

Reaching the Non Christian Homosexual or Lesbian

By Patricia Lawrence.

Two things have inspired this newsletter. The first was a gay pride parade. It was gay pride week and as I was flipping through the TV channels I came upon a gay pride parade. As I watched, I found myself feeling very sad. Sad for this group of people who think they should be proud to be almost naked, shaking their bodies in everyone's face. Sad that they think this is their only way of getting respect and affirming their sense of identity. Behind the proud faces I know many are lost and hurting people. The second thing happened a week later. I was worshipping in church and was struck by the song we were singing, "**RISE UP, YOU CHAMPIONS OF GOD,..RISE UP AND BEAR HIS LIGHT ABROAD WE'LL REACH THIS GENERATION**".

The song encourages us to find ways to reach with our generation. Part of our generation is the homosexual community. We need to find a way to reach them—a group of people who need healing and need restoration of their value systems that mistakenly say what they are doing is OK. The song goes on to say, "**WE'VE GOT OUR MARCHING ORDERS NOW IS THE TIME TO CARRY THEM FORTH**". How can we reach them?

Reaching them will not be easy. Many people involved in homosexuality don't trust Christians because they believe we hate them and we want them to go to hell. How can we overcome their mistaken beliefs about us? It usually doesn't work to just walk up to someone and tell them what they are doing is sin. We need a different way to reach them. We have to gain respect, learn about their needs and hurts, and lay a foundation of trust before we can speak into their lives. There are 2 stages to laying that foundation:

Cultivate a relationship with the person, just as Christ cultivated a relationship with you.

The **first stage** is to cultivate a personal relationship with the person. This includes learning about their needs and hurts and laying a foundation of trust so that they will be willing to let us speak into their lives. You have to cultivate a relationship with them just as Christ cultivated a relationship with you. How do you do this? Consider your own experience with Jesus and consider the model that Jesus gave us.

a) See a person not a homosexual or lesbianism.

They need Jesus as much as anyone else. I have a step aunt that has been with her girlfriend for as long as I can remember, I love her very much and when I get the opportunity I like to go and visit her and stay with them. She lives about a 4 to 5 hour airplane ride away. I recall a time when I was visiting her; I met all her lesbian friends and went to many events with them. At the end of the week she said to me, "You treated my friends with respect and kindness, now I want to hear what you believe."

Many homosexuals and lesbians are interesting and nice people. They, like all of us, want to be loved, accepted and have friends. We must pray that we will have the heart of Jesus and see them the way He does. When that happens we will see people, not behaviors.

b) Actively love that person.

When we watch the gay parade and listen to what people are saying, it is hard to imagine loving them. When you love them as Jesus loves them (He gave his life for them) you will see that the gay parade is a way for them to dull the pain and fill the void. The homosexual doesn't want to appear weak because they are afraid of rejection. They are afraid that they will have to give up the very lifestyle that makes them miserable. People like this become experts at hiding their fears, yet they are waiting for someone to love them.

If we are going to make a difference in people's lives we must have love that demonstrates itself in actions. What kind of actions? Actions that show kindness and meet needs. Taking action will move us out of our comfort zone. Choose to take risks, stretch, grow, learn and force yourself to get out of your Christian bubble—your spiritual comfort zone! You never know what God has in store for you when you are willing to be His vessel.

c) Talk with them about Jesus and show Him to be personal rather than an impersonal 'higher power.'

Often many of us want to talk about homosexuality or their behavior first, instead of Jesus. What they do won't matter at the end of the day if they do not know Jesus. We must talk about the most important topic there is, Jesus. There is true, immeasurable power in one name. Ever notice that anybody, even Christians, can talk about God as a higher power, Our Creator, even our Father, but that we all tend to avoid referring to Him as Jesus Christ. There's just something powerful about the name of Jesus. When you say it, walls start falling down, people's hearts begin to soften and lives start to change. His name is explosive material. Even when a person seems outwardly hostile and negative, when Jesus' name enters the conversation, something begins to churning on the inside. You can be sure that Satan understands the power of Jesus' name. That's why he doesn't want you to use it, except, of course, in vain. Remember the devil has lost. Realize you are speaking truth; you are taking part in something much larger than yourself. God does not expect you to change anyone. Your job is just to go ahead and speak the name of Jesus and say the words He brings to your mind.

Opening Doors

One time when I was visiting my lesbian aunt, we were out for breakfast and she said to me, "Pat, I know you are ashamed about me being a lesbian and if I could change I would for you." My answer was, "I am not ashamed of you. You are very important to me. What I want for you is to know my Jesus because Jesus loves you so much." My aunt started to cry, "I so much want what you have."

You never know who is at the edge of a decision for Christ. Many homosexuals and lesbians are wrestling with God, and He's powerful and unrelenting. Sometimes a simple word on your part might be the thing God uses to finally reach someone. The song says, "**FEEL NOW THE BURDEN OF THE LORD. FEEL HOW HE LONGS TO SAVE THEM. FEEL NOW FOR THOSE WHO NEVER HEARD ABOUT THE SON HE GAVE THEM**".

Don't allow yourself to think of anyone as hopeless or beyond God's reach. I have seen the most hardened and angry people come to Jesus.

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d) Share your story.

One day my aunt I were in the car for a 3 hour drive and we were talking. She was asking me questions about what I thought about homosexuality and I was answering her. At one point she started to share what she felt. She said, "I know you will laugh at what I feel and think but this is what I feel." She shared about the God within her (she's very new age) and how she had this skin disease. She believed it was a punishment for being unfaithful towards her girlfriend. All the time she was talking, I was praying and asking God what I should say. When she finished sharing, I affirmed that I would never laugh at what she feels and how she thinks. I might not agree with her but I would never laugh at her because she mattered to me. Then I said, "I am so glad that I know that Jesus died for me so that I would not have to punish myself for the wrong I have done. He died so that I could be free of guilt." I continued on to share what Jesus Christ had done for *me*.

A *personal* testimony is the most non-threatening way to tell an unbeliever why Jesus is important to you. Even if you never struggled with homosexuality, your story is compelling because it's personal and experiential. You can prove it's true because you were there! It can't be refuted. The homosexual needs to know of a Jesus who loves and cares for them.

Plant seeds of spiritual truth, remembering homosexuality is not a salvation issue but an obedience issue

The **second stage** is planting seeds of spiritual truth. In this stage you sow the gospel, not a code of ethics, in the homosexual's heart. You fertilize with examples and new information and you keep weeds in check by rooting out misunderstanding. You sow seeds by being open, asking questions and listening.

a) Listen to their story.

One way of sowing seeds is by being open, asking questions and listening. No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care. Don't assume you know why they are gay. Learn about the person to whom you're talking. Learn about their life, interests, needs, struggles, joys, and family, as well as their opinion, feelings, or beliefs about God.

b) Don't be afraid to say "I love you."

Homosexuals and Lesbians need to know there is non-erotic love. I remember in my own healing process. I had a Christian woman who had become my friend and I began to fall in love with her. It upset me so much. When I finally told her I thought she would abandon me. But she didn't. Instead she told me she wasn't surprised because this was the only way I knew how to relate to other women. Then she affirmed that she loved me but not as a lover; as a friend, and that would not change. She showed me non-erotic love, something we need to learn by experience

c) Know what you are offering.

Be prepared to share Jesus' story. Telling God's story is where we unleash elemental forces and decide eternal destinies. This is so crucial. When you begin to see the lostness of the homosexual person, his or her emptiness and woundedness and how precariously he's balancing on the edge of eternal suffering, your fears will begin to recede. A precious soul is at stake. That realization will motivate you to risk sharing the most earth-shaking truth of all time. But beware! When your concern for the homosexual causes you to bring up the name of Jesus, things are going to get a bit unpredictable. **Lives will change!**

The song continues to say, "**GO FORTH, JESUS LOVES THEM.. TAKE THE GOSPEL.. THE TIME IS NOW THE HARVEST IS RIPENING GO FORTH!**" *Will you arise and go forth? What will you do?*

What Can I Do?

Pray. God works through Exodus only when you pray. Exodus needs people who will pray for our ministry to youth. Will you send us a letter telling us that God has called you to pray?

Give. Exodus's ministry to people depends on your financial support. Most of our support comes from individual donors, not institutions, company sponsors or government grants. Will you give as God directs you?

Join in Ministry. Some Christians feel they cannot participate because they have never been a homosexual. As a result, Exodus works without the resources that many other Christian ministries have received. We need people to bring their gifts & talents in ministry service and ministry development to Exodus—the potential harvest is vast, the workers are few. God has no other plan than to work through the people He has called. Will you let God use your gifts & talents at Exodus?