

Wellspring

October 2011 – January 2012

Isaiah 58.6

All things are possible with God

[A publication of Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.]



Has the Message Changed?

By Bob Van Domelen

⁴ *But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who long for your saving help always say, 'The Lord is great!'" (Psalm 70.4)*

Normally the main message of this newsletter pretty much writes itself. I would, however, suggest that there is always a time of praying and listening involved and, God willing, I am paying attention. Somehow, though, it all seemed much easier twenty years ago because the ministry was formed in response to a clear need for support by those with unwanted same-sex attractions.

As I suggested in the June *Wellspring* edition, in the past 40 years "the attitude and in some ways the belief system surrounding homosexuality and lesbianism—not so much for those who seek freedom but from those on the outside looking in" had changed.

When this ministry was formed, there was considerable focus on HIV and AIDS. Church leaders contacted us more because they were concerned about the possible spread of the virus by infected individuals than about the manner in which they might minister to those infected. At the same time, the health concerns encouraged conversations about homosexuality—at the time considered a primary means of virus transmission.

Health officials today point to unsafe sex and dirty needles as major sources of HIV transmission. Homosexual behaviors still account for some of the spread of this disease but one rarely hears this as a serious connection.

One thing I don't think has changed since the 80s is the attitude of people who truly want help, who truly want to set aside the same-sex attractions that lead to what *they* consider immoral behavior choices. It can no longer be presumed, however, that everyone is on the same page with regard to the morality of same-sex behaviors. So what's the message of this ministry?

Our mission statement says in part -- *This ministry seeks to support those who struggle with homosexuality and believe that such behavior is incompatible with God's design for their lives. It is our belief that homosexual behavior is incompatible with the word of God. Not long ago such a statement would have met with nods of agreement from the majority of church-goers but such is not the case today.*

If anything, the primary focus of Broken Yoke Ministries is to encourage individuals in their identity as sons and daughters of Christ. In years past, the focus was on homosexuality as a condition, methods of treatment, and ways to encourage those in their struggle. We don't

deny the presence of same-sex attractions or even the reality that the causes of homosexuality and lesbianism are complex. Like many ministries similar in purpose, we used to simplify the struggle, but I think that left many who did not fit the one-size-fits-all description of homosexuality wondering why they had attended the meetings.

But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you

Looking through past editions of this newsletter I saw that even though I have presented many variables for those who struggle to consider, one focus has been pretty constant. Seek God in *all* things.

Attending weekend services is to attend weekend services—a duty for some, a joy for others, but only one occasion of spiritual focus. Even as I write this, I am aware of my own inadequacies when it comes to actively seeking God in *all* things. My will, my desires, needs and dreams still sit at the top of my priority list each day. There are times when I catch myself and, like moving text in a document, I click on and then move God to the top of the list. There is a certain amount of risk doing this, however.

We all risk knowing that the object of our desire at any given moment might be flagged by that still, soft inner voice suggesting we avoid what we think we want.

Still, in the occasions when I am asked what people can do in their daily walk, it remains "Seek the Lord." It is not judgmentalism on my part. It is not pointing a finger of condemnation at those who don't believe same-sex behaviors are immoral. And it does not suggest much will change without considerable surrender. But in the end, we will rejoice and be glad by seeking God in all things.

(Continued on p.2 **Message**)

Newsletter Change

In 2009, the Board of Directors agreed to publishing *Wellspring* three times a year as both interest and financial support had been dropping. At a recent meeting, the decision to move this newsletter to being an internet option was made. (www.brokenyoke.org/Wellspring.html)

Approximately one third of the readers of *Wellspring* are inmates without internet access. Anyone desiring to receive a print copy of the newsletter need only write the ministry with that request.

Broken Yoke Ministries
PO Box 5824
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Message (from p.1)

**May those who long for your saving help
always say, "The Lord is great!"**

No message is worth offering unless someone wants or longs to hear or read it. This is, I think, where things get a bit complicated because our message of freedom and change is considered both unnecessary and perhaps for some even insulting.

Our ministry is and always has been available for those who desire the specific kind of encouragement we offer. Our ministry never fails to point individuals toward a deeper personal relationship with the Lord and in doing so we freely echo the message "The Lord is great!" And as we move into our 25th year of service, our ministry remains committed to the Biblical principles that have served as our foundation.

Has the message changed? Not really. Has the audience changed? Now *that* might be a question worth considering. Any belief system that has roots two centuries old is bound to feel the tug of a society that wants its belief system to match its lifestyle. Finally, I have to ask myself "Have I changed?" And the answer to that question is, I think, a resounding yes! □



The Grace Place

Exciting news! The Grace Place support group meetings will be offering a new video series titled "Hope for Wholeness." This project has been years in the making and will provide for some great opportunities to explore issues of concern.

Anyone interested in attending should contact Jill at 414-218-3940 or email her at Jill@brokenyoke.org.

Wisconsin Support Group Ministry Locations

The Grace Place

Meetings: Wauwatosa

Men/Women Support Group (weekly)

Tuesday, 7:00PM

Reclamation Resources

P.O. Box 1062

Oshkosh, WI 54902

Call 920-303-1041 for meeting information

<http://www.reclamationrc.org>

Remember, this ministry depends on your donations to produce this newsletter and other ministry-related expenses. All donations are tax deductible.



Our Prayer Corner

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

- For all those who struggle with same-sex attractions, that they embrace the identity God had in mind for them from the beginning.
- For those who feel there is no hope, that they will be encouraged on their journey.
- For those feel abandoned by God, that they will feel God's presence in their daily living.
- For *The Grace Place*, that the new name will encourage members of the support system to know that it is a good place to be.
- For the youth of our society, that in times of uncertainty about their identity, they seek God in the mirror of their lives.
- For parents dealing with a child who struggles or has endorsed the gay life, that their love remains constant without sacrificing their beliefs.
- For the facilitators of our support group meetings, that they feel God's blessings for their efforts.
- For Jill as she continues to seek financial support in her role as a full-time co-director of this ministry.
- For the ongoing general financial support of this ministry, that those who are able will be willing to support us with both finance and prayer.

2011 Exodus Regional Conference

Homosexuality: How Should We Respond?

October 28-30, 2011

Green Lake Conference Center

W2511 State Road 23

Green Lake WI 54941

Register today at:

<http://exodusinternational.org/exodus-events>

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.

According to eleven US and international surveys that ask sexual orientation or gender identity questions, an estimated 3.5% of adults in the United States identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and an estimated 0.3% of adults are transgender.

Reminder: The next *Wellspring* will be published in February, 2012 – online at www.BrokenYoke.org

So that His tent will be rebuilt in you with joy!

As a young boy, my dreams were focused on the future, dreams to be successful in both my professional and personal life. As I grew older the vision became more realistic, more in tune with what I saw as my strengths and weaknesses with just enough idealism to stretch beyond.

Then it happened. I was living my "future" and it looked only a little like my boyhood dreams. The weaknesses became more pronounced in my own mind until the only way in which I could keep from deep depression was to create a second me. This was the secret Bob known only to a few and even sparingly to them.

This second person, something like a shadow which moved alongside instead of behind, struggled with many things—homosexuality, pornography, and a pride-filled nature just to name a few.

There was a spiritual side of me which sought God but too often I simply didn't have enough faith to believe the shadow life could be defeated. I prayed earnestly for change but saw the lack of significant change to be "proof" that I had finally crossed too many lines, sinned too often for forgiveness.

In my thinking, I had used up my quota of second chances with God, so instead of knocking at God's door I stood quietly to the side hoping He would glance in my direction and remember me. My heart echoed the words of David:

I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings (Psalm 61.4).

You see, I saw God as "out there" instead of dwelling within me. My body and my life were meant to be a tent in which God would reside, a place of worship and intimacy with Him who created all things, and a tent of refuge.

Recognizing this reality is one thing, surrendering as a sign of invitation yet another. Some people make the surrender without major conflict but that was not my way nor has it been that way for many of those I know through this ministry. Our surrender came while in the midst of crisis brought on by homosexuality or lesbianism. For others it might come because of alcoholism, anorexia, molestation and/or abuse, or some deep, deep depression which seeks to snuff out the light of hope. But surrender must come.

Christians who find comfort in the psalms of David know that he committed adultery and murder in order to satisfy his own selfish desires. The tent of his life had been destroyed, made dark when he turned his back on the light of God. Yet he repented and was restored.

Feeling that I had to make everything right within me before God would take up dwelling in my tent was one of the great stumbling blocks I encountered after my own surrender. As illustration, I still struggle with a feeling that my house must be clean before anyone is allowed to visit. A friend once told me that he didn't come to visit the house, he came to visit me.

Despite my struggles with temptation, I am learning that God *does* want to rebuild my tent. He *does* love me and desires to be intimately involved in all that I do. And He IS

rebuilding my tent in joy because His focus is not on those things already forgiven but on me. It is our relationship which brings joy to *both* of us!

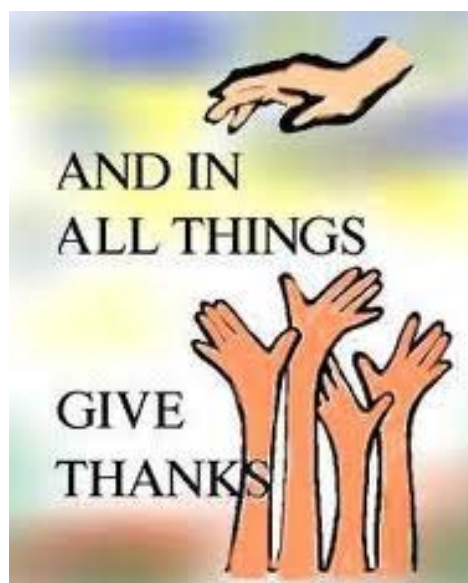
For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life (2Cor.5:4).

I have two friends who are both dying—one of AIDS and the other of cancer, both young men. Not many would understand how they are able to endure the constant pain in this journey of theirs, but these two men focus on the Lord despite that pain, not necessarily because of it. Both men acknowledge that they would love to be healed completely, but that is not a condition of their love for the Lord. As one said recently, "If I am healed, I know that God is with me. If I die, I am with God."

We were all "knit in our mother's womb" by God, each of us given a special tent in which to grow. Along the way some of us lost sight of that joy-filled tent but it is not impossible to rebuild the place where heaven and earth can come together. We need only give God permission.

Like Paul, we need to see that God is our strength in weakness, the goal for which we strive. And in the end, *Therefore, [we] are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over [us] (Rev.7:15)□*

This was the lead article for Wellspring, August 1997.



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A Little Humor. . .

Bill and Mary had just gotten back from the honeymoon, and were having their first fight, and it was a big one.

No matter what Bill tried to say or do, Mary refused to compromise, or even to listen. He started growing exasperated.

After a while, Bill said "When we got married, you promised to love, honor and obey."

Mary replied, "I know. But I didn't want to start an argument in front of all those people at the wedding."

