

## GOSPEL

### ***How to Disciple a Transsexual***

My friend Ryan is a transsexual. He used to hate God, but now he's at least lukewarm toward the idea of trusting Jesus. In this chapter, I want to share a few insights into how I've discipled Ryan. That way, if you ever disciple a transsexual, you'll have some idea of where to begin.

The obvious problem you're probably noticing is that Ryan is not a Christian. At first it was a challenge to disciple someone who hadn't even trusted in Jesus yet! But the more I did it, the easier it became. You see, evangelism and discipleship are fundamentally the same thing: pointing people toward Jesus as their all-satisfying treasure. So don't get all worried thinking that this chapter doesn't apply to you. It does. Even if you're discipling Christians instead of unbelieving transsexuals.

The reason I met Ryan was because I didn't ask enough questions. Had I been more careful on the front end, I could have avoided the whole situation and stayed inside my conservative evangelical Christian bubble. We have this student in our college community named Amy. She is the most Jesus-loving, extraverted, bubbly person I've ever met. And she's extremely hard to say no to, because she says things like, "Jesus told me to talk to this person!" Or, "The Lord is totally working in your life!" Things that make you think Jesus must have ridden in the car with her on the way over. Amy grabbed me one week before our Wednesday night prayer meeting to ask if I'd meet with a friend of hers from school – a homosexual who was not yet a believer in Christ, but had been asking lots of questions about faith. I didn't really *want* to. But she was so enthusiastic, so happy in Jesus, so convicting with her "you're a pastor and this is your job" tone of voice. So I agreed.

Then, *after* I'd said yes, she proceeded to tell me the rest of the story: Ryan was an outcast at school because he dresses up as a woman once a week. He'd scheduled a sex-change operation for next spring. He was "married" to a lesbian woman as a mere formality, to allow them to pursue their homosexual lifestyles discreetly. His parents had disowned him and he hadn't set foot in a church since childhood. Oh, and he wanted to meet as soon as possible. I feigned utter confidence in Amy's presence and assured her I'd love to meet with Ryan. Then I went home and peed my pants.

The next morning, I hit my knees and began to pray out of my own dire inadequacy. I have never had much success in reaching out to homosexuals. I mean, I come across as harsh and judgmental and arrogant and selfish – to Christians! So to those who have been wounded by the church, I must be Genghis Khan. My prayers that morning were brutally honest and not very creative to boot. They were something like “Oh, Jesus” followed by some expletives and mumbling. You might think that’s irreverent, but I think it’s just real.

That night I met Amy and Ryan at a coffee shop. And in those first few minutes, God did a profound work in my life. I guess I was expecting Dennis Rodman in a wedding dress or something. What I found was a human being named Ryan, created in the image of God, with the same wounds and soul-scars and questions as you and me and everyone else. Don’t get me wrong: there was great discomfort on both sides of the table. It was worse than a first date. Ryan was shifty and uneasy. I could tell he was testing me out to see if he could trust me. And I felt awkward as well, afraid that at any moment he would discover that I was Genghis Khan and would stand up and yell obscenities at me and make a big scene. Part of my fear was self-interest, but part of it was an honest concern for the kingdom of God. I was sitting across from a guy who had been deeply wounded by Christians. He had finally found one bubbly Jesus-girl whom he could trust. Now he was risking interaction with a real, live minister one more time. I felt that if I didn’t win his trust, this might be the last time he thought about Jesus. But if I could just show in some way how much God cared about him, maybe he’d hate God a little less. And that would be big.

My goal as I tell Ryan’s story is to convince you that discipleship must be centered on the gospel. In order to see true heart-transformation in a disciple’s life, you have to get him to delight in Jesus more than money or love or ambition or control or self-interest. The only way to do that is to constantly remind him of his deep brokenness and sinfulness – the “bad news” of the gospel – so that he despairs of his own efforts, and then to constantly rejoice in the powerful grace of God through the cross – the “good news” of the gospel – so that he deeply feels and believes God’s radical love for him. Jack Miller, a now-deceased missionary and seminary professor, used to summarize the gospel with these two phrases: “Cheer up: you’re worse than you think. But cheer up: God’s grace is greater than you ever dreamed.” The same

gospel that saves sinners also sanctifies the saints. The gospel doesn't just make you *right* with God; it frees you to *delight* in God.

### ***You're a Sinner, and Jesus is Your Only Hope***

The trouble is that we don't really believe that the gospel matters for Christians. Most of us only think of the gospel in the context of evangelism. We view the gospel as the ABC's of Christianity, the starting point, the thing nonbelievers need to hear, the door you walk through to get "in." Once you're in, of course, then you move beyond the gospel to biblical principles and quiet times and religious books and worship CD's.

Ryan was pretty sure that we were "in" and he was "out." He knew that in the eyes of the average Christian, he was a really bad guy – a transsexual, for God's sake! A pastor had told him once that he was on an express train to hell because of his lifestyle. (I wondered if that pastor would say the same thing to a perpetual gossip or a legalist or someone who eats too much.) So Ryan consistently steered the conversation toward his lifestyle – the thing that seemed to keep him "out" in the eyes of most Christians. He had been to the gay church in town, and they told him that his lifestyle didn't matter. On the surface, he was fishing for me to say something similar: "It's okay to be transsexual – you can still follow Jesus." But underneath, I sensed a much more powerful question in play: "Am I more broken, more sinful, more hopeless than you?"

So I moved the conversation away from Ryan's lifestyle and toward the common brokenness and rebellion of all of humanity. I told him the real issue wasn't his gender confusion. It was his sin. He wanted to hear that he was worse than the guy next door. I told him that he wasn't. I took out my Bible and made him read out loud some of the famous verses about sin. I focused on the fact that *all* have sinned, that *all* have turned away from God, that *everyone* needs to be reconciled to their Creator. Our external sins may be different, but our hearts are all the same. Then I took it a step further: I told him about my own sin.

"Ryan, do you want to know about me? I am a control freak. I like to have everything under my power. I like to put myself in the place of God and manage the outcomes. I am rude and harsh toward my wife and kids. I am judgmental when people don't live up to my standards. I fail to love people the way Jesus does. I love people on my terms, the way I think they deserve to be loved, based on my criteria. I

am uncaring and critical and resentful toward those who don't see things my way. I bow down and sell my soul every day to the idol of Control. Ryan, I am a sinner, and Jesus is my only hope."

Suddenly, Ryan began to soften. The conversation turned a corner. He fell to his knees and, through his tears, trusted in Jesus right there in the middle of the coffee shop. (Actually, he didn't. But that's the ending you were hoping for, isn't it? Because you still think this is about evangelism! Stop it already!) The conversation *did* turn a corner, because Ryan finally began to realize that his lifestyle was a secondary issue. Here I was, a happily married minister, telling him that my heart was as dirty and sinful and broken as his. The only difference was that I was trusting in Jesus to make me right with God and transform my heart, and he wasn't.

We are good at telling non-Christians they need Jesus. No thinking follower of Christ would look at Ryan and say, "Change your lifestyle first, and then we can work on your heart." We know that deep inner change must come first; "make the tree good, and its fruit [will be] good" (Matthew 12:33). So ask yourself: why don't you apply the same truth when it comes to discipleship?

The gospel is not the ABC's of Christianity; it is the A to Z of Christianity. When we forget the gospel, we cheat our disciples. We give the impression that being a follower of Jesus means becoming less broken, less sinful, less hopeless. So we create a caste-system-Christianity: there are the really broken people (unbelievers), the pretty broken people (young believers), and the people who have learned to pretend they're not broken (mature believers).

Not only is this blatantly unbiblical, it is contrary to common sense. Jesus said that those who are forgiven much will love much (Luke 7:47). The mature Christians are not those who are less broken, but those who realize the depth of their brokenness and are clinging all the more tightly to Jesus.

To test this truth, just ask yourself how my conversation with Ryan would have differed if I had said, "Yeah, you're really messed up. But the good news is, if you trust in Jesus, you can be as good as me." You might be smart enough (or politically correct enough) not to say this to a transsexual. But unless your discipleship efforts are rooted in the gospel, it's exactly what you're saying to your disciples.

***The Gospel Works from the Inside Out***

Gospel-centered discipleship focuses on internal change – which is why you’ll probably hesitate to use it. We naturally default to an outside-in view of spiritual growth. I think we do this because external things are easier to measure and quantify and track. So we suggest that our disciples DO more. They need to be sharing the gospel, or leading a small group, or serving in ministry, or praying for the nations, or making better use of their time, or whatever. These things are all good – assuming they’re driven from the right heart. But very often they’re not. The problem isn’t that your disciples are not doing these things. The problem is that they don’t really *want* to. You can tweak external behavior all day, but to change heart-level desires, you need the gospel! The gospel fuels change from the inside out. It addresses beliefs and desires, not just actions. A truly deep and biblical belief in the gospel will always result in character change. If change isn’t happening, you can be sure that there’s a heart problem.

This isn’t biblical rocket science; it’s simply the principle Jesus himself used. Good trees bear good fruit. When the people asked him how they could do the works of God, he answered, “This is the work of God, that you *believe* in him whom he has sent” (John 6:29).

But your disciples are good at faking it, so they are convinced that the external solutions are what they need. They *think* they believe the gospel. In fact, they’ll probably argue with you if you tell them they really don’t. But just disciple a transsexual or two, and you’ll understand that it always comes back to belief.

See, I know that Ryan needs to change his lifestyle. It’s not glorifying to God. And every Christian he’s ever met has taken the lifestyle-change approach to discipleship. They’ve pushed him to repent and change his external behavior. But why should he? He doesn’t *want* to. He wants to be a transsexual. Until he wants *not* to be a transsexual, nothing else matters! In the same way, until your disciples *want* to obey Jesus or pray or reach out to others, nothing else matters.

How do you make someone want to change at this deep level? I don’t really know, but I’m good at trying lots of stuff. So that’s what I did with Ryan. That first meeting had built some trust between us. He trusted that I wasn’t going to hate him or judge him, and I trusted that he wasn’t going to hit on me or tell me I was sexy or something. I began to think and pray about what to do next.

The following week, another student handed me a CD of a lecture she'd heard on homosexuality. It was given by a former homosexual activist who had been radically transformed by Christ. I listened to it, and I thought: maybe this is it! Mike, the guy on the CD, was so refreshingly real. He talked about how much he hated Christians during his gay-activist days, and how it took a strong community of loyal friends to really draw him to Jesus. I knew Ryan hated Christians, so I thought he might relate well to what Mike said. I gave the CD to Amy the Bubbly Jesus-girl and asked her to pass it along to him – not to try and change his behavior, but to see if it might surface some deeper desires in his soul.

A few days later, Amy called. "Ryan wants to meet with you as soon as possible. He's listened to the CD three times and he has all sorts of questions." I knew that could mean two things: either Ryan was convicted by some of the stuff on the CD, or I was Genghis Khan again. Maybe both.

So, after putting my kids to bed that night, I rolled over to Starbucks. The three of us sat down at one of the incredibly small and useless tables – the one right in the middle of everything. I was extremely self-conscious. We were going to be using the words "Jesus" and "transsexuality" a lot, and that meant every other customer would be trying to eavesdrop on our conversation.

### ***Every Sin is Idolatry***

Ryan started the dialogue by making it clear that he utterly disagreed with everything on the CD. Mike's statistics were wrong, he hadn't done enough research on gay issues, maybe he was never truly gay anyway, and so on. Had I been trying to change Ryan's behavior, I might have been more apt to defend Mike or to enter into a gay-apologetic debate. But none of those things mattered. At this point, I wasn't trying to convince Ryan that his lifestyle was wrong. I was trying to surface some deeper issues in his heart.

"Okay, so there was lots of stuff that you disagreed with. Did you invite me here to argue about that stuff? Or did you invite me here to talk about some things that you're really thinking about?" With those few questions, I changed the focus of the conversation.

In discipleship, we usually talk about the wrong things. We spend all sorts of time talking about petty sins and surface issues, when the real battle is going on in

the heart. You can talk about behavior and external circumstances all day, but unless you drag some heart-idols out on the table, you're just putting a Band-Aid on the problem. You can say it the way Jesus did: "Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks." Or you can say it the way Tim Keller does: "The root of every sin is a breaking of the first commandment." The real question is not what we're doing, but what god we're worshipping. That's why what your disciples *want* is much more important than what they *know*.

As we talked, I discerned that Ryan's dominant heart-idol was Pride. He wanted power, acceptance, love, control. He found these in his sexual identity. Before he accepted his transsexuality, he said he felt weak, unimportant, secretive. Now, he had an identity. He was socially powerful. When he dressed as a woman, he put others on the defensive. He could judge those who disagreed with his lifestyle as being bigoted, unloving, or intolerant. He was in control.

Our heart-idols set the trajectory for everything else. I could have spent countless hours talking about Ryan's external behaviors. But now that I was beginning to see what he loved and worshipped, I could move the conversation in a direction that would address the disease and not the symptoms.

So how do you solve the problem of idolatry? Well, the gold-star Sunday School answer, of course, is to turn away from idols and turn to Christ. That is the ultimate goal: repentance and faith. But here's the problem: we don't worship idols because we're ignorant or uninformed or bored. We worship idols because we LOVE them. We crave them. They are more important to us than life itself. I worship the idol of Control because I believe it will give me more than Jesus will. Ryan worships the idol of Pride – manifested in transsexual behavior – because it promises to provide what he needs and wants and craves. So sometimes dealing with our idols is not as easy as "repent and believe." Sometimes it requires surfacing the deeper wants in our soul that will pull us toward God, if we will only let them.

Ryan began to talk with Amy the Bubbly Jesus-girl and me about some things that he *did* agree with. Mike had said that even during his gay years, he always wanted to be "normal" – to have a wife and kids and a house in the suburbs. Ryan desperately identified with that desire. He felt it would never be possible, because he was gay and transsexual. But deep down, the desire – the want – was there.

"Where do you think that desire comes from?" I asked.

“I don’t know.”

“Can I offer a possible answer?”

“Sure.”

“Understand that I’m going to talk about this from a biblical point of view, because that’s my world view.”

“Yeah, I know. Go on,” he invited.

“I think the fact that you desire to be married and have kids proves that God has implanted certain instincts deeply within your soul. If you were born gay, and if there was no God, it would make no sense for you to desire a wife and kids. The existence of that desire testifies to the fact that you are made in the image of God, like the Bible says, and that sexuality is a deeply wired, God-given part of your identity as a human being. That means that it’s possible for you to change.”

“No it’s not. I don’t want to change. I’m transsexual. I have been ever since I can remember.”

“Then why do you want a wife and kids and a house in the suburbs?” I queried.

“I honestly don’t know.”

“I think there’s more going on there than you’re willing to think about.”

Ryan sat in contemplation for a few moments. “What do *you* think it would take for me to change?” he questioned.

“I think you have a heart-idol called Pride that you are worshipping right now. You are your own God. It will take a work of God’s grace to change you. You’ll have to come to the point where you decide that Jesus is trustworthy, and you allow Him to reign in your heart instead of yourself. I realize that’s going to take some time.”

“Bob, let me tell you why I don’t trust Jesus...”

### ***The Gospel Changes Everything***

By this point you may be thinking that all this gospel stuff is pretty abstract. It’s not about doing, but believing; it’s not about surface sins, but heart idols; when do we get to the real tangible, practical, applicable stuff? If you are thinking that, your assignment is to start over at the beginning of the chapter. Because I’m trying to convince you that heart idols and belief *are* the practical things. They may not lead to easy assignments like, “Read your Bible more” or “Get into community.” But when you

start allowing your discipleship efforts to revolve around the gospel, you will see profound change, because the gospel changes everything.

Ryan began to tell me all the reasons he didn't trust Jesus. And they all came back to one common denominator: he didn't trust Christians. He told me how he had been rejected by the students – and even the youth pastor – in a large evangelical youth group because he was small and frail and not “manly” enough. He told me about the pastor who told him matter-of-factly that all transsexuals would go to hell, and the other minister who insisted that his transsexuality was demonic and required an exorcism.

But these painful memories paled in comparison to the rejection he felt from his family. His mother and stepfather were both professing Christians. When Ryan had “come out” and began to live an active transsexual lifestyle, they had cut off their support and affirmation. From their point of view, it was a tough-love measure, a “love the sinner, hate the sin” sort of approach. But to a sexually broken young man who had been rebuffed by Christians his whole life, it was yet another evidence of Christian hypocrisy. As Ryan spoke about his parents, his whole body seethed with visible rage.

So we talked for a long time about the pervasiveness of sin, and how Christians often fail to live by their own moral standards. And I talked about Jesus a lot, and how Jesus loved to hang out with whores and cheaters and social outcasts. I was trying to get Ryan to see that he could trust Jesus even though he had a hard time trusting Christians. I reminded him that he trusted Amy and me. And I talked about how he needed to forgive his parents, because otherwise he was only rejecting them the same way they had rejected him.

I was utterly unprepared for what came next. “If I asked you to do something for me, would you do it?” Ryan asked.

Now, when you're talking to a transsexual, you naturally get a little uncomfortable with that sort of question. But since I had just been preaching to him about trust, I had to give him the benefit of the doubt. So I said, “Sure... anything.”

“Would you call my mom and ask her to come here?”

“Here? You mean Starbucks?”

“No, I mean Omaha. She's never been here. I've asked her to come here again and again, but she won't. She thinks it would be ‘validating my lifestyle’ for her to come here. But I just want to see her. I want to talk to her. She doesn't have to stay

with me or anything. I just want her to come visit. I think we have a lot to talk about... a lot of anger and pain to sort out. I wish she'd come here."

"So let me get this straight," I asked. "You want me to call your mom, who I've never met, and ask her to fly to Omaha to see you?"

"Yes! Bob, listen... you're a minister. She'll trust you. You can speak her language. She thinks I'm a depraved sex addict. But she'll listen to you. Bob... I can't make any progress with God until I work through things with my mom. You're my friend. Get her to come here."

I felt time slow down, like a movie scene where the outside action is a blur and all you hear are the thoughts in the main character's head. "You're my friend." I couldn't escape the magnitude of that statement. There was not a Christian in the world that Ryan trusted except for me and Amy the Bubbly Jesus-girl. And now he was asking for my help in overcoming the one issue that clouded the gospel more than anything else in his life: his broken relationship with his family. This wasn't just a step toward the gospel; it *was* the gospel. Remember: the gospel is not praying the sinner's prayer. The gospel is trusting in Jesus. Ryan was beginning to *want* to trust in Jesus. But he would never trust Jesus if he couldn't forgive his mom. And he would never trust Jesus if he couldn't trust me.

So I grabbed a napkin and a pen and wrote down his mom's phone number.

Somewhere along the line, we individualized the gospel. We said it was just about "you and Jesus." We forgot that the gospel doesn't just change eternal destinies; it changes everything. The gospel transforms societies, renews families, and heals relationships. That's why Jesus called it "the gospel of the kingdom" (Luke 16:16). The gospel is all about the rule and reign of Jesus. And where Jesus is rightly honored as Lord, there is more than just personal salvation; there is redemptive action! The gospel is holistic. For me to say that I cared about Ryan's soul without caring about his relationship with his family would be the pinnacle of hypocrisy. The answer wasn't, "Get saved and then we'll deal with your family relationships;" the answer was, "God wants to heal the wounds in your family. He is a redemptive God."

Now ask yourself: how often do you connect your disciples' life-struggles to the gospel? Probably the last time you helped someone through a family conflict, you dished out some biblical principles or told them to suck it up and do the right thing. If Ryan were a Christian, we'd probably say: "Read this book on how to honor your

father and mother,” or, “Do this Bible study on forgiveness,” or, “Just keep walking with Jesus and things will work out.” But gospel-centered discipleship asks these questions: How does the gospel need to be expressed in this situation? Or: What heart-sin is at the root of the problem? Or: What gospel truth is not being believed or lived out?

This is what distinguishes biblical Christianity from pop psychology. Any pagan psychologist can say, “Control your anger; forgive each other; treat others with respect.” But what is it that gives the *power* to love or to forgive or to respect others? It’s the gospel! And what is it that keeps us from doing these things? It’s our unbelief, our lack of trust in God, our heart-idols. In Ryan’s case, I knew two things: his own idols of control and selfishness were preventing him from loving his parents, and his parents had some heart-idols of their own that kept them from really loving Ryan like Jesus would. So getting Ryan’s mom to fly to Omaha was more than a friendly favor; it was gospel-centered redemptive action. It was incarnating the gospel in a real, tangible way. It was what Jesus would do.

So I found myself engaged in the most awkward phone conversation I’ve ever had in my life. “Hi, my name is Bob, and I’m calling from Omaha. I’m a friend of Ryan’s. Well, not *that* kind of friend. Actually, I’m his pastor. Well, technically he’s never been to our church. But he’s a friend of a friend, and now he’s my friend. Is any of this making sense?”

“Is everything okay with Ryan?”

“Yes, why?”

“Because the only reason I can think of for a pastor to call me from Omaha is that something bad has happened.”

“No, no... actually something very good is happening.”

### ***The Gospel Frees You to Risk***

What is it that keeps our disciples from this sort of gospel-centered redemptive action? It’s a lack of belief in the gospel. Brennan Manning speaks of having “the courage to accept your acceptance.” When we really believe that God is *for* us, we don’t fear rejection by friends, family, and peers. We’re no longer living for their approval; we already have God’s approval. It’s what Paul was talking about when he said, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” The gospel is what enables us to love dangerously, the

way Jesus did. And dangerous love is what spurs effective evangelism and social justice and community and mission and reconciliation.

Ryan's parents did come to town a couple weeks later, and it was a great visit. They took the risk of acknowledging their sin and asking Ryan's forgiveness – regardless of his lifestyle. And Ryan took the risk of beginning to forgive them. Their visit didn't solve all the problems or erase all the hurt. But it was a starting point. And Ryan was right: working through things with his parents helped to remove some of his tension toward God.

Up until this point, Ryan had only set foot in our church one time. It happened to be the night we were discussing biblical manhood and womanhood, which was either a really bad coincidence or a divine comedy. Could there be any topic more awkward for a man who thinks he's really a woman? What's worse, we had actually split up into two groups that night – men and women. Ryan had come up to me, grinning, and asked which group I wanted him to go to. I told him he should go to the men's group, but he only lasted a couple of minutes. He ended up sitting in the back of the women's group while all the girls glanced uncomfortably at him. I was pretty sure he'd never be back. But on the weekend of his parents' visit, they all showed up to our worship service together.

A few weeks later, Ryan and I went out for a steak dinner at one of the finest restaurants in town. It was his way of thanking me for setting up his parents' visit. If I thought about it too much, it was slightly awkward: I, a married minister, was basically on a date with a cross-dressing transsexual. But my wife was okay with it, and after all, the Bible talks about being "all things to all people." Besides, it was fun to watch our waiter try to figure out what was going on.

As I enjoyed my prime rib, Ryan got intensely serious. "Bob, I've got some deep secrets that I've never told anyone, and I think it's time I get them out. You're the only person I trust with stuff like this. If I tell you about them, will you promise to keep them confidential?"

I could tell from Ryan's face that this was no joke. He was deadly pale. So I tried to lighten the moment. "Ryan, sure, man. You know I'll always honor your trust. But if you have dead bodies buried in your backyard or something, I'll have to call the police." He didn't laugh. I choked on my steak a little bit and tried to pretend it was no big deal.

“I’m not going to talk about it here. I’ll come in to your office tomorrow.”

The following day, Ryan opened a window into his past that had not been opened before. Thankfully, it didn’t involve dead bodies, and I didn’t have to call the police. But it was deeply serious to him, and getting it out in the open lifted a crushing weight from his soul. As I sat in my office after his departure, I wondered: what made him feel willing to talk about painful secrets from his past? The answer, of course, is that the gospel had freed him to risk. I had spent months and months saturating every conversation with Ryan in the truth of the gospel. And he was beginning to actually believe the depth of his own brokenness and the power of God’s grace. He didn’t have to hide anymore.

Ryan hasn’t trusted in Jesus yet. But I dare say he knows the gospel better than many Christians. He knows that he’s a broken person – but not any more broken than the guy next door. He knows that the idols of Selfishness and Control dominate the landscape of his heart. He knows that Jesus can change everything – including his own desires – if he’ll humble himself and surrender. And he knows that being a disciple of Jesus isn’t about just getting out of hell or being sexually healthy. It’s about the pursuit of a redemptive God who offers a whole new kind of life.

The gospel doesn’t just make you *right* with God; it frees you to *delight* in God. So saturate your discipleship in the gospel. Because you’re a sinner (and so are your disciples). And Jesus is your only hope.

*About the Author:*

*Robert H. Thune is currently the leader of the Coram Deo Church Community in Omaha, Nebraska. He is a sinner, and Jesus is his only hope – just ask his wife and kids. He has formerly served as a teaching pastor at a large church in Omaha and as a campus minister in Austin, Texas. He loves reading, writing, playing with his kids, and a good game of basketball.*