

Wellspring

February – March 2008 Isaiah 58.6

All things are possible with God

[A publication of Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.]



Stopping Short

By Bob Van Domelen

²¹Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ²²When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. ²³Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19.21-23)

I can still recall thinking to myself after hearing the parable of the rich young man, "Lord, don't let me get rich because I want to be in heaven with you." Of course, I was young at that time and for some reason believed the parable was all about money. But it wasn't. It was about focus, attitude, and opportunities.

Even though the parallel is not perfect, I want to draw a comparison between the rich young man and the issue of seeking freedom from same-gender attraction and/or same-gender sexual behavior. That might seem a bit of a stretch to some but I hope what I share will have made sense by the time I get to the end.

The young man had approached Jesus and asked what one good thing he needed to do to gain eternal life. Jesus told him to obey the commandments and then listed them. Knowing how difficult a time I sometimes have keeping the commandments, the young man's declaration of having kept them all probably produced a "Wow" from me the first time I heard the story.

Jesus calmly followed with the suggestion that the young man sell his possessions, give the proceeds to the poor, and then follow him. This suggestion was where the rubber hit the road, so to speak, for the young man. His life was not uncomfortable and he had grown accustomed to having all his needs and wants met because of his wealth. Is it really any major surprise that he went away saddened?

We wouldn't really be all that surprised if a young person of considerable finances today had the same reaction as the rich young man. After all, Jesus seemed to be offering poverty in exchange for the good life despite the argument some preach today that we are called to receive everything we ask in His name. At the very least, however, Jesus offered a different kind of self-discipline and perhaps even personal denial than what the young man expected.

I have good friends who have asked me what I have against gay and lesbians. I tell them nothing, but they kind of roll their eyes when I say that. After all, anything less than celebrating homosexuality is considered condemning it. I am in their eyes, at the very least, politically incorrect and socially biased.

A Matter of Focus

I was raised in a world of goals and expectations and many of these were made for me by significant people in my life. What I should do for a living, what my favorite foods should be, and even the kind of people I should consider friends were suggestions that come at a nudge or even a push from someone else.

I learned quickly what appealed to me and what didn't and resolved my personal conflicts using the least painful methods.

At an early age, however, I was confronted by a conflict I didn't understand, didn't really want, and didn't feel I could tell anyone about. It had no name for a number of years but eventually I learned it was homosexuality.

Mom and dad didn't say anything about the business of sexual contact with other boys—just that good boys treated girls with respect. I kept that commandment as the years passed but increasingly saw my attention focused on finding a connection with other guys, a connection that made me feel both accepted and desired at the same time. Fearful in the world of boy meets girl, I eventually came to believe that success there was less desirable than the success I thought I was having.

Attitude

At some level, I think most of us who deal with same-gender attractions come to a point in life where we think we have no say in the matter. For some, the oft-repeated behaviors become too much the answer in meeting other needs, even when those specific needs are non-sexual in nature. For others, the idea of being born gay makes the whole issue one that is totally out of their hands. "This is just the way I am."

I personally never bought the argument that I was born gay but I certainly understood how my behavior choices often went down the street of same-sex behavior. The difference, though, was that despite the addictive nature of these behaviors, I really wanted a type of wholeness that always seemed just out of my grasp.

For me and all those who consider same-sex behaviors contrary to God's will, this attitude is the reason people roll their eyes at anyone who feels change is possible.

Opportunities

Jesus said, "Then come, follow me" to the young man. It was an invitation for the young man to see himself on a much deeper level of relationship with God than merely obeying commandments and the young man could not get beyond what he believed was the life he was called to live.

After almost twenty years of ministry, I have come to understand that none of us is exactly like another. We bear similarities in some respects yet make decisions and choices unique to ourselves as individuals.

When push comes to shove, however, I personally believe that the invitation "Come, follow me" is open to all of us without exception. But the invitation for us, as it was for the rich young man, asks us to set aside what *we believe* is the way we are for the way *we are meant to be*. The rich young man focused on his wealth, and his attitude was that his wealth was so important to him that he could not surrender it.

As much as I might have *thought* my same-gender attractions defined me or how much pleasure might be part of that, the invitation reminds me to surrender so as to be made more complete.

I would argue that this is not a one-time surrender but a surrender that occurs each and every day. I would also argue that memory is not erased just because we surrender. Each day will bring its share of new temptations—some sexual but most of them non-sexual. The temptations, however, are in direct contrast to the invitation.

Stopping Short

Almost 23 years ago, my life was at a crossroads. I was asked to choose between a recommitment to my wife or an agreement to have our marriage annulled. To recommit meant that the struggle I had for so many years with same-gender attractions would go on.

I took accepting an annulment to be the door I thought I wanted to pass through, a door where I could finally live with my choices but in the open. The moment I said the words "I chose you" to my wife, I truly wondered why I had said them. But I am certainly glad that I did.

Stopping short is settling for something that we think is in our best interests. It's the old saying "have your cake and eat it." But stopping short is less than ideal. The young man knew that. He went away saddened.

I cannot answer for those who have managed to reconcile their choices in such a way as to make them seem in agreement with God's word. I can only answer for me. Nor will I judge them as without redemption for that is the Lord's final decision.

But I must certainly proclaim when asked, that I cannot straddle the fence on the morality of homosexual behavior. Likewise, I cannot put on the face of self-righteousness and condemn those who disagree. We all stop short of being who we are called to be and of doing what we are called to do. The invitation, however, remains the same. "Come, follow me." □

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:
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Waukesha, WI 53187-0361**

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

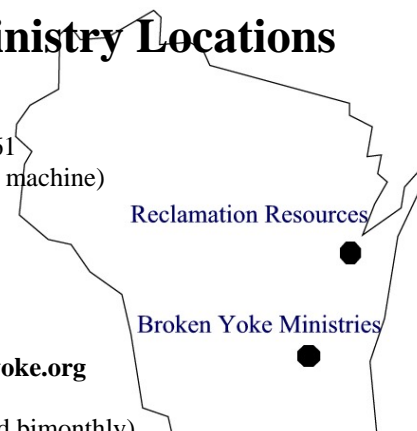
Website:

<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 the success of Broken Yoke's "Putting a Face on Ministry to the Homosexual" seminar (February 23), that it will be well-attended and an opportunity to discuss a Christian response to the issue, offering hope and resources.
- For all support groups connected to this ministry, that individuals attending find encouragement and experience growth in their relationship with God.
- For family and friends, that they love without condemnation or false acceptance.
- For today's youth, that they find a way to see homosexuality as stopping short and not an end.
- For those on this mailing list, that they know they are welcome to continue receiving *Wellspring* and can do so by returning the subscription card.
- For Bob and Cathie, that their coming move will be a blessing and an opportunity to serve God even more than before.
- For this ministry, that the coming transition results in a stronger ministry, one better able to serve those who can benefit from its services.
- For those unable to financially support this ministry, that they pray regularly for Broken Yoke Ministries and all whose lives are affected by it.

All things are possible with God!

¹ I waited patiently for the Lord;
 he turned to me and heard my cry.
² He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
 out of the mud and mire;
 he set my feet on a rock
 and gave me a firm place to stand.
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.

Psalms 40:1-3

There are many days when these verses come to mind, days when I need to remind myself what God has done for me and for all who call upon Him. In some ways, a whole lifetime is summed up in these 72 words.

I know that I am not a man without sin but I believe that God's mercy is new every morning. Each day is a new chance to grow closer to God, to feel God shake just a little more of my past off as I am able to surrender that to Him.

Sometimes I wonder how that clean garment God places on me in the morning got so dirty by the end of the day. Then I remember an unkind word or thought, the slight shading of the truth when under pressure, and the memories of choices I thought were what I really wanted but were distortions of the truth.

God reminds me that I am not back in the depths of the slimy pit. He reminds me that I am only noticing the hardened substances from the past, substances He wants to free me of as I am able to let them go.



Putting a Face on Ministry to the Homosexual: A Conversation

February 23, 2008
9:00-11:30AM
RiverGlen Christian Church
S31 W30601 Sunset Dr
Waukesha, WI 53189

If anything, our ministry doesn't do enough to advertise that there is help for those who struggle with same-gender attractions or behaviors and want help in learning to make better choices.

"Putting a Face on Ministry to the Homosexual" will be an opportunity for those attending to hear about the kind of support available for men, women, and family and friends of those who struggle or live with same-gender attractions.

A business card CD with articles, book lists, internet connections, and other resources will be offered. Some of the materials will also be available at our website for those unable to attend. Visit us at www.brokenyoke.org.

A free will offering will be taken to help defray event expenses.

This Is Really Important!

We planned to include a card with this edition asking if you wish to remain on the mailing list for *Wellspring*. I have since found out, however, that this might be pretty expensive for us and we don't have money specifically set aside for the postage-paid returned card we had considered using.

Wellspring has had a steady growth in readership over the past fifteen years but it would be understandable to find our mailing list is outdated. People move. People lose interest. People even die. What most people don't do, however, is contact organizations like ours to make an address adjustment. The most common result is that our newsletters find their way into circular files.

What many of you might not know is that men and women in prison make up almost 80% of our mailing list. A number of them send me small donations to support the costs associated with the newsletter. Some send stamps to help defray the correspondence ministry I do.

In case you are wondering, we *do* send the newsletters at bulk mail rate to keep costs as low as possible. While printing and mailing costs continue to rise, donations have not risen at the same rate. *Wellspring* currently costs almost \$800 each issue; *Into the Light* costs a little over \$900.

INSTRUCTIONS

We are happy to provide the newsletter free of charge as long as you want to receive it. At the same time, I am going to ask that you spend 41-cents if you want to continue the newsletter. Fill out the form below, cut or carefully tear this section out and put it in an envelope. Then mail it to the address listed. If we don't hear from you, we will have to presume that you are requesting the removal of your name from our mailing list *or* that the newsletter is not getting to you in the first place.

Neatly print your name and address

Our mailing address is:

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Dated Material

A Little Humor

Susie's husband had been slipping in and out of a coma for several months. Things looked grim, but she was by his bedside every single day. One day as he slipped back into consciousness, he motioned for her to come close to him. She pulled the chair close to the bed and leaned her ear close to be able to hear him.

"You know" he whispered, his eyes filling with tears, "you have been with me through all the bad times. When I got fired, you stuck right beside me. When my business went under, there you were. When we lost the house, you were there. When I got shot, you stuck with me. When my health started failing, you were still by my side. "And you know what?"

"What, dear?" she asked gently, smiling to herself.

"I think you're bad luck."

