

Sept. 30, 2016

My Father's Uncle came out as gay a few years before I was born. He was my dad's only relative that stayed in the Michigan area so they saw him quite often. There was a lot of bad blood at the start because my parents refused to congratulate him and accept that he being gay was a good thing. By the time I was born things had calmed down and they would start to see each other again at family events.

I don't remember at what age I was told about him being gay but I have known it most of my life. My parents didn't try to hide it from me. I have also known and agreed with my family's stance that it is a sinful way to live as long as I remember. My family took a lot of precautions with me and my brother. We saw them at family functions and such but we didn't make special trips to go see them outside of that. There was always some distance between our family and his.

Whenever we did see him my brother and I were not left alone with him until we were much older. My parents made sure that one of them was in the room with us at all times. Also if we ever showed up to his house and any of his gay friends who did not have my parents' trust were there my family made a quick exit. My brother and I were taught that if anything was off or inappropriate, which my parents had conversations with us about what was inappropriate, we were to find one of my parents immediately and tell them. Whenever we went to go see him my parents would talk to my brother and I in the car ride over talking to us about my uncle and what we believed as Christians. We also would talk every time about what to do to protect ourselves.

Overall I grew up with love and respect for my Uncle as a person and I still have love and respect for him. He is a very nice caring person and I enjoy when I get to see him. With that though there will always be a distance and a separation that is in our relationship because I fully believe that his lifestyle is sinful. I feel like my parents did a good job of teaching us how to love and respect my uncle while also being safe and keeping a distance that would allow us to stay safe physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

A few months ago I was talking with my mother about this situation and how they made the decisions that they did. She said one big deciding factor in keeping our relationship with my uncle at more of a distance had to do with the fact that there was a friend of the family who had a son that was a few years older than me. My uncle became a sort of mentor to their son and by the time he was a teenager he came out as gay as well. My mom said because of this and the fact that especially I shared a lot of similarities with my uncle they were cautious to make sure he wasn't able to have any influence over me in that way.

I am not sure if this will help with anything but I figured I would pass it along. I would have no problem sharing or with this being shared with anyone and hope that it can go to good work helping another family that may run into this situation.

Kevin Kotewa