

Wellspring

June—July 2006 Isaiah 58.6
All things are possible with God!
[A publication of Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.]



Be Transformed

By Bob Van Domelen

Put to death whatever in your nature is rooted in earth; fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desires, and that lust which is idolatry. Your own conduct was once of this sort, when these sins were your very way of life. What you have done is put aside your old self with its past deeds and put on a new man, one who grows in knowledge as he is formed anew in the image of his creator. (Col.4:5-7, 9-10)

Perhaps one of the more difficult aspects of walking the Christian walk lies in how we tend to read verses like these. I say that because few people are so ignorant of themselves that they don't know when they have done something that they should not have done.

The moment I tell a lie, I know that I have deliberately tried *and maybe succeeded* in deceiving someone. People use words like "It's just a little, white lie" but when push comes to shove, a lie is a lie. And for the one who lies, something personal is diminished. And maybe the saddest thing of all is that we often pass off things like "little white lies" as having no consequence.

Other behaviors are what a lot of us would call "biggie" sins—hard to ignore when they happen and definitely behaviors we know we are to avoid.

Over the years, I have been blessed to hear both men and women recount a moment in their lives when they knew that they had done something really bad. There was no list of "Thou shalt not" behaviors tacked to their bedroom wall, yet without being specifically told something was sin, they knew it was sin.

These people would also share with me that some serious sins could be acknowledged to mom or dad, teacher or minister, and other sins could not. Some confessed sins were easy to deal with and even came with "This is how you can avoid doing this again" instructions. And some sins seemed too private, too shame-filled, for anyone to understand. Silence, far from healing anything, often won out over confession.

Put to death whatever in your nature is rooted in earth – in other words, anything that is not of God or pointing toward giving glory to God.

Behaviors, however, have a tendency to become habits. Some habits, like keeping a neat desktop, saying the word "like" in every sentence, or separating food on a plate so it doesn't touch, are rarely given any thought. They

are called harmless although sometimes annoying behaviors.

Other habits, like spreading gossip, being late for any and all appointments, or smoking, are behaviors that can have a serious consequence – for everyone involved. People avoid gossips unless they themselves like to hear the latest on someone. But in general, a gossip is not trusted.

The person who is constantly late for appointments is labeled unreliable—a label that might result in being passed over for promotion or even being let go from a job. No one counts on a person who is unreliable.

The person who smokes knowingly risks his or her own health as well as the people around who do not smoke. Unfortunately, people who are often very good people and wonderful friends are sometimes excluded because of their smoking habit.

Your own conduct was once of this sort, when these sins were your very way of life. The examples I have given so far are behaviors that might indeed have been considered *your very way of life*. Additionally, I would add that at least in the eyes of others, those who practice those behaviors have an identity that links them to the behaviors: He's a gossip; she's unreliable; he's a smoker.

And over the years, these identities have been addressed in self-help books, support groups, and public educational forums. The goal: stop being a gossip, an unreliable person, or a smoker.

But what about homosexuality? What about lesbianism? Although some churches and organizations reach out to people with same-gender attractions, there seems to be a growing movement to not only accept the homosexual condition but to celebrate it. And sadly, those who think otherwise are being called homophobes or right-wing extremists.

My childhood was filled with inappropriate sexual activity as a boy, behavior that eventually left me with no choice but to say that I was a homosexual. Gay was not a word used back then, and even if it were, I would not have called my life gay. I think that there is a major difference between physical pleasure and emotional/spiritual happiness.

For many with this struggle early in life, there are only two apparent courses of action. The problem either goes away by God's intervention or the problem ceases being a

problem if enough people say it isn't a problem. And here is where it gets sticky for the church. Let me share a few observations.

- Secular society often endorses as truth all that is shared about homosexuality with them in the media.
- The term "gay-friendly" is promoted as a "live and let live" attitude so long as "I don't have to be involved."
- Pro-gay thinking says, "God created us; God is love; gay is about love; therefore gay is good."
- Many of us want the path of least resistance. If we struggle with our particular weaknesses or sins, maybe they're really not sins—we just *think* they are.
- Churches tend to either completely reject those who admit a same-gender attraction if it doesn't disappear within a short time frame *or* they decide to redefine homosexual behavior as a legitimate expression of love between two people.

From my personal point of view, I have decided that I would rather be in battle against behaviors I believe are sin than choose the simple route of endorsing them.

That is not the same thing as saying I despise those who have chosen a gay identity. How can I do that when it was the same label I wore for so long? Loving gays and lesbians does not mean we put a stamp of approval on *everything* they do. It is loving gays and lesbians because Jesus taught us to love others as ourselves.

There is one concept I needed to come to grips with in my own struggle, however. I can honestly say from this point in my life that I would never have chosen the path I walked for so long, but I cannot say that I was without choice. And choice is not a matter of genetics. It's a matter of free will.

I believe that change is possible—it's the signature verse for Broken Yoke Ministries. But I also believe that such change will stretch anyone willing to be a partner to the process. Sometimes when pastors ask me what they can do to help people with this issue, I point to things in my own life and in my relationship to God as a means of bringing understanding.

What you have done is put aside your old self with its past deeds and put on a new man, one who grows in knowledge as he is formed anew in the image of his creator.

Becoming a new man or woman, being formed anew in the image of our Creator, does not mean the past disappears nor does it mean same sex temptation necessarily ceases. Being a new man or woman in Christ is being a man or woman with options in the face of temptation. Being a new man or woman in Christ in a faith community means being a witness of the presence of God, the power of the Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection, and the working of the Holy Spirit within me.

This is the option the church must offer to who struggle; this is the standard of truth for all who profess to be Christian. Anything less is just that—less. □



³ He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear
and put their trust in the Lord.
(Psalm 40)



New Board Member Appointed

**Tom Mereen brings
experience and initiative to
the Broken Yoke Board
of Directors**

I met Tom Mereen at a meeting of Safe Haven, a support group for family and friends of those who struggle with same-gender attractions or have embraced the gay or lesbian lifestyle. This wonderful group of people was introduced in the February edition of this newsletter.

Tom and I decided to sit down over a cup of coffee and discuss the direction of Broken Yoke Ministries, its current mission and vision statements and what Tom felt he might be able to bring to the board as a member. His enthusiasm and experience with other boards reinforced the feeling I had when first speaking with Tom that our ministry would be better for his participation.

Tom was officially appointed a board member at the May meeting of the BY Board of Directors. And while I am thinking of it, please keep all the board members of this ministry in your prayers.

Speaking of Board Matters...

Broken Yoke Ministries has been active since 1987 and was incorporated February 25, 1992. Although there has been change in our mission and vision statements to reflect the focus of the ministry, we have been operating with the same by-laws established in 1992.

Two years ago, the board began to look at this document, tweaking a phrase here, eliminating something there. The board voted the first of two required approvals at its November 2005 meeting and after a few more alterations approved the final version at our May 2006 meeting.

By the way, if you were doing the numbers, you will have noted that 2007 marks the 20th anniversary of Broken Yoke Ministries. We will be celebrating but above all, we will be thanking God for His loving hand on this ministry.

All things are possible with God!

Broken Yoke Ministries is a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) corporation and operates *solely* on the contributions of people such as you. All donations to this ministry are tax deductible and will be recognized. While there is no charge for this newsletter, it can only be published if there are funds available to make that possible. Send your donations to:

**Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc
PO Box 361
Waukesha, WI 53187-0361**

PS A substantial number of our readers are incarcerated and unable to offer financial support. Please consider a donation on their behalf.



Rebecca Christensen, Mike Thomas (Social Concerns Chair), Pat Hunt, and Bob Van Domelen gather for a group photo at the recent ONE LOVE seminar in Rockford, IL.

ONE LOVE SEMINAR

I recently was blessed to speak at First Evangelical Free Church in Rockford, IL, at the first of what is hoped to be a series of seminars on the topic of homosexuality.

Originally I was only a panel member for an afternoon discussion, but plans changed with the unfortunate illness of the scheduled main speaker, Rev. Kent Paris of Nehemiah Ministries. Approximately 80 attended.

In the first of the two morning sessions, I offered basic information on homosexuality and lesbianism. The second session focused on change based on a relationship with Jesus Christ. Panel members were not tossed any easy questions and as panel discussions go, the conversation could have gone on and on but for time constraints. It was a beautiful Saturday and organizers clearly showed respect for those attending.

The following morning, First Assembly of God (Rockford) offered me an invitation to do a Bible study on homosexuality. The whole weekend was a blessing for me and I hope for those who attended.

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.



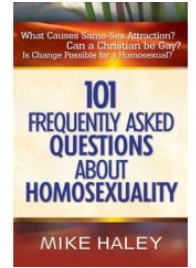
Redeemed Ministries

A support system for women
Support Group (bi-weekly)
2nd & 4th Tuesday, 7:00PM
Call 414-607-1935 for info

Reclamation Resources

P.O. Box 1062
Oshkosh, WI 54902
920-303-1041
<http://www.reclamationrc.org>

In an effort to provide good resource material for pastors, the BY Board of Directors approved an outreach project to send a free copy of Mike Haley's book, "101 Frequently Asked Questions About Homosexuality" to almost 300 pastors on the ministry's mailing list for Wisconsin. A cover letter describing the services of this ministry and a copy of the ministry's new brochure will be included.



Our Prayer Corner

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

- For all those who attended the ONE LOVE seminar in Rockford, that the information they received will continue to bless and help them.
- For all those who attended the bible study on homosexuality at First Assembly of God, that the conversations begun that weekend will encourage growth in understanding.
- For parents with children dealing with same-gender attractions, that they never stop loving their children as Christ loved His church.
- For the preparation and completion of the special book project, that pastors receiving the book will be blessed with the information it contains.
- For the board of directors of Broken Yoke Ministries, especially our newest members Tom Merein and Kevin Retlich, that they continue to move forward in building the ministry as God would see it develop.
- For groups like Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays, that their presence will be recognized as a much needed balance to those who only support a pro-gay position.
- For the women who attend Redeemed, our women's support group, that they find encouragement, hope, and useful tools in dealing with issues.
- 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 financial needs will be met through the generosity and prayer support of the readers of this newsletter.
- Finally, for all who feel they have no choice but to live as gay or lesbian, that they wake each morning seeking to serve the Lord in all things. God will move all of us into His loving arms if we surrender our wills to Him.

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All things are possible with God

Dated Material

A Little Humor

Scientists at NASA have developed a gun built specifically to launch dead chickens at the windshields of airliners, military jets and the space shuttle, all traveling at maximum velocity. The idea is to simulate the frequent incidents of collisions with airborne fowl to test the strength of the windshields.

British engineers heard about the gun and were eager to test it on the windshields of their new high speed trains. Arrangements were made. But when the gun was fired, the engineers stood shocked as the chicken hurtled out of the barrel, crashed into the shatterproof shield, smashed it to smithereens, crashed through the control console, snapped the engineer's backrest in two and embedded itself in the back wall of the cabin. Horrified Britons sent NASA the disastrous results of the experiment, along with the designs of the windshield, and begged the U.S. scientists for suggestions. NASA's response was just one sentence, "Thaw the chicken."

