

Wellspring

February—March 2006 Isaiah 58:6

All things are possible with God!

[A publication of Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.]



Joined and Held Together

By Bob Van Domelen

“¹⁶From him (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4.16)

I don't know of too many of us who at one time or another did not have to listen to “When I was a kid” while growing up. We'd nod our heads aggressively with the hope of ending the conversation as quickly as possible. Or perhaps our eyes would become vacant as our minds transported us to some other safer and certainly less boring place than in a room listening to “When I was a kid.”

The phrase was, I think, little more than proof that there was quite a gap in generational thinking. And being the “full of wisdom” creatures we were at the time, the parent who dared such a comment proved, in our thinking at least, that he or she was clearly out of touch. In matters that meant the most to us, it was pretty easy to say our parents just wouldn't understand.

My generation was and is no different from generations past and those to come, but I think one thing happened to all of us to at least a certain degree. We took a step away from the potential support of loved ones, particularly in sensitive areas of our lives, because we saw it as a move toward independence. Maybe it was and maybe that's how it should have been.

At a recent Broken Yoke meeting, we watched a short video presentation on forgiveness. One of the comments the young pastor made was that everyone carried some hurt, struggled with some personal issue, and felt the weight of that in their daily lives. For most, it was a hidden hurt not to be shared. For others, it was an issue that brought them feelings of helpless shame. As I thought about it, I decided that silence was the rope that held them captives; silence was the door that would not be opened to others who might help.

There are thousands around the country with same-gender attractions who do not consider homosexual behavior an acceptable response. They would not watch “Brokeback Mountain” and call it a tender love story. Instead, they would say the film reminds them of all the reasons they have to leave that lifestyle, not endorse it. For them, the film does not point to society's inability to collectively celebrate homosexual and lesbian relationships as much as to point out the flaws in those relationships.

It is growing increasingly clear that men and women who seek help to leave the gay life find it more difficult than they might have imagined. Rather than support and encouragement, they face confusion from one side and anger from the other. I say it that simply because no matter what group I use as example, the result is pretty much the same.

When I asked the men at our meeting that evening what they found helpful about our group, they used words like affirmation, understanding, tempered response, and encouragement. They spoke of feeling able to share some of their intimate struggles because others in the group had already done so and had not walked away defeated.

I asked them to describe an ideal group and heard things like a place to be real and realistic, 24/7 help if they needed it, a place to feel honor and integrity, and a place to feel safe. Such a group would be a resource not only to strugglers but to churches and community alike. It would also be a place where they did not have to be neat and tidy. Above all, such a group would be a place where no matter what had happened the week before, God would know each person stood before the throne with a sincere desire to understand and feel God's love.

Interestingly, no one felt that an ideal group would be a place where everything was fixed at the end of the evening. Rather, it would be a place where words like reconciliation and repentance could be spoken without fear. And the ideal group would be a place where every man recognized the human dignity of another man; every man recognized his neighbor as equally loved by the Lord who loves us all.

the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament

Sometimes I am frightened by the idea that the body of Christ is not as joined or held together as it could or should be. We are a people who either tolerate anything and everything or very little to nothing. To be in the middle is to be indecisive—so say those at either end.

Our group members want support for the choice they have made to reject same-gender sexual behavior or inappropriate emotional attachments. They don't want the body, the church, to tell them that they have it all wrong; God created them gay, so celebrate it. They don't want the body, the church, to tell them that only complete, undefiled saints are allowed to become or remain members.

Our group members have taken steps in a direction they feel called to take. The two extremes allow for no progress, only the tension of being tugged and pulled in conflicting directions. Such conflict encourages the silence they have carried for too long, the shame that gave birth to the silence in the first place.

If you are wondering what is happening in the middle, rest assured that I am not suggesting any compromise on the morality of behavior. It might be easy to suggest that there must be a give and take on both sides, but I think it really is more a matter of loving as Christ would love—not advocating sin but recognizing the need for sinners to be loved, nurtured, and encouraged.

*Grows and builds itself up in love
as each part does its work*

As I reflect on the notion of growing and building up in love, I find myself wondering what it would have been like had I heard, "When I was a child, there was always someone who seemed different. Today we'd say gay, but back then it was just they were different. I don't know if I ever understood completely what they were going through, but I know that they needed friendship; they needed all of us because something was missing in their lives and we could all help fill that void." I think I would have paid attention to something like that being said to me.

I think I might even have said, "Dad, sometimes that's me you are describing." And he would not have ranted or raved; he would not have called me a sissy or queer. He would have reminded me I was his son; he would have reminded me of his love; and I think that would have gone a long, long way.

One concept that eludes pro-gay individuals is that being what we are called to be in the Lord is hard work. I told a caller to the ministry tonight that if what I hear in church does not convict me a little, I start to wonder if I am growing in my faith. Church is not about being comfortable all the time because that would imply nothing needs to be changed. And the last time I thought about it, I decided change is hard work.

Maybe the ideal group is a work in process right where our members meet. Maybe it is the members of our group who will transform those in their churches, enlisting them as prayer warriors, as accountability partners, and as brothers and sisters on the journey through this life and into the next.

The first step, however, belongs to each individual who has decided that the struggle is a weight that must no longer be born alone. Persevering through silence while hurting will never bring healing; it will never allow others to serve as perhaps they themselves have been served in their moments of trial; and that silence will never build up the body, strengthen the ligaments, or produce the fruits a healthy body should produce.

If homosexuality is not an issue for you, recognize the fact that there is still something inside you that needs to be released. Whatever that might be, support others just as you would want to be supported. It's a team effort, folks, and we are all part of the team. A little disorganized at this point in history but with all the potential of true greatness in the presence of 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. It currently costs approximately \$600 per *Wellspring* edition. If you cannot support us financially, pray for us and encourage others to do so. 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.

Our Prayer Corner



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

- For all Exodus International leaders who attended the leader conference in January, that the nourishment and encouragement they received will continue to bless them.
- For parents dealing with the conflicting emotions experienced because of this issue, that they never stop loving their children as Christ loved His church.
- For our church leaders, that they will seek out resources to help those with same-gender attractions and share those resources with their congregations.
- For ministries worldwide that offer support to those seeking freedom from inappropriate same sex behavior, that they feel the strength of the prayer support we offer them.
- 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 board of Broken Yoke Ministries, that it continues to grow in enthusiasm and ideas to bring this ministry into the lives of the churches it seeks to serve.
- 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 will to Him.



Check out the Exodus International website in the weeks to come for more information.

www.exodus.to

Exodus encourages the church *not to remain silent*. Even with continued attack on Exodus and the church at large, we stand firm on God's word and His truth. Jesus called us to, "**Stand up for me against world opinion and I'll stand up for you before my Father in Heaven. We are intimately linked in this harvest work.**"

If you are looking for help out of your struggle; if you are a parent, family member, or friend affected by homosexuality; if you are a pastor or Christian leader wanting to be equipped to respond to homosexuality – **this conference is for you!**

This week will be informational, but will also be a week of hearing stories and encouraging one another as we focus on our relationship with our Godly Father. As it says in *The Message*, He promises, "Keep company with me and **you'll learn to live freely and lightly.**" As over-comers, our eyes and ears have been opened.

Look for more information in the April edition of Wellspring

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Safe Haven

I recently had the opportunity to share with some of the members of this support system for family and friends of those who either struggle with same-gender attractions or who have decided that they have no option but to follow those attractions.

The main article for this month's edition of *Wellspring* was written with these good people in mind. To me, they represent what I feel God intends a support system to look like. Let me describe this group to you as I saw them that evening.

They were not parents/friends who had decided to close the door on the one whose choices brought them to this group in the first place. They were not people who believed in instant fixes, nor did they consider their situations hopeless.

They were, however, people who were joined together first and foremost by the love they have for their children. I would never call theirs a blind love or a love with no value system. Nor would I say it was a love that had resulted from the ultimatum "If you really loved me, you would accept me as I am."

In their monthly meetings, I think that they listen to each other, pass the tissues without judgment, and offer suggestions based on personal experience. One thing that was clear to me before our meeting even started that evening was that along the way they had become friends, and the homosexual issue aside, they regularly supported one another with ongoing prayers.

During and after the meeting, the group I met laughed, had light refreshments, and seemed to understand that the meeting was a way to recharge their emotional batteries. I think some recognized that when they walked out the door two hours later, they were walking back into circumstances that would seek to drain those batteries.

Support systems are not perfect; those who join them stumble around looking for answers that might never truly fit their situations. But they keep looking. Most of all, however, I think that those who join support systems like this one look for and often find hope. And believe me, that is huge in the scheme of things.

These people did not ask to find themselves needing Safe Haven, yet here they were, listening to me share ideas and experiences. I had felt a little like an outsider at first, but these good people would never have allowed me to leave with that feeling. I am so glad that Safe Haven exists. They and groups like theirs are a treasure and a blessing! -Bob

If you are looking for more information on support for family and friends like Safe Haven, visit <http://www.pfox.org>

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

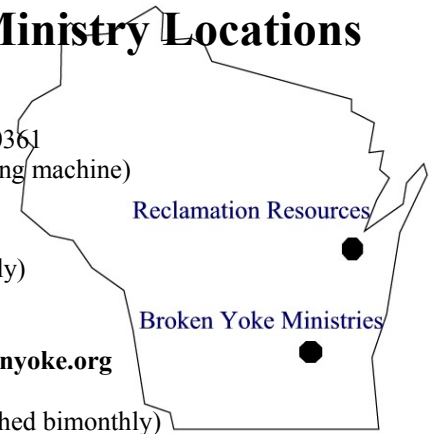
Website:

<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.



(A support group meets periodically in Madison.)

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>

ONGOING THINGS TO DO

- Daily Prayer**
10-30 minutes per day
- Church**
Weekly services (Praise in Community and Christian Fellowship)
- Bible Study & Meditation**
Participate in a study group or establish personal study time in the Word
- Overcomer's Ministry**
Attend a support group on a regular basis
BE COMMITTED TO YOUR GOALS!
- Conversations with the Lord**
Concentrate on the Seven Attributes of God
 - God is unconditional love – you are never rejected
 - God is Spirit – Worship Him, don't work for Him
 - God is Omniscient – Reveal, don't conceal
 - God is Omnipotent – Rest, don't test
 - God is Holy and Good – Expect, don't neglect
 - God is all truth and justice – Repent, don't invent excuses
 - God is faithful – Believe, don't be deceived
- Meet with an accountability partner**
A same-sex person who will help you remain motivated and on track
- Other relationships**
Get into weekly fellowship with good Christian peers
- Counseling**
Find a good Christian counselor

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Dated Material

A Little Humor . . .with thanks to standup comedian Steven Wright

- My friend Winnie is a procrastinator. He didn't get his birth mark til he was eight years old.
- I saw a man with a wooden leg, and a real foot.
- Don't you hate when your hand falls asleep and you know it will be up all night.
- There was a power outage at a department store yesterday. Twenty people were trapped on the escalators.
- I've got some powdered water, but I don't know what to add.
- My friend has a baby. I'm writing down all the noises he makes so later I can ask him what he meant.
- I went to a general store, but they wouldn't let me buy anything specific.
- I went fishing with a dotted line...I caught every other fish.
- Ever notice how irons have a setting for PERMANENT press? I don't get it...

