



"Encouraging transforming ministry to all persons affected by relational brokenness resulting in sexual sin."

June 2004

Beginning With Us

By Karen Booth

In a plenary address at a past Exodus conference entitled "How Should We Respond?" speaker Joe Dallas challenged Christian believers to examine what we've done – or failed to do – about homosexuality, remembering always that we represent God by our words and deeds. Because Dallas believes we have fallen short in many respects, he hears God calling the church to repent – to repent of its own "in-house" immorality, of its inappropriate responses to homosexual persons, and of its failure to take a prophetic stand against pro-gay activism in our culture. And he also hears God inviting the Church to recommit – to reach out boldly to sexual strugglers, speak the truth in love, and walk alongside them in their journey of healing and change.*

Over the next three issues, our TC newsletter will address Dallas' three areas of concern, beginning with this article focusing on Christian sexual purity. First, consider some recent statistics:

- Sex outside of marriage has reached major proportions. In 1960 and 1970, half a million couples were living together; by 2000 the number had jumped to 5 million, with half of all married couples living together before "tying the knot." 25-33% of surveyed men and 17-25% of surveyed women admitted to having had at least one extramarital sexual experience – that's 19 million husbands and 12 million wives who have cheated on their spouse. And the National Council on Sexual Addiction Compulsivity estimates that 6%-8% of Americans are sex addicts, approximately 16-21 million people.
- Our nation is in the midst of a pornography plague. This is especially true on the Internet where there are somewhere between 1.2 to 1.4 million adult websites. A fourth of all search engine requests are porn related, and a third of the visitors to porn sites are women. But there is a major price to pay. The American Association of Matrimonial Lawyers reports that Internet pornography was a contributing factor in half of all their divorce cases in 2003.
- The average American adolescent will view nearly 14,000 sexual references by the time he or she reaches 18 years of age. Three million kids aged 17 and under will visit an adult pornographic website, and the average age for a first-time visit will be 11. Increasingly, young people are acting on what they see and hear. In several recent surveys, 42% of the guys and 33% of the girls aged 15-17 have had sexual intercourse and 21% of the ninth graders have slept with four or more partners. People under the age of 25 account for two-thirds of all STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) in the US, with 19 million teens newly infected each year. There are 1 million teen pregnancies in the US each year, 85% of them unplanned. Yet a *Los Angeles Times* poll reported that over half of the adult respondents thought it was OK to have a child out of wedlock.
- Polls of Christians show little difference. Surveys done by *Christianity Today* found that 23% of those surveyed had an extramarital affair and almost half indicated they had done something sexually inappropriate. Over a third of the surveyed pastors indicated a problem with pornography. A similar survey by *Leadership Magazine* found that 12% of surveyed clergy admitted to an affair, while 23% had engaged in sexually inappropriate behavior with someone

other than their spouse. And roughly 42% of conservative Christian teens are fully sexually active by the age of 18.**

Why is this happening within the Body of Christ? And why doesn't the Church have a stronger voice or more effective influence on the moral issues affecting our nation? John Smid, Executive Director of "Love in Action," also believes it's because we haven't effectively dealt with the sexual sin within our own ranks. In a recent newsletter he wrote,

I recognize that as a body of believers we do not have a very good reputation (with those involved in sexual immorality.) This is because we have not been honest about our own struggles with pornography, adultery, fornication, commitment to families, and the like. We have neglected to challenge each other in areas of relationship purity.

I believe that we would do well to listen intently to the complaints of others who might appear to disagree with us. God is calling us to remove the logs in our own eyes before we attempt to deal with the specks in other's eyes. (Matthew 7:1-5). Are we willing to humble ourselves and admit that statistics show that divorce is growing to extreme levels within our churches? Are we willing to admit that we have been unfaithful in our marriages and that we have poorly modeled family commitment due to the prospects of monetary gain?

I believe we must as a church do a much better job of upholding biblical standards across the board. Many of our churches are close to moral bankruptcy. This is hard to admit, but we must pay attention ... God is calling us to humble ourselves and seek His face by leaving our sinful behaviors. Then He will heal our land.

To add to the problem, in many local churches sex is simply not discussed at all. While the world bombards Christians with sexual messages and images, pastors and lay leadership remain silent. But healing and freedom from sexual sin happens in a local church only when its people understand God's will for sexual expression and are committed to sexual purity. And it happens when church leaders develop an atmosphere of honesty, confession, forgiveness and accountability that's as commonplace as pot luck suppers and hymn sings. When is the last time someone in your church lifted up a sexual temptation during prayer request time? If your answer is "never," or "seldom," then you have some work to do.

You might receive encouragement from a pastor in Nashville who sent a letter to every man in his church, encouraging them to "out" themselves to him in regard to their sexual sin, to begin to relate to each other honestly, and to seek the help and support they needed to become sexually pure. The potential for a messy situation and resultant "fallout" was enormous. But by taking the risk and facing the truth redemptively, this pastor gained much for his flock and for the Lord. He reports that he received calls from many men who saw that letter as the first sign of hope for them in the gospel.

Leslee Unruh, founder and director of Abstinence Clearinghouse, writes – "... the future spiritual livelihood of the Body of Christ relies, in part, upon our willingness to face the monster of seduction." If you're willing to face down the monster of seduction and minister gospel hope to sexual strugglers, then TC recommends the following resources on sexual purity, honesty and accountability:

Books – *The Every Man's Battle, Every Young Man's Battle and Every Woman's Battle* book series by Arterburn, Stoeker and Ethridge, *Too Close to the Flame: Recognizing and Avoiding Sexualized Relationships* by Greg Jantz (available through Focus on the Family), and *Strength In Weakness: Healing Sexual and Relational Brokenness* by Andy Comiskey

Desert Stream Ministries (Andy Comiskey, Executive Director)
PO Box 17635, Anaheim CA 92817-7635

714-779-6899 or www.desertstream.org

Sexual purity support groups across the US and in 22 countries. Resources include in-depth Bible Studies – Living Water, Cross Current, SALT and the River (high school and young adult) dealing with relational brokenness and sexuality. Leader training is held each year on the West Coast and at Sandy Cove Retreat Center in Northeast Maryland.

Pure Freedom

814-234-6072 or www.purefreedom.org

Equipping Christians to enjoy abundant lives of sexual purity. Resources include the books/studies *And the Bride Wore White* (for women), *Who Moved the Goal Post* (for men) and *Secret Keeper: The Delicate Power of Modesty*." Pure Freedom" events are scheduled nationally or individually for local churches.

Enlighten Communications, Inc.

P.O. Box 270236, Littleton, CO 80127

800-786-8283 or www.enlightencom.com/

Inspires young people to embrace the benefits of character and abstinence and to seriously consider the physical, emotional and spiritual consequences of sexual activity outside marriage. Resources include "Sex Has a Price Tag" videos and cds, and a 4-session video curriculum "Sex, Love and Relationships."

National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families

800 Compton Rd., Ste 9224

Cincinnati, OH 45231

513-521-6227

www.nationalcoalition.org/materials.html

Ministry devoted to defending Biblical sexuality and to protecting families from the harms of pornography. Their resources include "Tips and Talking Points: An Age-Appropriate Guide Book for Discussing the Harms of Pornography with Your Family."

Internet filtering and tracking/accountability services – Many service providers offer filtering software and programs. A Google search under "internet filtering" will turn up many options.

Accountability partners are offered through Eye Promise from Promise Keepers at

www.promisekeepers.org/resc/resc130.htm and Covenant Eyes at www.covenanteyes.com

www.afafilter.com

*Joe Dallas' full message is available in booklet form from Focus on the Family. A shorter reprint is included in the Transforming Congregations Ministry Information Packet. Or you may request a reprint of the same article from the *Exodus Impact*, May 2003 issue from Exodus International.

**Most of these statistics were taken from the website of the National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families. The American Association of Matrimonial Lawyers statistic is quoted in the Harvest USA Newsletter for Summer 2004. And the statistic about Christian teens is from the November/December 2003 issue of *Ministries Today*.

The Marriage Debate: Part 3 – “The Slippery Slope”

In his commentary in the March-April edition of *Seed and Harvest*, Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry’s Dean, Peter C. Moore, made the following observations about morality, same-sex behavior and marriage. Responding to criticism about the consecration of openly gay Episcopal bishop Gene Robinson, he wrote:

Without Jesus Christ, something else becomes our center and our *de facto* moral authority. For example, we must admit that at least some of the opposition to the consecration (of Robinson) is culturally conditioned. Many people are revolted by the idea, not because Scripture teaches that gay sex is inherently disordered and wrong, but because they are culturally incapable of accepting it ... Many are convinced – not by their faith, but by their upbringing, schooling, teaching, or media exposure – that sex belongs only in the context of traditional marriage. If their ideas are only culturally induced, they can also be culturally discredited.*

Elsewhere in his article, Dean Moore included portions of a speech given recently at Brown University by novelist/essayist Tom Wolfe. Wolfe lamented the degeneration and decay of our culture as evidenced in a strident political battle between three local candidates in Manhattan – one openly lesbian, one openly gay and one apologetically straight. While the two homosexuals touted their sexuality as a mark of honesty and integrity, the other man assured the voters that his heterosexuality would not affect his public policy making. Wolfe concluded by saying, “Only if you believe that there is a God in heaven who can point his finger at you and say ‘Thou shalt,’ and ‘Thou shalt not,’ do you have any basis for moral decisions that are anything more than your own selfish preferences, or culturally-induced attitudes.”

If selfish preferences and culturally-induced attitudes win the day in our national debate about sexuality and marriage, then we are on a very slippery slope. While some gay activists argue that official sanction of same-sex unions will benefit all – by stabilizing gay and lesbian relationships and strengthening and affirming heterosexual marriage – just the opposite has proven to be the case.

Dr. Stanley Kurtz has studied and written extensively about the “marriage cultures” of Scandinavia and the Netherlands, countries that are far more “gay-friendly” than ours. He has discovered that since the advent of legalized same-sex unions in the late 80s and early 90s, marriage overall has declined instead of being strengthened. Out-of-wedlock childbirth has in some areas more than doubled, and in two very liberal regions, marriage has almost ceased to exist at all. While Kurtz did not conclude that same-sex unions caused this erosion in marriage, he argued that the two go hand-in-hand in a downward moral spiral, each reinforcing and abetting the other.

A world of same-sex marriages is a world of no-strings heterosexual hookups and 50 percent divorce rates. The divorce revolution, the sexual revolution, and the homosexual-rights movement all emerged simultaneously in the sixties, and the entirely related advances in these three social movements explain why we are on the verge of legalized same-sex marriage today. Again, you can argue that the gains in freedom and tolerance are worth it, but don't try to tell me that the costs to marriage — and to children — of our new cultural mode aren't real.**

Furthermore, if marriage is redefined to include same-sex couples, what prevents a future redefinition to include other arrangements of consenting individuals? If monogamous, heterosexual marriage is an unfair imposition of Judeo-Christian belief and thus a violation of church and state – as has been argued by some in the Massachusetts case – how then do we counter or resist polygamy and incest, prohibitions of which are also based on Scriptural understandings?

If you doubt that we could slip that far, then you need to think again. A growing cultural movement called *polyamory* is beginning to make its mark on the edges of American culture and faith. In a classic case of “have your cake and eat it too,” polyamorists argue that sexual relations with more than one person at a time for any length of time is completely moral as long as everyone is honest and consents to the relationship. An independent group called “UUs for Polyamory Awareness” was formed within the ranks of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and even in that admittedly ultra-liberal religious body, it is making waves.

What some gay activists advocate in same-sex marriage is essentially polyamory, sanitized for public consumption. In an interview with the Dallas morning news, Rev. Troy Perry (founder of America’s largest gay denomination – the Metropolitan Community Church) said –

Monogamy is not a word the gay community uses. It doesn't believe that heterosexuals are monogamous anymore. Just look at all the divorces in America ... We talk about fidelity. That means you live in a loving, caring, honest relationship with your partner. Because we can't marry, we have people with widely varying opinions as to what that means. Some would say that committed couples could have multiple sexual partners as long as there's no deception. Each couple has to decide. (Dallas Morning News, July 5, 2003.)

If steps are not taken to preserve current forms of traditional marriage, John O’Sullivan predicts that over the next decade Americans will find ourselves living with a three-fold “marriage culture: 1. same and opposite-sex civil unions, 2. household partnerships involving any constellation of consenting adults, not necessarily in sexual relationship with each other, and 3. strict monogamous heterosexual marriage among conservative faith traditions. O’Sullivan suggests that each arrangement will have to compete for “customers,” and only time will tell which kinds of partnership contracts thrive. (“Marriage – American Style: The End Ahead,” National Review Online, July 10, 2003.)

Andy Comiskey is the Director of Desert Streams Ministry, which is devoted to helping people heal relationally and achieve sexual purity. A former gay man, Comiskey has issued a clarion call for Christians to get more involved in our cultural battles over marriage.

As Christians seeking to be compassionate, and relevant to the market place, our mouths have nearly been shut. Our sin is not that of the raving fundamentalist; it is the sin of passive, naïve centrism. For this we must repent. For too long we have not exercised our rightful inheritance. As Christians, we hold the keys to what constitutes the Designer’s vision for humanity, and His repair for the broken image. We must find our voices today. Otherwise we participate in the desecration of God’s image in humanity. (From “True Justice: Halting the Push for Gay Marriage,” from Desert Stream Ministries website www.desertstream.org/documents/injustice3_.pdf)

TC recommends the following books for more thoughtful information about the marriage debate:

- *Marriage Under Fire: Why We Must Win This War* by Dr. James Dobson
- *The Truth About Same-Sex Marriage: 6 Things You Need to Know About What's Really at Stake* by Erwin R. Lutzer. (Order from Dr. Lutzer’s website at www.marriageofsamesex.com/)
- *Same-Sex Marriage* by Mathew D. Staver

*Recent NY Times (Dec 2003) and Newsweek (Feb 2004) polls on teen attitudes confirmed Moore’s concerns. While younger people tended to be more pro-life than their elders, the same age group (18-29) were at least 10% more likely to embrace a changing definition of marriage. Peter Sprigg, director of the Family Research Council’s Center for Marriage and Family Studies, believes that’s because “we have a whole generation that has been raised on pro-homosexual mythology.”

** From “Love and Marriage: A combination necessarily exclusive to a man and a woman,” National Review Online, July 30, 2001. Dr. Kurtz has a PhD in social anthropology from Harvard, and is currently a research fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institute. His work is complex and has been subject to some controversy. Most of his articles can be read at National Review Online – www.nationalreview.com

United Methodist Pro-gay Activists Test Denominational Will

United Methodists committed to “full participation of gay and lesbian people in the life of the church” continue to test our denominational will in the areas of ordination and pastoral appointment. In a sermon delivered April 27, 2003, Associate Pastor Beth Stroud of First UMC Germantown (FUMCOG), admitted that she was living in an open “covenant” relationship with another woman. In response, charges were filed against her, and over the last year she has been involved in a supervisory process with Bishop Peter Weaver. At this writing, the case was reviewed in July by the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference Committee on Investigation, which recommended moving it on to church trial. A trial date will be set after Bishop Weaver selects a retired Bishop to preside.

First UMC is a Reconciling Congregation and it has given full support to Rev. Stroud, lauding her for “be(ing) open with the congregation and the larger church about her life as a lesbian in covenant relationship with a partner.” In a somewhat manipulative step, the congregation even attempted to influence members of the Committee on Investigation, sending all of them information packets containing legal briefs and letters of support for Rev. Stroud. Church leadership has set up a legal defense fund for her, and also “assured Beth that her employment at FUMCOG is secure, regardless of what happens to her ordination credentials.” A similar situation happened with the Rev. Greg Dell, pastor of Broadway United Methodist Church in Chicago. Found guilty in 1999 of officiating at same-sex unions, he was suspended for a year. However, the church created a position for him as Director of “In All Things Charity” and hired him as a “consultant” to their interim pastor. Dell was reappointed to Broadway in 2000.

You can find out more about this case or follow the judicial process by logging on to FUMCOG’s website at www.bethstroud.info/fumcog20040518.shtml

In what could become another denominational test, self-avowed lesbian Rev. Katie Ladd has been appointed by Bishop Elias Galvan to Seattle’s Woodland Park United Methodist Church – the church Karen Dammann was serving when she was brought to church trial last year for disclosing her practice of lesbianism. In addition to Dammann and Ladd, the Rev. Mark Williams – an openly self-avowed gay man – has also served at Woodland Park.

Ladd and Williams both publicly disclosed their homosexuality at their 2001 Annual Conference session. When charges were filed against Williams, he refused to reveal to the Committee on Investigation whether or not he was currently “practicing” and the charges were dropped for insufficient evidence. He remains a minister in good standing in the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference. Ladd has never had a complaint against her, and news articles do not indicate that she has ever acknowledged currently engaging in lesbian sexual activity. Bishop Galvan’s office has stated, that he and the cabinet (District Superintendents) are “not aware of any reason that Katie Ladd is not fully appointable within the church.” Ladd herself does not believe she is in violation of church law.

Larry and Betty Baker's Story (Shared at the TC luncheon at General Conference 2004)

In 1970 we were a happy, young married couple with two beautiful blonde little girls. Larry's years of military service were behind him and we were excited about the career he had begun as a commercial airline pilot. We were also excited about the Lord and our growing faith, and were actively serving Him in a Bible-believing church. We wanted another child but knew it would be difficult for me, and so we began to look into adoption. Although we first considered Vietnam, the Lord led us through a series of events to adopt a precious baby boy from Korea. Larry was able to fly to Seoul to get him, and the girls and I had our first glimpse of two brown eyes peering over the top of his daddy's shoulder at Kennedy Airport on a rainy day in April of 1972.

From the very beginning, he was ours – no question! On his first Sunday at church, a little friend came up to our older daughter and asked, "What is he, Chinese?" And she replied with eight-year-old indignation, "No, he's my brother!" And so he was.

He has been such a joy and blessing in our family over the years – a thoughtful, intelligent, caring son and brother who was never in trouble and graduated with honors from a top university. There were times he struggled with prejudice, and we talked and prayed about it. He loved going to Korean culture camp, where even the counselors were adoptees; and during his college years he made a trip back to Korea with a large group of adoptees. On his return home, he helped care for a little boy who was coming to his adopted family. It made our son all the more appreciative and loving.

A few years later, we began to suspect he was involved in homosexuality. When we asked him outright about it, we assured him that nothing could stop us from loving him or claiming him as our son. It has been a long and difficult road since then, made more difficult by his rejection of a loving God. He is still involved in homosexuality, but he is still our son. We hold him and his partner up in prayer every day and ask the Lord to mold them into the men He wants them to be. Ours is a close, loving family; both our daughters are married and we have four beautiful grandchildren. But there is division among us on the acceptance of homosexuality as a normal lifestyle. There is still a lot of love and joy in our family, but there is a shadow over every holiday and family event.

I cannot tell you how much the Lord has blessed and helped us to grow in Him through this. He has led us to the Transforming Congregations ministry and given us a burden to help other families who struggle with this problem and other problems of sexual brokenness. You see, we're not alone, and it's not just homosexuality. The first thing the Lord told us was that we must deal with our own sexual sin before pointing a finger elsewhere. That involved a lot of painful confession: of early sexual activity, abortion and adultery. But today we are forgiven, healed and made whole by the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.

Many of you may know of similar situations in your own church and community. If you don't, it's not because it's not there; it's because individuals and families are ashamed to tell you. It's because we as a church have not educated ourselves and reached out to these people with the unconditional, compassionate love of Jesus. Every community has people who struggle with unwanted same-sex attractions, struggle with sexual promiscuity, the lure of adultery, and rampant pornography. A recent *Newsweek* article cited a *Christianity Today* study that discovered 40% of responding clergy had visited sexually explicit websites.

It may be that some of you are among those strugglers. Jesus Christ can heal and free you; you can be a great help to others. Will you join us and help lead our church to stand firm on Scripture and the *Discipline*, and open its arms to those who need our help?

New on Our Resource Shelf

What's all the fuss about homosexuality? And why get so bent-out-of-shape over sexual sin? Should thinking and talking about sex really be that much of a priority for the church? I often hear those kinds of questions when I travel and speak. If you wonder about these questions, too, then you need to read Rev. Jack Hayford's new book – **Fatal Attractions: Why Sex Sins Are Worse Than Others**. (Regal Books, 2004) With clarity and compassion, Hayford shows how sexual sins are worse, not because God finds them hard to forgive, but because of the personal and collateral damage they inflict in our lives. It's a "must read" for anyone who has been wounded by their own or someone else's sexual immorality, or for those who want to minister wholeness and recovery to others. You can download the first chapter at http://regalbooks.com/Fatal_Attractions_sample.pdf

Joe Dallas is one of the "founding fathers" of ex-gay ministry, and over several decades he has counseled not only same-sex strugglers, but also the family members and friends that love them. He distills years of wisdom into his new book – **When Homosexuality Hits Home: What to do When a Loved One Says They're Gay**. Balancing compassion with conviction, Dallas counsels conservative Christians on how to deal with the conflicts and roller-coaster emotions they often go through when children, spouses, siblings or friends declare their homosexuality. And he does so in a way that strengthens rather than weakens the relationships. Each chapter includes questions at the end for personal reflection or group study/discussion. The first chapter – about the stages of grief that follow the death of family expectations – is available for download at www.harvesthousepublishers.com

Truth in Love: The Bible and Same Sex Behavior is a new 2 DVD set by Robert Gagnon. Based on his recent scholarly work *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*, it's seven half-hour segments cover all the Biblical basics – the issue of sexuality, Biblical interpretation with integrity, the Old and New Testament testimony, Jesus' teachings on sexuality and pastoral concerns. Perfect for an in depth Bible study, it's available for \$25 from New Creation: Marriage and Family Advocates, PO Box 390535, Minneapolis MN 55439. (888-696-1828)

Dr Warren Throckmorton has been mentioned many times in previous TC newsletters. Director of College Counseling and Associate Professor of Psychology at Grove City College, he recently released a DVD/Video documentary called **I Do Exist: Is a Changed Life Possible?** A fascinating look at the lives of five former homosexuals, the film describes how people first came to identify themselves as gay and how they made the profound reorientation to heterosexuality. The testimony of Noe' Gutierrez is especially powerful. Appearing previously in the pro-gay "It's Elementary" school curriculum, his life has since turned around through the healing power of Jesus. The film ends with practical suggestions about how churches, schools and communities can get involved. \$19.99 through Dr. Throckmorton's website – www.drthrockmorton.com/idoexist.asp or contact him at Dr. Warren Throckmorton, Grove City College, 100 Campus Drive, Grove City, PA 16127. (724.458.2000)

Upcoming Events

“Sex and the Supremacy of Christ”

The Desiring God 2004 National Conference

Sept 24-26, Minneapolis MN

888-346-4700 or www.desiringGod.org

The conference will affirm the God-given goodness of sexuality, while teaching attendees how to use Biblical truth to free the church from cultural and sexual captivity. Workshops include “Ten Steps Toward Sexual Sin: Pitfalls and Protections for Christian Leaders.”

Desert Streams Leadership Training – “Living Waters,” “Cross Current,” “Salt” and “The River”

Oct 10-16 – East Coast Training at Sandy Cove Retreat Center, North East, Maryland

Feb 27-Mar 5 – West Coast Training at Rancho Capistrano Retreat Center, San Juan Capistrano, California

For more information and registration applications, contact Desert Stream Ministries at

www.desertstream.org/trainings5.htm or 714-779-6899

“Living in Freedom: Equipping Our Churches, Our Families and Our Friends To Proclaim Freedom From Homosexuality”

Oct 22-23, Westgate Church in San Jose, California

Sponsored by Westgate Church and Transformed Image, a local Exodus affiliate, the workshops and plenary addresses will offer practical resources for ministering to same-sex strugglers. Speakers include Joe Dallas, Dr. Kathy Koch and Rev. Karen Booth.

Contact Conference Coordinator, Terrence Toon at: Westgate Church, 1735 Saratoga Ave, San Jose, CA 95129. Phone: (408) 252-3700 x10 Email: info@living-in-freedom.org or visit the conference website at www.living-in-freedom.org

For information about other regional and national events, check the Exodus website at

<http://exodus.to/ministry-to-exgays-events.shtml>