



Reaching Out

Obstacles to Truth and Freedom

In our Fall edition of *Reaching Out*, Chairman Neal Sundermann shared the five guiding principles of this organization. Those principles, stated again below, define our ministry and are the basis of every decision that we make, including the budgeting of our time and our financial resources.

Underlying those five principles is the foundational belief that heterosexuality is God's creative intent for humanity (Genesis 1:27 and 2:24-25).

Feelings of same-sex attraction, though usually stemming from complex factors beyond the individual's control, we understand to be one of the many "disorders" that have beset a fallen humanity. Acting out on those feelings, including acceptance of a homosexual identity and involvement in homosexual practices, we view as distortions

of God's creative intent for human sexuality and thus as sin.

The good news — and the heart of our ministry — is that there is cleansing, wholeness and freedom through the power and redeeming love of Jesus Christ. Through the services of Prodigal Ministry over 24 years, thousands of persons in conflict from unwanted same-sex attraction have found new life in Christ and sexual wholeness. Through Exodus International and its many other affiliates nationwide, the numbers are in the tens of thousands!

Yet even with all this living proof, a

growing number in our politically correct culture deny the need and even the possibility of changing's one's "sexual orientation." A report recently released by the American Psychological Association (APA) has added fuel to this wrongful and destructive denial.

Most of our readers may recall that in 1973, the APA, bowing to political pressure, removed homosexuality from its list of diagnosable disorders — a move that discouraged many suffering from unwanted same-sex attraction from seeking professional care.

In August of this past year, the APA released the report of a special, six-person Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation. The report's illogically drawn conclusion was that there is "insufficient evidence" that sexual orientation change efforts are effective, and its corresponding recommendation was that practitioners should avoid telling clients that changing from "gay to straight" is possible.

All six persons assigned to the APA's task force already were on record as opposing sexual orientation change efforts — a fact that made objectivity and impartiality impossible. Their report not

only flies in the face of all our living proof that change is possible (Guiding Principle #1!), but also ignores 50-plus years of scientific and clinical evidence that psychological care for unwanted homosexuality has been proven to be effective treatment. (NARTH — the National Association of Research and Therapy for Homosexuality — has prepared an extensive review of these clinical studies. A summary of that report is available at www.narth.com/docs/journal_summary.html.)

The tragedy of the APA's biased and unscientific report is that an even larger number of persons who are living in turmoil due to an unwanted same-sex attraction will never seek the help that Christ offers. Instead, more and more school counselors, loved ones and even misguided clergy will encourage them to accept, celebrate and act upon a false identity that is contrary to God's intent and design.

If you know of individuals and/or families torn by same-sex attraction, share with them our five guiding principles, and encourage them to seek caring, confidential and Christ-centered counseling by calling (513) 861-0011.

PM's Five Guiding Principles

1 In Christ – in His strength – all things are possible. That's central to principles 2 through 4!

2 People can change! – their thinking, their feelings, their behaviors, the effects of their past, their relationships and their spiritual condition.

3 Any person with same-gender attraction has the right and the freedom to choose, and to receive

moral support and encouragement from Prodigal and from other believers.

4 Change is not an all-or-nothing process. All Christians are in a life-long process of transformation.

5 We align ourselves with the position that there is no conclusive or definitive evidence that homosexuality is genetic or bio-chemical.

God Never Let Go Part II

by Jerry Armelli

EDITOR'S NOTE: Foundational to Jerry Armelli's successful counseling ministry is a unique set of credentials, including years of specialized training and membership in professional organizations. Central to Jerry's ministry, however — and to the passion, which he brings to his work — is his own personal journey out of homosexuality. At our request, Jerry agreed to tell you his story. Following is Part II of this three-part series.

Yes.

At the age of 23, after so many years of struggling in loneliness on an emotional seesaw between shame and fear, I had confronted the question that I avoided so long. Was I homosexual?

And the honest answer that flowed spontaneously from my subconscious mind: Yes, I was.

Freed by that admission, I then set out to explore the gay scene. There, surely, I could escape the internal struggle that plagued me and find the male acceptance for which I had so longed. With anticipation, I dedicated myself to a continuous cycle of gay bars, gay parties, and gay activist groups.

But the companionship, the love, and the freedom that the gay scene promised proved to be a shallow façade, a bitter illusion.

For me, the gay scene became a road to more intense loneliness and overwhelming depression. Depression, to the point of despair.

More than once during that dark period of hopelessness thoughts of suicide plagued me. Denying my gayness had brought misery. Pursuing my gayness led nowhere. If happiness could not be found in either direction, why continue to exist?

Then, by God's grace, I was invited by a caring deacon to join a group of young Christians who simply met weekly to follow Jesus, to share their

life struggles and to pray with and for each other.

Christianity as a solution to my struggle was not new to me. I had been raised by loving, Catholic parents and had given my life to Christ years earlier. For years I pleaded with Christ to free me from my homosexuality, and tried to do all the "right" things. But my pleas seemed to fall on deaf ears. Wholeness and peace seemed more and more unattainable.

Willing now to try anything — but doubtful of any positive outcome — I showed up at their weekly gathering.

In spite of my defeatist predisposition, as I sat in the presence of those men and women, sharing their hearts to the One Whom they had honestly come to know as "Lord" and to each other, I sensed something that was so very attractive. I sensed an inner peace and joy that transcended all the struggles and harsh circumstances that these people were experiencing in their own lives. And above all, I sensed the love of Christ reaching out through these strangers to me — without reservation and without conditions.

It was then that I determined, for the first time in my "Christian" life, simply and truly to follow Jesus, wherever that led. To be obedient to Him, whatever that meant.

Was that it?

Was that the answer to my struggle?

With this new commitment, was I immediately rewarded with freedom from homosexuality?

No. But it was the first real step. The very necessary first step.

In our Spring Reaching Out Jerry will explain the steps that followed that commitment, and will complete the story of his journey from bondage to freedom and transformation.



An experienced, trained and compassionate counselor, Jerry Armelli also is an engaging public speaker. To schedule Jerry to address your church or civic group, contact him at (513) 861-0011.

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