

Wellspring

August – September 2007 Isaiah 58.6

All things are possible with God

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Am I Really Changed, Lord?

By Bob Van Domelen

June 1994

[Continuing to celebrate our 20th Anniversary as a ministry, I am reprinting this 2004 lead article. I hope that you will be blessed by it.]

The other day, as I stood in front of a large mirror, it was painfully obvious that I was not looking at the same physique so proudly carried in my youth. Not that my body was particularly well-defined, mind you, but I was satisfied.

These days, I lean forward a little to check my shoelaces or read the bathroom scale. I also play the game called “Hiking up one’s pants” after getting up from a chair because my belt slides south at such moments. And friends who have not seen me in a number of years greet me with the words, “Boy, have you changed!”

I confess that some days I reminisce about wearing a pair of size 32 pants, or a shirt that doesn’t look like a ski slope on me. The reality of my self-image, however, is focused more on the inside of me than on my outside.

If tomorrow my body were returned to its earlier state, others would have no difficulty in recognizing the change. They might even ask, “What sort of diet were you on?” or “What kind of exercises did you do?”

Change. That’s what seems to be at the core of my struggle with negative behaviors. Change. How do I find it? How do I recognize it if and when it occurs?

Not all my behaviors are obvious to others or even to myself, although a cause and effect relationship can be found in most situations if I probe deep enough. Being overweight, for example, is recognized externally, but the reasons I am overweight might not be so easily detected.

The verse in Scripture that says, “I thank you, Lord, that I am fearfully, wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14) flies in the face of my struggles, because from where I stand, my failings and weaknesses seem such a contradiction to that verse. The first step in change must, therefore, be to allow God the freedom to work on me in the areas of my life GOD chooses and in GOD’s timing. Wow! That means I have to be flexible—not one of my stronger points.

I remember back in 1983 being forced to seek therapy because parts of my life were running amok. In the beginning, my days were filled with prayers that God would change me, but not much happened—at least as far as I

could see. I had asked God for help but refused to give over my desire to be the one in charge. Sound familiar?

Being in charge, I brought intensity and focus to the sessions that might have impressed the therapist, but that did little to promote change. I simply became better at hiding my behaviors from the world and myself, while convincing myself that progress was being made. Two years later, I surrendered for real and let God take charge. Life hasn’t been the same since.

Someone once told me that true surrender is not unlike a person hanging on to the controls of a boat out of control in turbulent waters. The most difficult thing is to let go of the wheel and to trust.

Believing that God knows my needs better than I, the process of change will not be the straight line I would choose left to my own devices. Some of the issues I face daily appear to be unrelated to what I *think* my main issues to be. But God knows that one of those “unrelated” issues might be a major obstacle in the path of my healing.

I try to apply the phrase “Stop and smell the flowers” almost daily in my healing journey. In the morning, I thank the Lord for the gifts of life yet to be experienced. During the day, the Lord encourages me to see evidence of His presence that previously might have been ignored. And in the evening, recalling the events of the day, I thank God for the healing events I did not see, asking for more awareness in the coming day.

Over a period of time, I have come to see that negative behaviors once dominating my life have diminished or even disappeared completely. “Wait a minute!” my mind shouts. “We didn’t cover that in therapy yet!” “Not fair!” another part of me hints. “I was going to concentrate on *that* issue at next week’s meeting.”

Some changes sneak up on me without asking my permission and only become obvious in retrospect or in another’s observations of my behavior. Some changes ARE obvious AND planned (to stop smoking, for example), but most are part of a broader picture. The biggest change, of course, will be when I enter paradise to spend eternity praising God.

The kind of commitment required is one which seeks God in all things *and* practices the Presence. “And Jesus



said, 'What do you want me to do for you?' 'Lord,' they told him, 'Open our eyes.'" And Jesus did. □

Just a thought or two more. . .

1994 sounds like a long time ago and then again it seems like just yesterday, so have I changed? Yes, but I wanted to share a little of what that has come to mean for me.

When I surrendered my life to God in 1985, I did so because my way of handling my issues had proved so disastrous that not even my inflated ego could continue to pretend otherwise.

The main article (Am I Really Changed, Lord?) is still true and I want to emphasize that to you. The changes are on the inside, deep in my heart, overflowing at times into my actions with the kind of results that I only once dreamed about.

I am confident in my knowledge that God loves me, forgives me, and continues to call me. I think I believed this in 1994 but the passing years have matured my knowledge into the stuff of which conviction is given birth, the kind of conviction that confidently whispers these truths or emphatically voices them from the stage of some convention.

I would add, however, that anyone seeking change should trust God to give evidence of that change because it is common today for others to believe that they should be able to define it for you. Still others will deny you because given what they know of homosexuality, there is nothing you should have to change. Celebrate, they say. I say, "Better things are coming for those who put their faith and trust in the Lord." Change *is* possible! [Bob]

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Send your donations to:

Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc

PO Box 361

Waukesha, WI 53187-0361



And What a Celebration!

It was a barbeque, a potluck barbeque to be more specific, and it was a wonderful time of celebrating where Broken Yoke Ministries has been and dreams of where it will be in years to come. Testimonies, always a witness of God's presence, spoke of the truth behind what Broken Yoke is called to do—not to change people but to encourage them, support them, and remind them of the love God has for them. Twenty years more? God willing.

Wisconsin Ministry Locations

Broken Yoke

P.O. Box 361

Waukesha, WI 53187-0361

262-896-0841 (answering machine)

Bob@brokenyoke.org

Meetings:

Support Group (weekly)

Tuesday, 7:00PM

Website:

<http://www.brokenyoke.org>

Newsletter:

Wellspring (published bimonthly)

Note: This newsletter and some back issues are available in pdf format on our website. If you don't have Adobe Acrobat Reader, there are links that allow you to download that program free.



Redeemed Ministries

A support system for women

Support Group (bi-weekly)

Call 414-607-1935 for info

Reclamation Resources

P.O. Box 1062

Oshkosh, WI 54902

920-303-1041

<http://www.reclamationrc.org>



Our Prayer Corner

Because we care about one another, we pray . . .

- For all those who struggle with same-gender attractions, that they accept the identity God had in mind for them from the beginning.
- For professional therapists, that they remain willing to address same-gender attractions/behavior in a manner consistent with those who seek freedom from those attractions and behaviors.
- For those who attended the Exodus Freedom conference, that the blessings received continue to sustain and encourage them.
- For the church, that those who come searching for help will find the encouragement they seek, not spiritual dead ends.
- For those suffering with HIV or AIDS, that they see God's loving and healing presence in their daily lives, especially evidenced in the hearts of those here on earth who serve them.
- For our teens, that they not be overwhelmed by the "born that way" message and instead actively question those who preach such a message.
- For families, that love is seen as strong in character yet compassionate in presence.
- For Bob, that his daily walk reflects God's loving and healing strength in his ministry and in his personal life.
- For Broken Yoke Ministries, that its ongoing financial needs will be met through the generosity and prayer support of the readers of this newsletter.

Even More Reflections

From Bob

I have been reflecting on the changes or lack of change I have seen in the past twenty years related to homosexuality and lesbianism. Here are just a few more thoughts on the subject.

- *There are theories about the possible cause and effect behind homosexuality yet nothing conclusive.*

Years ago, the source of same-gender attractions was deemed to be the product of a dominant mother and/or a weak, absent father. I can't really recall much discussion at all, however, about women and their same-gender attractions while growing up.

Some people argued that all that was needed to "cure" an effeminate man was for him to meet some nice girl, get married, and then everything would be fine. What they really meant to say was "Hey, dude, have sex with a woman and you'll be fine." Even today mothers tell me that their sons dated in high school yet have come home from college announcing they are gay. Because of those high school dating experiences, these mothers ask how this change could have happened to their sons (or daughters).

Men who attend our support group agree that the opposite of homosexuality is not heterosexuality. It is holiness and a healthy understanding of and approach to their masculinity.

In the 1990s, a number of studies surfaced as attempts to prove a genetic link to homosexuality. The hypothalamus study, the twins theory, and the X-chromosome theory were among the more notable. These studies fell short in a number of ways.

First, efforts to replicate the results originally announced fell short or failed. Second, approaching a set of experiments hoping the results validate a desired outcome is simply not good science. And third, the issue of environmental conditions and influences could be shown in each study. The researchers themselves acknowledged this factor.

- *Because of the often shared but unproven assumption that homosexuality was/is a genetic condition, minority status became an achieved goal.*

As a boy, I once heard a teacher say, "If you hear the same thing often enough, then most people think it is probably true. And if enough people *think* something is true, then it is likely to be considered a *fact* whether or not it is."

I suppose someone could argue that because I have been saying the same things in this newsletter for almost 20 years, I might be trying to get people to believe something just because I say it over and over.

I plead guilty to the charge because if I and others like me stop sharing, the only voices on the subject will be those who have been using the argument of minority status to quiet ours.

My opinions are sometimes called homophobic, hate-filled, and contrary to God, yet I do not have nor did I ever have a strong sociopathic aversion to homosexuals or lesbians. I have never considered anything I have written or said to have been offered out of a sense of hate. Most important to me is the reality I live based on God's word, a reality that encourages change and repentance as well as the mandate to love my neighbor as myself.

As more and more legislation is passed affirming the minority status of gays and lesbians, we will eventually join other countries where a sermon on homosexuality will be considered hate speech and therefore illegal.

I have to ask these questions. What is going to happen to thousands of people who deal with same-gender attractions and consider those attractions contrary to their lives if it comes to a time when those individuals will be considered unstable or anti-social for rejecting what others tell them is a genetic condition? Do I *have* to live as a gay man, for example, because I sometimes have same-gender attractions?

- *Gays and lesbians are good people.*

I have often wondered why anyone would say they are not, but this concept has become part of the pro-gay argument of justification. A co-worker, for example, is a really neat guy, helpful and fun to be around. He is also gay. I like the man.

Some would suggest I shouldn't like him because I disagree with his orientation and that would be untrue. What is true would be that I disagree with sexual intimacy between individuals of the same sex. If my co-worker made acceptance of his behaviors a *requirement* for us to be friends, then our relationship would continue but only in a professional and job-related manner.

- *The media plays a significant role in the molding of society's attitudes.*

If someone finishing a doctoral program in college asked me for suggestions for a thesis, I would suggest a serious look at how media has responded to the issue of homosexuality over the past fifty years. I would further suggest a comparison study of entertainment versus news media. Do they reflect society's attitudes or form them?

The Word of God can sound very outdated when held up against popular TV sitcoms. The pastor who suggests the potential for sin in same-gender relationships could risk termination in some churches for being insensitive. The parent who stands on a firmly held belief as to the immorality of same-sex behavior will be told that such beliefs are out of date.

More next issue

Exodus Regional Conference 2007

Join us as we consider
Revolution: Church, Family, and Self
October 19-21, 2007
The Associated Retreat Center
Osceola, WI

Are we getting healthier or just hanging on?
Creating a Place within the Church
Families and Those We Care About
Moving Forward, Falling Behind, or Standing Still

Lots of wonderful fellowship
Lots of praise and worship
Time to step back from the world

Specific information will be available in the next issue of *Wellspring* or check our website.

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Dated Material

A Little Humor

Reaching the end of a job interview, the Human Resources Person asked a young engineer who was fresh out of MIT, "What starting salary were you thinking about?"

The Engineer said, "In the neighborhood of \$125,000 a year, depending on the benefits package."

The interviewer said, "Well, what would you say to a package of 5 weeks vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical and dental, company matching retirement fund to 50% of salary, and a company car leased every 2 years - say, a red Corvette?"

The Engineer sat up straight and said, "Wow! Are you kidding?"

The interviewer replied, "Yeah, but you started it."

