

A Mother's Choice

Ann Houston-Sago

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Ann Houston-Sago's timely and moving Christian memoir *A Mother's Choice* is about making a painful decision that put her relationship with her daughter at risk.

This short, heartfelt book concerns Houston-Sago's conflicted emotions as she was caught between the teachings of her conservative religious faith and her equally strong belief that she should be encouraging and supportive to her children. Having raised her two daughters to be open, with the assurance that they would be loved and accepted whether or not she agreed with their decisions, she faced a major challenge: her "perfect," super smart, beautiful older daughter revealed that she was in love with a woman.

Emotional turmoil comes to the fore as Houston-Sago confronts the conflict between her desire to be a part of her daughter's life and support her through her coming difficulties, and her church's condemnation of LGBTQ+ relationships. Recalling her own past struggles with such attraction, she worried that her child-rearing practices and support for her daughter's choice to serve in the military had contributed to the situation.

The narrative expresses common concerns among conservative, religious parents whose children are LGBTQ+. Houston-Sago grapples with church teachings that evoke fear for LGBTQ+ souls; grief that she would not have the opportunity to be a grandparent; fear that her child would be wounded by society's attitudes, and be in danger of physical assault; and concern that discrimination might limit her daughter's career possibilities and position in society. She also expresses worry about what her friends, family, and church might think.

The book's tension comes to a head when a wedding invitation arrives, and a deadline for taking a stance, one way or the other, is placed in view. "I was torn between exercising my faith and losing my daughter," Houston-Sago writes. "The prospect of displeasing God by attending the ceremony was something so distasteful that I cringed at the thought. But my instinct as a mother was to support my daughter."

Houston-Sago's raw, conversational narrative reveals her inner turmoil and vulnerability as it delivers insights into the stresses she and her daughter faced as they explored questions of identity. Its surprising resolution raises questions about the effects that unresolved guilt and hurt might continue to have on Houston-Sago's faith, and on her daughter's ability to feel confident of her mother's support. There are, however, consistency issues in the text, including that Houston-Sago's daughter is first called bisexual, but is later referred to as gay, without the discrepancy being addressed.

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KRISTINE MORRIS (January 6, 2021)

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