

“An Interview with Yvette”

7/26-27/08

6 pm; 9 & 10:45 am

Introduce Yvette Schneider

Last week we wrapped up our series, “**What Would Jesus Say to ...?**” by looking at Ellen DeGeneres. She was preceded by Oprah, Bono, Carrie Underwood and Rush Limbaugh ... each one has put their mark on our culture.

Since there is so much going on in our society at large, and our state with the issue of homosexuality, we thought it would be helpful to take a week following “What Would Jesus Say to Ellen DeGeneres?” and actually hear from someone who used to live a homosexual lifestyle.

So, Yvette Schneider is with us today. Yvette’s life was radically transformed in 1992 as a result of meeting Jesus Christ, Who delivered her from lesbianism and occult involvement.

After her conversion, Yvette was involved in college campus ministry for three years, and became a policy analyst with Family Research Council.

She married Paul Schneider in December 1999. They have two daughters, Jessica, who is almost 6, and Erica, who is 4.

Yvette has spoken in many different venues, including Focus on the Family’s “Love Won Out” conferences, Fellowship of Christian Athletes’ leadership camps, D. James Kennedy’s “Reclaiming America for Christ” conference, and many others.

Paul and Yvette have been involved in helping people who desire to overcome homosexuality.

Will you please welcome Yvette as she comes to share with us?

Question: For the person who is not homosexual, even talking about this topic can be uncomfortable and disorienting. It can be difficult to understanding how anyone, especially someone they know and love, can end up in the homosexual lifestyle.

I’m sure each person’s story is a little different, but could you share with us, briefly, how this can happen, and share your journey into this lifestyle?

“I’ll be getting into this in some depth this afternoon, but, one of the roots is a lack of bonding in the home, or with friends, and the deep longing that is created for same-sex affection... the appropriate kind that is supposed to come from parents, siblings, friends.

I was very distant from my parents when I was growing up. My dad spent all of his time sitting in a chair reading the newspaper and doing crossword puzzles. My mom was a rage-aholic. She screamed and yelled constantly about anything and everything. I was terrified of my mother, but at the same time I really wanted love and affirmation from her. I did great in school. I was a great athlete. But nothing I did seemed to make my mom like me.

My younger sister was the extroverted, cute daughter. It seemed like it was easier for my parents to love her and give her attention than it was for them to love and give attention to me. I grew up feeling unlovable. When I was at home, I spent most of my time alone in my room. I thought, surely there has to be more to life than this.

But when I was in high school, I had a best friend. We were together all the time. For the first time in my life I felt loved and appreciated for who I was. It was great. Suddenly my life was completely transformed. It was vibrant and exciting, like in the Wizard of Oz when everything goes from black and white to Technicolor. My life finally had meaning.

So I didn't care when my mom sat me down and told me that she and my dad were getting a divorce. What did I care? They had been fighting for as long as I could remember.

But I did care when my mom sat me down and asked me if my friend and I were having a homosexual relationship. I was devastated. How could my mom think that of me? I ran out of the room and locked myself in the bathroom. But later that night when I was crying in my room, I had to admit to myself that deep down inside I wished we were having a homosexual relationship - because then she would never leave me, and I would always feel the way I did then.

Question: So this was the first time you had thought of homosexuality in relation to yourself?

Yes, and to have someone as significant as my mom, who is supposed to know me better than anyone, ask if I was a lesbian, that had an effect on me.

What happened from here?

After high school, I went to college at the University of California at Irvine. I majored in English. I wanted to be a writer. I got good grades; I was president of the pledge class of my sorority; I was editor-in-chief of the yearbook my freshman year, yet I still felt empty and unfulfilled.

I thought, there's got to be more to life than this. So I went to a therapist to find out what was wrong with me. After a few appointments, the therapist said, "Yvette, there's nothing wrong with you. You just expect too much from life. You have to learn to lower your expectations." I thought, how on earth am I supposed to do that?

But my expectations were lowered for me when my mom told me that she wasn't going to pay for my college education.

Now I had to find a job so I could pay my way through college. I went to the job board at UCI and found a job working at a hotel in Laguna Beach. What I didn't know was that Laguna Beach had a large gay and lesbian population. About 70% of the clientele of the hotel I was working at was gay. This was my first contact with the gay community.

I became good friends with one of my co-workers who was a gay man named Ed. By this time I had a new best friend that I was spending all of my time with. Ed said about my new best-friend and me, "You have an implicit homosexual relationship." I said, "Give me a break, Ed. Just because you're gay doesn't mean that everyone is gay." Still, I didn't have the same intense connection with the guys I had dated that I had with my best-friend. I didn't care if a guy called me again or not.

Question: So this was your first key exposure to someone who was gay?

Yes.

And you felt comfortable with Ed, or at least not threatened by him?

Yes.

And then...

My dissatisfaction with life was starting to get to me. I needed a change, so I applied for the University of California's Education Abroad Program at the University of Delhi in India so I could study Hinduism and Buddhism for a year. I thought that maybe I could find some meaning to life.

When we got to India, we went up to the Himalayas to learn Hindi. While I was there, I became good friends with my Hindi teacher. After several months, at her initiation, the relationship became physical. The next day I was horrified by what I had done. This couldn't be who I was. I spent the day walking through the foothills of the Himalayas, and I was consumed with inner turmoil. I didn't want to identify myself as a lesbian. But I was feeling loved and appreciated by this woman and I couldn't walk away from that. Somehow I had to reconcile the fact that I thought homosexuality was wrong with the fact that I was getting my emotional needs met through a homosexual relationship.

I finally decided that the only reason I thought homosexuality was wrong was because that was what my oppressive, controlling Judeo-Christian culture had taught me. So I determined that once I got back to California, I would fight the oppressor. And in my mind, the oppressor was society.

When I got back to California, the first person I got in touch with was my old friend Ed. I said, "Guess what I learned about myself while I was in India? I'm lesbian." Ed said,

“No, you’re not. Whatever you do, don’t go down that road. You’ll regret it. And you’ll go to Hell.”

Question: Wow! And he hadn’t become a Christian? Was this an expression of his not finding fulfillment in this lifestyle... his misery?

Yes. Ed was using recreational drugs and alcohol more and more to try to deal with what was missing in his life.

In your experience, is this common in the homosexual community... a deep lack of personal fulfillment?

It really depends. Some are frustrated by the relationship they are in and some do well. But, there’s always that lack of contentment until someone comes to Jesus Christ.

But you didn’t listen to Ed?

I said, “First of all, I don’t believe in Hell. And second of all, you’re gay! How can you tell me not to be? If you were really my friend, you would tell me where I can go to start meeting people.”

And that’s what I did. I started meeting people. I went to a lesbian bar in Long Beach, and met someone right away. We started spending all of our time together - as was my pattern. After awhile, my mom started getting suspicious. She said, “Are you having a lesbian relationship?” I told her I was. She said, “You need extensive psychological help.” I said, “Oh really? That’s not what the American Psychiatric Association says. They removed homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual back in 1973.” My mom said, “Do what you want, but not in this house.”

So I moved in with this woman. Everything was great for awhile. But it wasn’t long before we became jealous, obsessive and possessive. She knew exactly how far it was for me to go from our house to work and back, so she would check the odometer on my car to make sure I had come directly home. One day our relationship had become so dysfunctional because we expected each other to meet our every emotional need that she became violent with me. She ended up ripping the phone out of the wall and throwing it at me, barely missing my head. I thought, “What have I gotten myself into?” But I couldn’t leave. She was beautiful and popular, and I wasn’t. I needed to be around someone like that.

As my relationship got worse, I became more militant in my gay activism. I was working for a law firm in downtown L.A. I wore a pink triangle to work every day so everyone would know I was gay. I was out and I was proud. Closeted homosexuals would confess their fears to me, and I would say, “Every time you don’t stand up for who you are, you oppress not only yourself but every other person involved in homosexuality.”

I joined GLAAD, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. I went to every Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade in southern California, and I fought with the Christians who would carry their 1 Corinthians 6:9 signs saying how homosexuals would not inherit the kingdom of God. And every year, I would try to pick a fight with them. I would go up to them and say, "If you don't like it, leave. No one invited you. And guess what? If you're going to be in heaven, then I have no desire to go there." Every time I argued with those Christians, I could get at least one of them to yell at me; and when I did, I knew that I had won.

But one Saturday, some friends and I were going out to a lesbian bar in Long Beach. From a distance, I could see a man and a woman handing out fliers. I thought maybe there was a new restaurant or shop opening. As I got closer, I could hear them talking and I knew that they were Christians. I was instantly irritated and started walking straight toward them. My friends said, "Just ignore them. Who cares what they have to say?" But I went up to them and said, "Don't you have anything better to do on a Saturday night than to stand here and harass us?" The man said, "I am so sorry. I don't mean to offend you. You can take this tract and read it, or you can throw it away. It's up to you. But I just came here to tell you how much Jesus loves you." When he said that, I felt about two inches tall. I thought, what's wrong with me? This guy isn't the mean one, I am. It didn't stop me from going into the bar that night. But it did begin to challenge my beliefs about Christians.

Question: So, this man's gentle, humble response really, sort of, put the first crack in your shell.

So, God is at work. And then...

Around that time, I ended a three-year relationship and moved in with Ed and another gay man named Mike. Doors were opening for me in the publishing world, and I thought my ship had finally come in - I was going to be a writer. But even as things were looping up in terms of my career, many of my friends were sick and dying of AIDS. Ed and Mike both had full-blown AIDS. They were in and out of the hospital with things like cryptosporidium, Kaposi's Sarcoma and pneumocystic pneumonia. There were times when I was functioning as their nurse maid. I would help them change their IV bags. I would cook for them. Then eventually they would bounce back and we would be back in the bars and partying again. I couldn't help but think, is this what life is all about? There's got to be more to life than this.

I decided to go to another therapist to find out why I was so unfulfilled. This time I went to a gay therapist. He said the same thing as the first therapist, "You just expect too much from life." I was frustrated and disappointed that no one could help me. No one had any answers for me. Life was hopeless.

That very same week, my boss at the law firm promoted me to a new position. It sounded great, until I learned that I would be leading a new department with a young man named Jeff who was a notorious Christian.

My friend Frank had worked with Jeff in a different department, and told me that Jeff was always giving him Bible tracts to read, and inviting him to lunch to talk about God. Frank said, "All I want to do in the morning is to come in and read the sports page. I'm sitting there reading, and Jeff comes in and says, 'Hey Frank, did you read that tract I gave you?'" I laughed and said, "Better you than me." Never say that! Now I was going to be working with Jeff, and I knew I didn't want to hear about Jesus.

On the first day we worked together, I walked in and Jeff had 3x5 index cards with Scriptures written on them posted all over his office space. I thought, this can't be happening to me. This is a nightmare. Jeff said, "Hi Yvette, what did you do this weekend?" I knew he was just trying to be friendly and strike up a conversation. But I wanted him to know that I didn't want to be his friend, so I said, "I'm not telling you what I did this weekend. It's none of your business." I thought for sure that would shut him up. I was wrong. He said, "Well, a group of us went to the beach this weekend and invited people to our church." I said, "Really? You'll have to tell me what beach you went to, so I know never to go there."

I thought my responses to Jeff made it perfectly clear that I was not interested in hearing about Jesus. But Jeff talked about God constantly. He was always saying God this and God that, the Bible says this and the Bible says that. Jeff would even go so far as to tell me what God was doing in his life. Sometimes I found it interesting, and sometimes I would think - I didn't know the Bible said practical things about how to live life. But I never expressed any of those thoughts to Jeff.

Jeff and I would get into debates on things like premarital sex and abortion - never homosexuality - and Jeff would always use the Bible to support his points. I said, "I don't believe the Bible, and I don't care what it says." Jeff said, "It doesn't matter if you believe the Bible or not, it's true." This exasperated me. Whatever Jeff believed he could back up by quoting the Bible. Whatever I believed, I couldn't back up at all. I would go home at night and look over my books on eastern mysticism. But I couldn't give one practical answer for daily living, and Jeff could.

What's more, even though I was always mean to Jeff, every time he thought he had offended me, he would apologize. I never apologized to him, and I offended him all the time. I couldn't understand why he was nice to me and exhibited so much humility toward me. I hated it. It made me feel mean and nasty.

I thought, I don't know how much more of this I can take. I tried to find another job so I could get away from Jeff, but nothing worked out.

So one day, while Jeff was in Colorado for his father's funeral, I reported him to our boss for proselytizing at work. I was trying to get him fired. She said, "You need to tell Jeff

that you appreciate his zeal, but that you don't share his beliefs and that you would appreciate it if he didn't talk to you about God anymore."

I intended to confront Jeff. I wanted to confront Jeff. But for some reason, I couldn't bring myself to do it. Instead, I just tried to ignore him. I wouldn't even talk to him about work-related issues. So, one morning Jeff came to work, put a cup down on my desk and said, "Hey Yvette, I stopped on my way to work and bought you a cappuccino." I couldn't believe it. Most people wouldn't get off the freeway in L.A. in the middle of rush hour traffic for a friend, let alone an enemy. I almost started crying out of frustration. I thought, how can this guy continue to be nice to me when I am so mean to him? Romans 2:4 says that the kindness of the Lord leads to repentance. There is no defense for genuine love and kindness with no strings attached.

And I could see that love and kindness in Jeff's relationships with his friends. One day when his truck broke down, he called someone from the music group at church to pick him up. With no hesitation, his friend got in her car and drove into downtown L.A. to pick him up. If I asked one of my friends to do that, they would gripe and complain, then make me feel like I owed them something after that. I knew Jeff's friends were different than my friends.

Question: So now things are coming to a head. How long had Jeff been sharing Christ's love with you at this point?

Almost two years.

And it is the love and kindness of Jesus through Jeff that is having this profound impact?

Yes, and so one day I asked him a question. This was the first question I had asked Jeff about God. I said, "What's the deal with the 10 commandments?" Jeff knew that I knew about sin, so he said, "God loves us so much that He has given us the guidelines that will lead us to life."

I thought God was mean and oppressive, and that He commanded us to do things because He could. But that God loved me and wanted what was best for me was a huge revelation.

I was starting to believe that Jesus may be the hope I was looking for, but I didn't want to go to church. I thought the people there would reject me. I didn't want to put myself in that situation. Jeff said, "You can't be a Christian on your own. The enemy will easily pick you off if you're separated from the flock."

So after working with Jeff eight hours a day, five days a week for two years, and hearing him talk about God every day, I finally went to church. When I stepped inside I could feel the presence of God so strongly that I couldn't even stand up during worship. I just sat there with my head in my hands.

After church, the girl sitting next to me asked me what I was going to do about Jesus. I said, "What am I supposed to do?" She said, "Jesus took all of our sins upon Himself and paid the price of death so we can have everlasting life. You need to repent of your sins and accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior." I said, "Okay." And that's what I did. It was like a huge weight was lifted off my shoulders. I experienced joy and peace for the first time in my life. But most of all I experienced the thrill of hope - the assurance that life did have meaning, that there was a purpose for my life.

Question: And how did you tell Jeff? How did he respond?

Later Jeff told me that there were many times when he wanted to ignore me or to make a rude comment back to me, and he would sense the Holy Spirit saying to him, "Is that the way I treated you when you were lost?"

Once I became a Christian, none of my friends wanted to have anything to do with me anymore. One of my friends said, "I knew you were malleable, but I didn't know you were that malleable."

My friend Lis had been one of my best friends for 5 years. She said, "As a Jew, you offend my spirit. There is no reason for us to ever get together again, or even to talk over the phone." Some of my lesbian friends wouldn't even let me in their house once they heard I had become a Christian.

Now that I was a new Christian, I found myself in the same position I had been in a few years before when I had nothing to say to my friend Jerry who was dying of AIDS.

Now my friend Ed was very sick with AIDS and had about a year to live. But this time, instead of having nothing to say, I could offer Ed hope - the hope of everlasting life - that the end of his life could be the beginning of something great. I couldn't wait to see him.

Ed and I were going to meet for dinner in the gay part of town in West Hollywood. I prayed for several days before we got together that Ed and everyone in West Hollywood would be able to see Jesus in me.

We ate dinner then went to a coffee house where we could talk. We went into a back room and I started telling Ed all the details about what had happened to me, and how I came to know that Jesus was God. As I was talking, a homeless woman, who looked like she had been living on the streets for several years, made her way to the back room of the coffee house where Ed and I were sitting. She walked up to us, pointed at me and screamed, "I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!" for probably a full minute. Finally, the manager came and made her leave. Everyone was staring at us. Ed said, "What was that all about?" I said, "She probably saw Jesus in me." And I told him how I had been praying all week that Jesus would be visible in my life. That opened up a very deep and very fruitful conversation.

We talked about God a few more times after that, then Ed gave His life to Jesus. A year later, he died. But a few months before he died, he said, “I appreciate God’s love and mercy so much. And soon I’ll get to see Jesus face-to-face. There’s nothing greater than that. But you get to stay here and see what it means to overcome, and learn how to walk by faith, and I’ll never get to experience that.”

Ed was right. I overcame lesbianism, and now I have a great husband and two wonderful daughters. I know what it means to walk by faith and trust the Lord with my life. But by far the greatest thing of all is to see people come to know the Lord and knowing that one day we will all be in heaven together. Because when all is said and done, the only thing we can take with us is other people.

So as someone who was difficult to reach out to and difficult to share the gospel with, I beg you not to grow weary in doing good and reaching out to the people around you. Because in due time you will reap, and the people you reach will be eternally grateful.

Question: Changing such an ingrained lifestyle isn’t usually easy, and often takes a while to become completely free. What was your experience?

I started reading my Bible all the time. Within my first week as a Christian, I read Romans 1. It was clear to me that I couldn’t continue living as a lesbian. I thought “Okay, then, I won’t. Jesus is Lord, His Word is truth, and I am going to follow His Word.” It didn’t take me weeks to decide, and I didn’t need to do deep studies. It was obvious. You can’t be a Christian and live as a homosexual. So I thought, “Okay, I’m not going to live that way anymore.”

I was naïve enough to think it would be easy. Fortunately, God brought key people into my life to help me along my journey. I had a mentor who would say, “Look, I know it is hard for you to come out of all of these things, but you swam all the way out there and you have to swim all the way back. Jesus is on the shore and He is cheering you on. Just remember that Hebrews 12:11 says that ‘all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful, but to those who have been trained by it, afterwards, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.’” I am so thankful that someone had the courage to challenge me and say, “Look, you can overcome anything. This is not something that you need to fall prey to at all.” She was God’s instrument to tear up the fallow ground and find the treasure that God had buried in me long before I even thought there was a treasure.

Because I didn’t know how to have healthy relationships, one of my friendships within the church was too attached and I started realizing there was something wrong. The Bible says that the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword and it can reveal the thoughts and intentions of your heart. I knew the thoughts and intentions of my heart were wrong but I didn’t know what to do about it – and I didn’t want to do anything about it. I was addicted. I can’t think of any better word.

One day I read Isaiah 55 and knew that God was talking to me. The passage says, “Why are you spending your wages on what is not bread and your money on what will not satisfy? Come to me and eat what is good and eat it in abundance.”

Right then, I saw myself on my hands and knees, eating stale crumbs off a dirty floor when God had a huge feast available to me, if only I would get off the floor and see it. It was three years before I noticed any true change in the healthiness of my relationships and a diminishment in same-sex attractions. Oftentimes I felt that I was going two steps forward one step back.

Question: How long were out of the lesbian lifestyle before you had the desire to date men?

It was about five years, and then I was just like any other Christian woman of 27 years who wanted to get married, asking God, “Will it ever happen?” “Where is the man I’m supposed to marry?”

There so much more that Yvette could share with us, but we’re out of time. So, we’ll pick up this afternoon at

4:00 in the Chapel. Yvette is going to talk to us about “**How Christians Can Talk to Homosexuals.**” She’ll get into greater depth on some of the reasons people go into homosexuality and take time for any questions you may have about the broader topic of homosexuality.

READ Ephesians 2:12-13 “In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from God’s people, Israel, and you did not know the promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. 13 But now you belong to Christ Jesus. Though you once were far away from God, now you have been brought near to Him because of the blood of Christ.” (NLT)

God sent Jesus so that we could cold have genuine hope. In the Bible “hope” means confidence.

He’s reminding the people here that before Christ, they were without God and without any solid confidence in their lives.

But, once they put their lives in the hands of Jesus, that act of faith brought them into a relationship with God... a relationship full of confidence for now and eternity because of God’s commitment to His children.

... to forgive our sins,

... to transform our lives,

... to give us a life of complete acceptance by God, security in God, and significance in life... a real purpose for living.

No matter who you are or what you've done, God loves you,
and He always will!

“Father in Heaven, thank You for Your loving grace and kindness! Thank You for Your willingness to forgive any sin and transform any life! I give myself to You for Your purposes. In Jesus' name, Amen.”