

Wellspring

June – September 2011

Isaiah 58.6

All things are possible with God

[A publication of Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.]



“Is Anyone There?” Revisited

By Bob Van Domelen

²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” (Ephesians 4.22-24,29)

Someone told me not so long ago that most everything I have shared in this newsletter has been a theme and variation on an often repeated idea. I won't disagree. If anything, repetition underscores what I believe are constants in the struggle with same-sex attraction—appropriate male or female bonding, self-image, environment, and both life and spiritual experiences.

In an unexpected way, what *has* changed the most in the past 40 years is 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. I had once believed that as I got older it would be easier to talk about the issue with people I thought would encourage me and support my journey.

“As a struggling teenager I did try to find answers to my questions about homosexuality from priests and teachers. My questions probably sounded a lot like ‘I have a friend who...’ when I asked them, but the sincerity in my eyes must have spoken volumes. The answers I received, however, did not. ‘Pray for the strength to resist temptation’ or ‘If you continue to do those things you will go to hell’ were the most repeated offerings. At the time, I think that I was frustrated with the lack of direction but I did finally understand that my confusion was no less than theirs.” (1992)

Instead of finding clarity as I grew older, a wave of support in the other direction began in 1974 when the American Psychiatric Association ratified a proposal by its board to remove homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual list of mental illnesses. The decision provided a sense of freedom for individuals who considered themselves homosexual but it also allowed for the possibility of treatment for those who were unhappy with that orientation if comments made at the time about such treatment were to be believed. By 1987 opinion had shifted significantly enough to set aside support for treatment as both unnecessary and possibly adding to

bias against those who did not desire such treatment.

Over the years, a favorable attitude toward homosexuality and lesbianism has gradually grown to the point of seeming to always have been there. Indeed some argue that the questions I raised as a teenager should not even had to have been asked. Those of this opinion would also say that my mentors missed the boat in helping me understand my true sexual identity.

Put off your old self -- Put on the new self

I recently received a letter from a man who was encountering an unexpected conflict. The man who brought him to find faith in God had recently written him a letter filled with the language of his old identity. His letter in response was filled with similar phrases and attitudes he had been working hard to set aside. I would suggest that verse 29 was doing battle against his long-standing friendship.

I wrote him of my own decision to listen to what I was really feeling about same-sex attraction, a feeling that said my behaviors for so many years were not in God's design for my life. I shared that accepting the “born that way” argument eliminates the stress of conflict but only temporarily.

When I consider “corrupted by evil desires,” I am not only thinking of temptations of the flesh but of the way in which half-truths and even lies can become truth when the desires of the heart (and sometimes the flesh) are met. The most deceitful of all lies, however, is born when the desires of the heart and flesh become idols and God is given second place. When that happens, it is all too easy to see God as agreeing with *me* rather than me agreeing with God.

Is there help?

“Those who come to Broken Yoke Ministries seeking answers invariably ask the same question, ‘Is there a church I can join where I will find Christian support and love even if someone finds out about my struggle?’ What they hope for is a faith community where they can worship, study Scripture, fellowship, and grow in their choice to be free from homosexuality. Some pastors have encouraged them to attend services but at the same time to refrain from any disclosure. In other words, the closet recently cast off as stifling is to be replaced with a newer version.

“I am not at all suggesting that individuals stand at the church door following services announcing to all who pass, ‘I am a person who struggles with homosexuality. Help me!’ What I am suggesting is that many who do

come from homosexual backgrounds have experienced rejection most of their lives. This rejection is often the same type non-homosexuals face but there *is* a difference. The person who struggles with homosexuality often stepped into behaviors as solutions to this rejection, behaviors others would not have seen as acceptable.

"I am also not suggesting that the one who struggles with homosexuality should receive more attention in the church than anyone else, just that they receive attention. It has often been said by those I meet, 'At least the gay community is willing to accept me and make me feel important.' Unfortunately, only a handful have shared with me that a church in the area did the same." (1992)

Changes can and do happen

In recent months, I have been working with our co-director, Jill Rennick, on defining the face of this ministry into the decade or so ahead. My own 20-plus years give me a certain depth of understanding that is helpful in the process and I see Jill's passion to serve others as the spark of the future.

Serving the ministry full time, she is doing what I was not able to do: promote the ministry in meetings with pastors or ministers through her testimony and resources. Since she stepped in as co-director, we have had an increase in the number of individuals attending the support meetings. There is a renewed energy evident in group members for mutual support and encouragement.

As I consider church response to those who deal with unwanted same-sex attractions, I believe that the timing of reaching out is very important. If I have failed over recent years, it would be in not providing enough of a balance to the "education" on homosexuality and lesbianism being provided by media of all types.

The people with unwanted same-sex attractions need to know that they are not alone. Most importantly, they need to know that their attractions do not demand acceptance of those attractions. And to this end, Broken Yoke Ministries stands firm. We do not change anyone. We do, however, stand alongside those who seek that freedom.



Broken Yoke Support Group Adapts New Name

The Grace Place

In the very first years of this ministry, the support group was known as the Nehemiah Fellowship but it was a practice that did not last. Recently, the support group leadership team began discussions to find a way to personalize and perhaps encourage ownership of the weekly meetings by naming them. The name decided upon was simple: The Grace Place.

God's grace does flow through each and every meeting as members share with one another, encourage successes, and pray one another through difficult times. The meetings are, as the group name suggests, a time and place where members recognize and receive God's healing grace. If you are interested in attending, contact Jill at 414-218-3940 or Jill@brokenyoke.org.

Can You Help?

The ministry is nearing the end of its matching grant program (June 30) and response has been wonderful. Because of your generosity, we are in a much better position to meet basic monthly expenses.

The response to financially assist Jill Rennick, our co-director, on a monthly or one-time basis has been a blessing to her and to the ministry. This is a difficult time in our country in terms of unemployment and financial uncertainty. It has been a time of considerable stress for those living in areas devastated by flood or fire. In short, it is a time when we are all the more humbled by the donations this ministry receives.

Someone once referred to Broken Yoke Ministries as a lean ministry that makes the most of its resources and I could not agree more. In our 24 years of service, we have never operated in the red. The formula is simple: If the funds are not there to do a specific project, the project is set aside until its costs can be met.

Our basic operating expenses (phone, website, postal fees, and general office supplies) match those incurred by many ministries our size. We do have some annual dues and fees to pay but to date someone has always helped us meet those. The bottom line, however, is that with whatever we do, we are respectful of those who financially support this ministry. And that means you.

Additionally, we know that many who read this newsletter are not in a position to financially support us but their support comes in the form of prayer. As I have shared before, such spiritual generosity is a treasure.

You'll note on page three that I am announcing the Exodus Regional Conference even though it is not scheduled until the end of October and online registrations will not be accepted until July. As the next *Wellspring* is not published until October, it seemed a good idea to do so in this issue.

Regional conferences are a wonderful way of finding support, having fellowship with understanding people, and at the same time getting away from everyday life. The Green Lake Conference Center is a beautiful place and the facilities are first class.

In the past, requests for scholarships to the regional would be made of the ministry but we were unable to do much. I am asking you to prayerfully consider sponsoring someone who might not otherwise be able to attend. If you send a donation by check, indicate on the memo line that the donation is to be used for a scholarship. All funds so indicated will be reserved for that purpose.

We have a wonderful speaker this year and I know that you will be blessed by what he has to share.

The Exodus International Freedom Conference in Asheville, NC (June 8-11) is a power-packed event. Go online to www.exodusfreedom.org for more information.

I sincerely thank you for your support of this ministry and I ask God to bless you abundantly.

In His love,
Bob



Wisconsin Ministry Locations

Broken Yoke Mailing Address

P.O. Box 5824

De Pere, WI

262-751-1128

Bob@brokenyoke.org

Meetings: Wauwatosa

Men/Women Support

Group (weekly)

Tuesday, 7:00PM

Website:

www.brokenyoke.org

Jill@BrokenYoke.org

Bob@BrokenYoke.org



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.

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.

Reminder: The next *Wellspring* will be published in October, 2011.



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 decisions made at the May meeting of the BY Board of Directors, that the future of the ministry is strengthened.
- For all those attending the Exodus Freedom Conference in Asheville, NC, that the experience is a life-changing event.
- 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**

Featured Speaker

Christopher Yuan



Christopher testifies about how God has changed his life from a drug dealer and homosexual to a sought out speaker and Bible teacher. His ministry has reached four continents.

He is featured in the award winning documentary "HOPE Positive: Surviving the Sentence of AIDS". He has co-authored with his mother *Out of a Far Country: A Gay Son's Journey to God, a Broken Mother's Search for Hope*.

Conference Fees:

Early Bird Special -- *Postmarked by Sept. 17*

\$185/person

\$310/married couples

-- *After Sept. 17*

\$210/person

\$360/married couples

Conference Site:

Green Lake Conference Center in Green Lake, Wisconsin
- 65 miles North East of Madison

- 90 miles North West of Milwaukee

Conference check-in Friday, October 28, 5:00PM

Register online at:

<http://exodusinternational.org/exodus-events>
available after July 1, 2011

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A Little Humor. . .

There were three men on a hill with their watches. The first man threw his watch down the hill and it broke. The second man threw his watch down the hill and it broke.

The third man threw his watch down the hill, walked all the way to the bottom, and caught it. The other two men were puzzled and asked the third man how he did it.

The third man said, "Easy. My watch is 5 minutes slow!"

