



THE NEWSLETTER OF PRODIGAL MINISTRIES

NOVEMBER 2013

Reaching Out

"Reparative therapy" organization? No! Rather...

A Ministry of Healing

Christ-centered...Holy Spirit empowered

"Reparative therapy."

"Sexual reorientation change efforts" ("SOCE").

Just months ago, most of us were unfamiliar with such terms.

Today, we on the board of Prodigal Ministries are, indeed, familiar with these terms and quite possibly most of our readers, also, have heard the terms and have at least a vague understanding of the concepts, which they represent.

We are familiar, in part, because during these past few months secular media

— both hardcopy and electronic — have given considerable coverage to New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie's signing into law Assembly Bill 3371, which forbids licensed professional counselors in that state to "engage in sexual orientation change efforts (more commonly referred to as 'reparative therapy') with a person under 18 years of age."

Almost 12 months prior to enactment of the New Jersey law, California had similar legislation in place.

Since the therapy specifically targeted by these laws is therapy conducted by licensed professional counselors aimed at changing the sexual orientation of individuals, and even more specifically, changing individuals' sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual; and since such change has been through the years and continues to be one outcome experienced by some clients of Prodigal Ministries; we thought that it would be helpful to address this issue and to answer two questions that many of our prayer and financial partners already have posed.

Those questions are: (1) Is Prodigal Ministries a "reparative therapy" organization and/or does Prodigal Ministries engage in "sexual orientation change efforts." And, (2) does the potential of similar legislation coming to Ohio change or even threaten the mission of Prodigal Ministries?

With respect to the first question, the answer is, plainly, "No."

Freeing our clients from feelings of same gender attraction and instilling

opposite gender attraction is not the goal or mission of Prodigal Ministries' counseling — a truth that we make clear to clients prior to their first session.

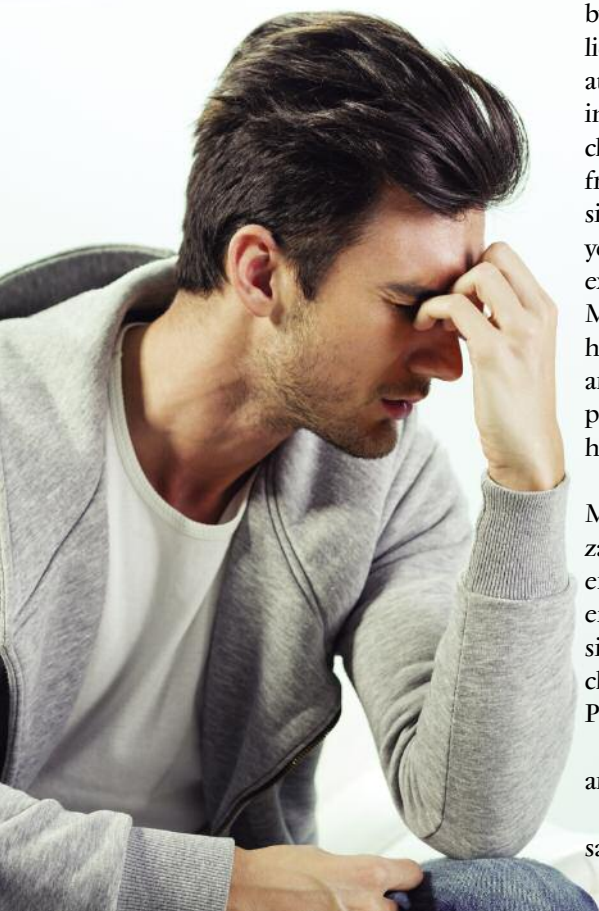
Rather, Prodigal's mission and goal for every client who comes seeking change in their lives, regardless of the nature of their brokenness, is to introduce them to, and/or to help them grow in their walk with, a loving and holy God and Savior and to see them experience the unsurpassed joy of living in obedience to His intent and design for every aspect of their lives, including their sexuality.

Critical to that mission and goal is helping our clients understand the truth clearly set forth in Scripture that God's one and perfect plan for mankind's sexuality is that it be expressed only in the lifelong, monogamous relationship between one man and one woman in marriage and that any distortion of that one plan, including but certainly not limited to, sexual behaviors with persons of the same gender, places the individual in conflict with God.

We also strive to help clients understand the unique, distinct, yet equal roles of men and women — roles grounded in the nature and character of our Triune God — and the necessity of accepting the gender identity into which He created us.

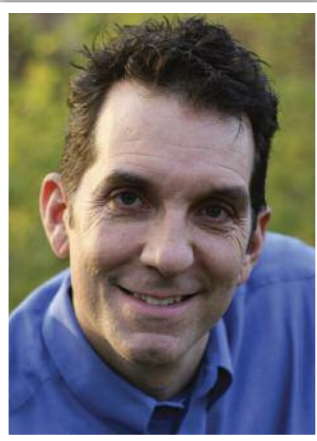
Many, varied and complex are the factors that may contribute to sexual brokenness and gender confusion. Prodigal's staff is trained to help clients identify the factors present in their

continued on page 3



Who is Prodigal Ministries?

What do you do? How do you do it?



Jerry Armelli, one of the founders and current executive director of Prodigal Ministries



*Larry Plum
Chairman, Prodigal Ministries*



PRODIGAL MINISTRIES
P.O. Box 19949
Cincinnati, Ohio 45219-0949
513-861-0011
www.Prodigoal-Ministries.com

Through our *Reaching Out* newsletters this year we have tried to answer for all our readers thoughtful, relevant questions posed to us in person by a few of our friends. We hope that they have been helpful.

Those in-person conversations with a few representative friends re-emphasized to us on the board of directors that whereas those who graciously support Prodigal Ministries through prayer and/or financial assistance know that the organization provides counseling and support for persons struggling with unwanted same gender attraction or other forms of sexual brokenness, they generally do not know how the ministry goes about this specialized calling on a day-to-day basis.

We want all our supporters to understand Prodigal's approach to this ministry. Accordingly, we sat down with executive director Jerry Armelli and asked the "what" and "how" questions others posed to us.

Board – Many, even those familiar with Prodigal Ministries, think of the organization as one that reaches out only to persons struggling with same gender attraction. That is not the case, is it?

JA – While that image is not accurate, it is understandable. Prodigal's roots are, indeed, in the issue of recovery from homosexuality. That is the issue with which I, myself, and Prodigal's two other founders struggled prior to finding freedom through surrender to Jesus.

Further, same gender attraction always has been, and remains, the issue with which a majority of our clients struggle. But mankind's fallen nature has impacted human sexuality in numerous ways, and we are trained and open to dealing with many issues surrounding sexuality. And I always want to add: Regardless of the nature of their struggle — whether it be sexual addiction, pornography addiction, transgenderism, same gender attraction, cross-dressing or other issues surrounding sexuality — we accept and treat individuals with respect and dignity.

Board – How do clients come to Prodigal Ministries? What prompts them to seek out the organization?

JA – Thank you! Your question actually already supplied an important component of my answer. That is — clients do come to us! They seek us out. We don't "solicit" clients.

Most of our clients come to us because they feel enslaved to issues with which they are dealing and want freedom. They find out about us primarily through referrals from churches, former clients or friends or by searching the Internet and finding our Web site. They initially contact us either by phone or through our Web form.

Again, the point that I want to stress is that our clients come seeking the sexual purity and relational wholeness that has eluded them. The vast majority come seeking help for themselves. Some come seeking help for loved ones.

Board – How does Prodigal handle those initial contacts? Is there a screening process?

JA – Yes. Either in person — my preference! — or by phone, I conduct an extensive assessment with each potential client to determine the nature and

"Most of our clients come to us because they feel enslaved to issues with which they are dealing and want freedom."

– Jerry Armelli

extent of the issue with which he/she is dealing and also to determine which of our support services would best serve that individual's needs. One-one-one counseling with me as Prodigal's

sole licensed professional counselor, mentoring with one of our staff, and support groups are among the options.

Board – In the secular counseling world and even in some church circles that have been seduced into a false compassion, there is a philosophy that encour-

ages individuals to accept or embrace some of the very issues from which individuals come to you seeking freedom, especially issues relating to same gender attraction. Is that ever your approach?

JA – No. We believe that God created mankind “for His glory and to reflect His image” and that we achieve that when, empowered by Him, we live in accordance with His original, creative intent in our lives. We believe that we all enter into life in a fallen state, incapable of reflecting His image or achieving wholeness/holiness in our own strength. Our desire, therefore, is to help all our clients understand God’s plan through Christ to redeem us from our fallen nature and to restore us to His original intent and design.

As you stated in addressing the “reparative therapy” question (see “A Ministry of Healing,” page 1), we conclude from Scripture that God’s perfect plan as it pertains to mankind’s sexuality is that human sexuality be expressed only in

the relationship between one man and one woman in marriage, a plan that reflects His very image as well as the mystical relationship between Christ and

“Our desire, therefore, is to help all our clients understand God’s plan through Christ to redeem us from our fallen nature and to restore us to His original intent and design.”

– Jerry Armelli

in God’s glory or the individual’s ultimate good.

We are not persuaded by the theories presented today that homosexuality is genetic, in-born or in any way an unchangeable destiny. (See “What If?” page 1, March 2013 *Reaching Out*) We believe that developmental conditions — conditions such as family dynamics, personality traits, and life events — may leave some individuals predisposed toward a same-gender attraction. Further, we believe that by caring for, ministering to

and mending the wounded places in his/her emotions, belief systems and relational abilities, a person struggling with same gender attraction **can** obtain a heterosexual identity. Change is not immediate nor is it all or nothing. Change is not that way for any of us, regardless of the issues we face. Growth and healing are a lifetime process. However, **obedience** to God’s expressed will for our lives can and should be immediate and we believe that a person can find in Christ a joy that transcends present circumstances, even the circumstance of unwanted attractions.

Board – Do you have a set approach that you utilize in your one-on-one counseling sessions?

JA – Each individual is unique with respect to the nature of their issues, the causal factors underlying their issues, and — this is important — with respect to his/her goals. Critical to our purpose is identifying and working toward the goals of the client, unless, of course, those goals are outside God’s goals and plans for all mankind, goals clearly expressed in His Word.

That having been said, though, there are

continued on back page

Ministry of Healing

continued from front page

lives and to point them toward freedom in Christ.

Ultimately, of course, all such “distortions” are a result of our fallen nature. And Prodigal’s ultimate mission is to walk with and encourage every client on his/her journey toward Holy Spirit empowered purity, obedience, surrender, and new life in Christ. We long for our clients to experience the joy in living that Christ wants us to know ... the joy that transcends all our present circumstances, including even the circumstance of an unwanted same gender attraction.

And so we repeat: Prodigal Ministries is not an organization that engages in “reparative therapy” or “sexual orientation change efforts.”

But then we want to add this glorious truth: Quite frequently, once a client chooses to enter that joyful relationship and identity in Christ, God does graciously, in His timing, remove that person’s same gender attraction, gender confusion or other sexual broken tendency. In His love and power, all things are possible!


QUESTION #2

With respect to the second question — would legislation in Ohio to make SOCE by licensed professional counselors illegal change the mission or challenge the existence of Prodigal Ministries? — the answer, again, is an unqualified “no.”

At the risk of being repetitious, we’ll state again that our mission is not “reparative therapy.” Our mission is to show our compassion and respect for, to walk with, to pray with, to study

Scripture with, and to hold accountable, individuals who come to us seeking purity and freedom in Christ. And Christ, we are confident, will, through the Holy Spirit, continue to bring healing in response to obedience, including, for some, healing in the form of “sexual orientation change.”

But let us follow that question with a related, purely hypothetical — but not unreasonable — question: If such a law were enacted in Ohio and the authorities charged with enforcing compliance with the law unjustly deemed Prodigal’s work in violation of the law, how would Prodigal Ministries respond?

Prodigal’s response to those authorities would mirror that of Peter and John to the Temple authorities who told them not to proclaim Christ: “We must obey God rather than man.” God has called us to be His agents in this healing ministry. And we must be faithful! 



We understand... Friends & Family

"How could this happen in our family? Why? Where did we go wrong?"

"All our hopes and dreams — devastated!"

Those are among the heart-breaking initial expressions of parents, other family members or friends upon being advised by a loved one that he/she has embraced a gay or transgendered identity.

The emotions are consuming, ranging and changing from shame to guilt to anger and grief.

If you have experienced such an announcement, know that we understand. And we want to help. We want to help heal the wounded

soul ... heal the broken relationship. We want to walk with you as you walk with your loved one on a journey that may, by God's grace and in His timing, restore wholeness and purity.

You are not alone.

God has heard your cries and has created a community where transparency, sharing and encouragement happen with others who understand. Where healing takes place. We meet twice each month.

To join us, or to discover more about our Friends & Family group, call 513-861-0011 or email Jerry, jerry.armelli@prodigal-ministries.org. Your confidentiality will be respected. ☞

Who is PM?

continued from page 3

three very general principles that govern all our counseling.

Board – Can you explain, briefly, what those principles are?

JA – Briefly is always hard for me! But I'll try. First, we know that God is always faithful to meet individuals in counseling sessions. When individuals approach sessions honestly and transparently, God is faithful to help them! Secondly, there is the importance of prayer. We approach each session with prayer, keeping one ear tuned to what the client is saying and one ear tuned to Jesus' guidance. And we count on the intercessory prayers of our supporters! Finally, we are committed to following Biblical principles and directives as we depend upon and follow the guidance of God's Spirit.

Let me emphasize again the uniqueness of each client and thus of our approach to each client. But then I want to add that even beyond those three overarching, general principles there is additional commonality in our clients' counseling. With virtually all persons who come to us seeking to make changes in their lives, we examine eight areas of their person-

hood, all eight of which may profoundly affect one's fallen sexuality, gender identity, feelings and behavior patterns.

Board – We can't stop there! What are those eight areas?

JA – First, their *thinking*, or thought patterns. Secondly, the individual's *emotions* are critical, and whether they are repressed or suppressed. Thirdly, the effects of one's *past* can be very important. As well as, fourthly, their thinking about the *future* and how it pertains to goals. The dynamics of one's *relationships*, needless to say, can profoundly affect a person's behaviors and feelings, and thus is the fifth dimension that we seek to explore. The sixth area is the *spiritual* dimension. All change is related to one's spiritual condition, of course. But in this context I am speaking specifically about whether Biblical directives are in place — directives such as worship, confession, repentance, et cetera. Number seven is one's *physical* condition, which can impact every aspect of a person's life. And finally, we look at *behavior patterns*, ranging from relational patterns to addictive behaviors.

Board – Anything else about Prodigal's approach to counseling that we would benefit from knowing?

JA – Yes. Two things. Hope, as a dynamic of recovery, and a healthy supportive community.

With respect to community, all of us need community within the Body of Christ to grow in Christ likeness. Prodigal is equipped to provide clients that to a degree through support groups. But at best, Prodigal is only in the lives of these precious individuals for a short time. Our local churches need to insure that those who have struggled or who are struggling with same gender attraction or other forms of sexual brokenness have access to meaningful community where there is loving transparency and accountability.

Then hope. Our clients need hope, but a balanced hope. Too much hope, and an individual may be denying the reality of a fallen world and our fallen nature. Too little of it, and an individual may be lost in the despair of "nothing can ever change." The hope that we seek to nurture in clients is Christ-centered hope. That is, hope based on the assurance that Christ is our Creator, Redeemer, Restorer, The Way, The Truth and The Life, and that He, alone, ultimately knows and wants what will bring true, eternal joy to our lives.

With Him, anything is possible! ☞