

God's Work to Redeem and Transform People Involved in Homosexuality

How does God Redeem and Transform People Involved in Homosexuality? I believe that God does this work of redemption and transformation by calling our attention to the real problem faced by all human beings, by dealing effectively with this real problem, and finally by restoring the true identity of His created human beings. I like to call this approach “the three trees.”

First of all, God redeems people involved in homosexuality by helping them to see that homosexual behavior is a symptom of a deeper problem, and not the problem itself. In other words, homosexual behavior or practice is one of the many ways human beings have developed to attempt to find meaning, purpose and identity for their lives. The real issue underneath homosexuality then, is independence from God. This is the original sin that in turn produces all resulting sins, including any attempt to find purpose, meaning or identify apart from our Creator. This search originated when Adam and Eve decided to be God. In that moment they lost their true sense of identity and purpose. This independence generates not only homosexual behavior, but every other form of sin committed by fallen people. So, every single human being is caught in this dilemma: created for fellowship with the Creator, but now unable to do so. Thus, no longer knowing who we are, we all embark in this journey to try to find meaning on our own. The tragedy is that the search for identity, meaning and purpose outside of God, whether in good or bad things always leads to the creation of more false identities or selves. This search eventually results in bondage and slavery. Therefore, this original sin is the root cause of all sinful lifestyles, whether it is pharisaic behavior or blatant sinful sexual activity. God points to this inner reality and not only to its outward expression. This is extremely important, for our natural tendency is to deal with the symptoms of the problem and not the root causes. This is the first tree: the tree of death – rebellion against God. This is the tree of independence from God and every fruit it produces is a result of such rebellion. It is no use trying to remove the “bad” fruit. It comes back the following season. That is why God provides a way to do away with this tree.

Next, God redeems people involved in homosexual behavior by dealing effectively with the real issue. He does this by what is termed “the Great Exchange” by Bridges and Bevington¹: our sin for his righteousness. Jesus takes up our sin – the noun here is in the singular, not plural – the original independence from God that produces all other sins (plural), upon Himself, and in exchange, He gives us His own righteousness! Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin (singular) of the world! By doing this, Jesus can take us back to a personal, meaningful and vital relationship with our Heavenly Father, our true purpose (Colossians 3:10 and John 17:3). We cannot earn this righteousness by our efforts. Jesus acquires this righteousness for us, and the Holy Spirit makes it a reality in our lives in a practical way (Romans 5:5 and 2 Corinthians 3:18). Thus this righteousness I cannot possibly produce becomes mine by the action of the Holy Spirit. Once I am made righteous again, I can come into the presence of the Righteous God and be accepted and received by Him! A very powerful illustration of this truth is the story of the lamb. Two ewes gave birth to their lambs almost at the same time. However, one of the baby lambs died and one of the ewes also died. So there was a mother sheep without its baby lamb, and a baby lamb without its

¹ BRIDGES, Jerry, and BEVINGTON, Bob. *The Great Exchange*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2007.

mother. The hungry orphan tried to approach the mother who had lost her son, but she would not accept him, for she did not recognize him as hers. So the shepherds took some of the blood of the dead lamb and smeared the orphan lamb with it, and brought the blood-covered little orphan to the mother that had lost her own lamb. When she smelled the blood-covered lamb, she recognized the scent of her own baby and *accepted the orphan as if it were her own son!* This is precisely what happens to anyone who accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior – God detects the precious blood of His own son on that person and only then receives him or her as if that person were Jesus Himself! This is very important, because one does not have to change first in order to be accepted by God; in fact, one cannot do this, for it is impossible! We are only accepted by God if we are also holy, perfect and pure as He Himself is! But being sinners this is impossible for us. But the complete work of Jesus on the Cross means that when I come to God covered with the blood of the Lamb, He sees me holy, pure and perfect as His own Son. In fact, He receives me as if I were Jesus Himself! This is the second tree: The Cross of Christ.

Finally, God transforms people involved in homosexuality by giving them a new identity. This is the new birth. God makes us into a new tree – The True Vine (John 15). In this tree we receive life, meaning, purpose, and identity from Jesus, and in the right season we produce righteous fruit. We are given a new nature and a new name – beloved sons and daughters of God. We are also given a new family – the community of believers where we can help each other grow into maturity. The search for purpose and identity is over! True purpose and identity are restored: We can now resume the adventure of getting to know our heavenly Father, and in the process, become more and more like Him! Our goal now is no longer self fulfillment, but growth into maturity – become more and more like Jesus, so we can get to know our Creator completely (Colossians 3:10). And as we grow into emotional and spiritual maturity, we naturally leave behind “childish” things, including our search for identity not only in homosexual behavior, but also in anything else apart from God. This is the third tree: the True Vine.

In conclusion, God redeems us by exchanging our sin for Jesus’ righteousness, by giving us a new nature, a new identify and a new purpose. Instead of independence from God, we become dependent on Him, and this dependence produces true freedom. As we shift our focus from homosexual practices and identity as being our focal problem and begin to look at our desire to take God’s place as the real center of our dilemma, and accept God’s plan to deal with this problem, we discover that IN CHRIST we are made new persons; the past loses its power over us. And when we stop looking for our SELVES outside of God, and instead start focusing on God and His complete work through his Son Jesus on the Cross, We discover who we really are: beloved children of God. This TRUTH sets us free and begins the process of transformation and change in our lives.

Willy Torresin de Oliveira

Exodus Brasil

www.exodus.org.br

©Willy Torresin, 2010