



THE NEWSLETTER OF PRODIGAL MINISTRIES

JUNE 2014

Reaching Out

Prodigal Joins Restored Hope Network

On May 27, executive director Jerry Armelli received confirmation that Prodigal Ministries had been accepted as a member ministry of Restored Hope Network (RHN).

Since the dissolution of Exodus, International in mid-2013, Prodigal had not been officially connected to a network of independent, likeminded ministries.

"We have missed the support, the resources base and the referral opportunities that active participation in a national network of ministries provided," said Armelli.

Official acceptance into RHN was the final stage in

a month-long application and interview process.

"I have known many of the individuals on their staff and board for years," Armelli

explained, "so I already knew that connecting with RHN would meet all our expectations and needs. But their careful, thorough application process really excited me about the partnership possibilities. RHN's commitment to Christ and to the Biblical model for ministry to the sexually broken came through so clearly in the application questions."

Armelli sees benefits to active involvement with RHN on three levels:

"First, RHN will serve as an important source of referrals. So many pre-



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cious individuals seeking support and healing for sexual brokenness contact national organizations first. If the need is one-on-one counseling or group support, RHN staff will direct persons inquiring from this region to Prodigal.

"Secondly, RHN shares my passion for equipping and working alongside the Body of Christ, the Church. The local church is vital in our outreach to the sexually broken. And RHN is committed to developing resources to equip churches in this specialized, ever-more-urgent area of ministry.

"Finally, RHN will help keep us — as a member ministry — informed about new online, written, and audio-visual resources as well as about changes in the legal and political arenas that may impact our ministry."

"RHN shares my passion for equipping and working alongside the Body of Christ, the Church."

— Jerry Armelli

A SEASONED STAFF...

RHN is led by a group of officers and directors all of whom have been involved in the redemptive ministry field for years.

The executive director of RHN is author and speaker Anne Paulk, one of the network's founders. In addition to her writing and conference speaking ministry, Anne often has served as media spokesperson for ministries that reach out to persons experiencing unwanted same gender attraction or

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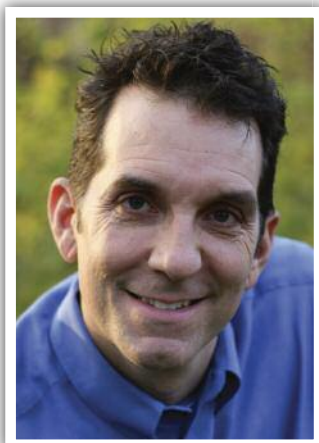
Anne Paulk
Executive Director,
Restored Hope Network



Andrew Comiskey
Chairman,
Restored Hope Network

RESTORED HOPE NETWORK

Doctrinal Statement



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

Friends—

A vital part of the process of applying for membership in the Restored Hope Network was understanding and affirming the network's Statement of Faith. What a joy it was to read and sign on to that doctrinal statement. It is, indeed, a concise, clearly articulated statement of the Biblical truths that have been the foundation of Prodigal Ministries all these years. We have printed it below in hope that you will find it useful in sharing the Good News.

Jerry A. Armelli

We, the members of the Restored Hope Network, believe that salvation is an unmerited gift of God's love given to those who believe the gospel. The gospel declares that God exalted Jesus Christ as Lord by sending him to suffer the penalty for our sins through his death on the cross and by raising him from the dead to inaugurate the new creation. We believe that God acted in this way so that we may have new life through union with Christ and live no longer for ourselves but for God and Christ who paid the ultimate price on our behalf. We believe that true faith in Christ leads to obedience as a fruit of the Holy Spirit; and that, when believers succumb to sin, they must repent. We regard the Bible as God's inspired word and as the highest authority in matters of faith and practice. We also recognize the role of church tradition for safeguarding Scripture and its moral code. As for sexual ethics we believe:

1. Jesus Christ deeply loves broken sexual sinners and provides hope for transformation. Jesus coupled a heightened ethical demand with a loving outreach to violators to lead them to repentance (Luke 7:36-50; John 4:4-30; 8:1-12). The grace of God offered in Jesus Christ is not merely a pardon for one's sins but also an empowerment by the Spirit of Christ to a new life lived for God (Rom 6:14; 7:5-6; 8:12-14; Gal 2:19-20; 5:18; 2 Pet 1:2-4). For some, this transformation may take shape as a significant reduction of unwanted sexual desires. For others, it may mean the grace to live in obedience in spite of ongoing urges to do what

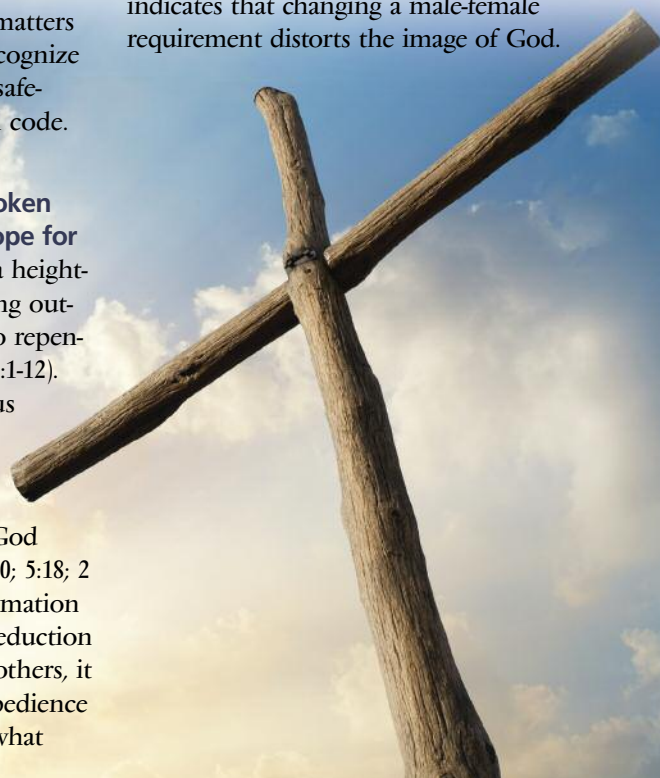
God forbids. Either way, Paul gives believers assurance that those who "walk in the Spirit will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Gal 5:16-17, 24-25). "These things some of you were" (1 Cor 6:11).

2. Jesus understood the male-female prerequisite for sexual relations established by God in Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 to be foundational for sexual ethics.

So important to Jesus was this male-female prerequisite that he deduced from God's creation of two sexes that sexual unions should consist of only two persons (Mark 10:5-9; Matt 19:4-8). Genesis 2:21-24 depicts a woman as coming from man, man's sexual "complement" (negdo), whose union reintegrates two into a single sexual whole. Genesis 1:27 indicates that changing a male-female requirement distorts the image of God.



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3. Consistent with Jesus' view of a male-female requirement for sexual relations is Scripture's depiction of homosexual practice as a severe violation of God's standards for sexual purity (Gen 19:4-11; Lev 18:22; 20:13). Paul's indictment of homosexual practice in Romans 1:24-27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9 treats it as an example of humans suppressing the truth about themselves visible in the material structures of nature and a violation of Gen 1:27 and 2:24. Every text in the Bible having to do with sexual relations presupposes a male-female requirement.

4. Sexual immorality is by no means limited to homosexual practice but has multiple manifestations in the heterosexual sphere that distort God's purposes for sexual unions. Though union with a person of the other sex is a necessary condition for a valid sexual relationship, it is not sufficient. Any expression of human sexuality outside the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman, as well as any expression within marriage that is not self-giving, is a perversion of God's will for sexual holiness.

5. Marriage between a man and a woman prefigures the union of God and his people or Christ and the church and has as its highest purpose the self-giving integration of the two sexes into a single sexual whole. From the very beginning God's goal has been to enter into an eternal covenant of marriage with those who love him (Hos 2:16-20; Jer 2:2; Ezek 16:8; Isa 54:5-8; 61:10; 62:4-5; Eph 5:21-33; Rev 19:7-9). On earth God designed marriage primarily for the purpose of shaping two into one — an aim more important than the satisfaction of the individual wants of husbands and wives.

6. Marriage and the sexual fulfillment that marriage offers have only penultimate significance. Jesus viewed marriage as an institution of the present age that would be superseded by something much better in the age to come: the heavenly marriage of the people of God to Christ (Mark 12:25). He also lifted up the celibate life as a way of giving undi-

vided attention to the advancement of God's kingdom (Matt 19:10-12; compare 1 Cor 7:28-35).

7. Sexual purity is a life-and-death matter. Sexual holiness for Christians matters to such an extent that living an unrepentant sexually immoral life can get even self-professed Christians excluded from the kingdom of God. (Matt 5:29-30; John 8:11 with 5:14; 1 Thess 4:3-8; Gal 5:19-21; 1 Cor 5; 6:9-10, 13-20; 2 Cor 12:21; Rom 1:23-32; Col 3:5-7; Eph 4:19; 5:3-6; 1 Tim 1:9-11.) For some this may mean that such persons were never true Christians to begin with; for others it may mean that such persons have fallen away from a once genuine faith. Either way, both can agree that a life committed to unrepentant, sexual immorality is evidence of a life not lived by saving faith. (Matt 5:29-30; 7:16-27; Mark 4:16-19; John 15:1-6; Rom 8:12-14; Gal 6:7-9; Heb 10:26-29; James 2:14-26; 2 Pet 2:18-21; 1 John 1:6-7; 2:3-6, 15, 29; 3:6-10, 14-20, 24; 5:18; Rev 2:4-17, 20-23, 26; 3:1-3, 5.)

Jesus Christ is our hope for the redemption of our sexuality, gender, and bodies (Col 1:15-20). We rejoice in this hope (Rom 15:13), even as we groan inwardly while we await the full "redemption of our body" (Rom 8:22-25). ☞

"On earth God designed marriage primarily for the purpose of shaping two into one — an aim more important than the satisfaction of the individual wants of husbands and wives."

Restored Hope Network

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gender confusion, having been interviewed by outlets ranging from Oprah Winfrey to *People* magazine.

The organization's board is chaired by Andrew Comiskey, executive director of Desert Stream Ministries (DSM), which he founded in 1980. DSM's distinguishing focus has been in training pastors and leaders of local churches to minister to the sexually broken. Comiskey is the author of *Pursuing Sexual Wholeness* (Creation House), *Strength in Weakness* (IVP), *Naked Surrender* (IVP) and the *Living Waters* healing program.

"It already has been encouraging and invigorating for me, Prodigal's

group leaders and our board to interact with ministry leaders across the nation through whom God is working powerfully to transform lives," exclaimed Armelli.

"The leaders and members of RHN share a contagious desire to see broken individuals — like we all are! — experience the unsurpassed joy of a relationship of surrender and obedience to our always loving, always Holy Savior. Prodigal needed this kind of connection. And God has provided." ☞

[To learn more about Restored Hope Network, check out their Web site, RestoredHopeNetwork.com.]

from the desk of our chairman

Equipping His Church



Larry Plum
Chairman, Prodigal Ministries



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Since the organization's founding in 1986, Prodigal Ministry's core mission has remained unchanged: reaching out in the love and transforming power of Jesus Christ to precious individuals experiencing unwanted same-gender attraction or other forms of gender confusion. Whether a client's need can be best met through one-on-one counseling with Jerry or through group support, our fundamental approach is the same. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Who alone can change hearts, we seek to see clients enter into, and/or help them grow in, a saving relationship to Jesus. Through God's Word we help them understand God's design for their gender and sexuality, a plan that is rooted in the very nature of our Triune God and that is intended to reflect the relationship of Christ to His Church. We are committed to walking alongside our clients as they journey toward Christ likeness.

"Success" in this core mission is not seeing individuals change from homosexual to heterosexual — although in God's grace that often is a glorious by-product. Rather, we measure success in terms of seeing clients understand their true identity in Christ and experience the ultimate joy of living in surrender and obedience to Christ, their Creator and Savior — a joy that transcends all our circumstances in this fallen world, including the circumstance of an unwanted same-gender attraction.

At its core, also, Prodigal Ministries has been throughout the years, a parachurch organization! That means that success in our mission has always required that we work "para" — side by side with — local, Christ-centered churches in the greater Cincinnati area.

The Holy Spirit has worked through this partnership in numerous amazing ways. In many ways, we are on the receiving end of this partnership. Many of those who come to Prodigal seeking freedom from the bondage of unwanted same-gender attraction or other gender issues already have a relationship to Christ and have "grown up" in the church. When such individuals seek help from the church, their pastors, who know of our work and experience in this specialized area of ministry, often direct them to Prodigal.

In other ways, Christ has empowered us to assist our church friends. During the past decade, a period during which Satan has worked overtime to normalize the very behaviors from which our clients seek delivery, church leaders more frequently than at any other time in our history have been seeking Jerry's assistance in developing a Biblical approach to the subject of sexual brokenness in general and homosexuality in particular.

Jerry has been called and is uniquely gifted to help the church in three ways: (1) teaching on the subject of God's beautiful plan for human sexuality, either from the pulpit or in the classroom; (2) equipping church leaders to put in place a Biblical, church-wide response to persons within and without the church who are "gay-identified;" and (3) establishing church-based support groups for wives, parents and other loved ones of persons who have accepted a gender role or identity that is outside of God's creative intent.

Prayerfully consider these questions: Does your church regularly address the topic of God's plan for sexuality and gender? These are issues that Satan is using to undermine the Gospel, itself, and many in the Church of Jesus Christ are hungry for clearly articulated Biblical truth. Do those in your church understand how to respond to the gay-identified in grace and uncompromising truth? Does your church have a support system for the loved ones of persons who identify as "gay, lesbian or transgendered?"

If the answer to any of these questions is "no," I encourage you to contact Jerry Armelli and begin a conversation. We would love to work alongside your leadership team in these areas.

God alone knows how many may be freed from or kept from lives of bondage and confusion because you initiated that conversation.

With so much love and thankfulness...

Larry Plum
Chairman of the Board