he would use this to draw me closer to himself and teach me to know him in a deeper way. The Lord reminded me of how he, in a redemptive way, had used my other times of painful loss to equip me to minister to others who were hurting. In that same way, he would use this difficult time to prepare me to help others who would walk down this same dark road.

But that night, being able to help others felt very remote and even impossible. I had to get myself together first; I had to find emotional healing, and I knew I had to learn everything I could about homosexuality. Until that day, homosexuality had been just a word, something I knew very little about—only that the Bible condemned it and it was something for which I felt a personal disgust. But now, homosexuality had a face—the face of my son.