

“Pastoral Care For Homosexual Attractions”
Fr. Mario Bergner
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- I. Homosexuality is only presenting issue during this historic hour of Christianity.
 - A. The greater issue is one of Faith and Order and the relationship between Moral Theology and Pastoral Theology.
 - B. In order to provide effective pastoral care, we must have an effective Moral Theology.
 - 1. Moral Theology enables us to articulate a systematic theology of sin, also known as Harmatology.
 - a) Harmatology teaches us that sin has both a pleasurable and deceptive aspects.
 - (1) Hebrews 11:25 states we like to *enjoy the pleasures of sin for a while*.
 - (2) 1 John 1:8 clearly states, *If we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us*.
 - (3) Homosexuality is expressed both in the flesh and in the spirit.
 - (a) In the flesh it includes a lustful bodily appetite.
 - (b) In the spirit, it includes sins of idolatry, envy, anger, unforgiveness to name a few.
 - b) Therefore, we need the revelatory power of Truth in the Holy Scripture, interpreted by the faithful Doctors of the Church and applied by the Holy Spirit.
 - c) Dr. Robert J. Gagnon’s *The Bible And Homosexual Practice*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2001.
 - (1) This is the definitive scholarly work that shows homosexual practice was not acceptable to the Early Christians and the Faithful Jews of the Ancient Near East.
 - (2) He also shows how homosexuality cannot be likened to modern social and religious struggles of African Americans and Women.
 - 2. Moral Theology articulates the Judeo-Christian sexual ethic.
 - a) The Judeo-Christian sexual ethic provides three spheres within which we are to experience sexuality, regardless of our sexual struggles.
 - (1) **Abstinence**, which is faithfully living with unexpressed sexual desire.
 - (2) **Holy Celibacy**, which is faithfully living with dialed-down sexual desire.
 - (3) **Heterosexual Marriage**, which is faithfully expressing your sexuality only with your spouse,
 - b) All three of these are options for people with homosexual attractions.

- C. Clarity in our Moral Theology provides direction for our Pastoral Theology.
1. Pastoral Theology will include Ascetical Theology.
 - a) This is the theology that helps us understand and shape the appetites and passions of body and spirit.
 - b) It enables us to conform ourselves to Jesus Christ.
 - c) We exchange the modern motto, “If it feels good, do it.” for “Die to self and live for Christ.”
 2. Pastoral Theology will incorporate all the helpful insights we can glean from psychology and psychiatry about homosexuality.
 3. Moreover, pastoral theology will school us in the cure of souls and in the spiritual formation discipleship of Christ Jesus need in order to mature in Him.
- D. Over the last twenty-four years I have seen the Lord Jesus free thousands of people from homosexual attraction.
1. For some this freedom meant abstinence, for others it meant Holy Celibacy and still for others, it has meant a change in sexual attractions resulting in marriage.
 2. Many leaders in the Anglican Communion have an anxiety about what the Good News is for people with homosexual attractions.
 - a) In an exchange of letters with the Archbishop of Canterbury I asked him.
 - (1) *Have you, dear Archbishop Sir, ever met someone whose same-sex attractions changed so that freedom for heterosexual relating was graciously granted by God?*
 - (2) *He replied, In answer to your question, yes, I have known people who have come out of same-sex attraction and patterns of behaviour, and I thank God for what he has given them. But I have also know so many who have struggled and prayed for such a long time, and have not had this given to them, and have concluded, not easily or quickly, that their condition is irreversible. . . . I retain anxiety as to what the good news is for those who truly don't see a way out of their homosexual attraction.*
 - b) I have no anxiety about what the Good News is for people with homosexual attractions.
 - (1) It is Holy Living, in harmony with the Biblical revelation, with the grace of the Sacraments and within the Community of faith in God's Holy catholic and apostolic Church.
 - (2) It is the Anglican Way, at its very best: Word, Sacrament, Regular prayer, Common Life and the Activity of the Holy Spirit.

- II. When someone wanting help regarding their homosexual attractions comes to us at Redeemed Lives Ministries, we look at various factors that may influence their healing process.
- A. Our most commonly asked question at Redeemed Life Ministries is, “How can I help someone who is struggling with homosexuality?”
1. My first response is to ask a few questions, “Is the person struggling a Christian? Has he or she been baptized, regenerated and converted in Jesus Christ?”
 2. If the answer is, “Yes, they are a Christian,” my next question is, “What do they want to do about their homosexual attractions? Are they seeking to live in abstinence, Holy Celibacy or are they seeking to change their homosexual attractions?”
 3. Most people who come to us for help are seeking change, though not all.
 4. If the answer is yes, then we try to ascertain two things, the unique construction of their homosexual attractions and then their unique life situation.
- B. First, we try to ascertain the unique construction of their same-sex attractions.
1. There are various forms of homosexual attraction.
 - a) Homosexuality is not a singular condition shared by all people with same-sex attraction.
 - b) To call homosexuality an orientation or even to call someone a homosexual person, are misnomers.
 - c) It is better to think about homosexuality in the plural, homosexualities.
 2. The Bible attests to at least four different types of homosexuality.
 - a) First, the Old Testament mentioning of homosexuality in the context of Pagan Sexual rites (i.e. Baal Worship, see Leviticus passages).
 - b) Second, the Romans 1 exchange of heterosexual passions for same-sex lusts.
 - c) Third, the 1 Corinthians 6 mention of *malakoi*, the passive partner in homosexual activity.
 - d) Fourth, the 1 Corinthians 6 mention of *arsenokoitai*, the aggressive partners in homosexual activity.
 3. Therefore, for each person seeking help we try understand the particulars of their personal struggle.
 - a) Are they over-identified with the other sex?
 - b) Are they under-identified with the same sex?
 - c) Have they been abused?
- C. Second, we take into consideration four aspects of the person’s immediate life situation.
1. Have they crossed the boundary into immoral sexual behavior?

- a) If yes, they need to process past homosexual activity as well as rebuild their moral boundaries through repentance and forgiveness.
 - b) If no, they will not have the added issue of processing past homosexual experiences and rebuilding moral boundaries.
 - 2. What is their age?
 - a) For example, if someone comes for help by their early twenties seeking change, they seem to progress quicker into heterosexual relating.
 - (1) One reason for this may be that puberty, on an emotional level, seems to extend into the early twenties.
 - (2) Sexual identity formation is more pliable during puberty.
 - (3) Therefore, it more easily redirected at that time.
 - (4) They may also be motivated by the desire for marriage and family.
 - b) One man who came to me for help wanted only to live in abstinence.
 - c) However, we see people come free from homosexuality from all ages.
 - 3. Are they part of a supportive local parish?
 - a) Not everyone in the parish need know of a person's struggle.
 - b) However, Christian fellowship and a shared common life are central for anyone seeking healing.
 - 4. Would they benefit from psychiatric or psychological care?
 - a) Proper diagnosis and treatment of psychological and psychiatric conditions can be a critical factor in helping someone overcome homosexuality.
 - b) Until properly treated, there may be a discouraging pattern of reverting into the pleasures of sin to avoid the suffering related to these conditions.
- D. There are many factors that affect the course of healing from homosexuality.
 - 1. However, ascertaining the unique construction of an individual's same-sex attraction and consideration of their immediate life situation is a good starting place.
 - 2. From there, we attend to other spiritual and psychological issues related to the person's homosexuality.

- III. Pastoral care for helping people overcoming homosexuality can utilize research in psychology and science.
 - A. Psychological research has been used to show homosexuality can be changed.

1. In October, 2003, Dr. Robert Spitzer's published a study in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol. 32, No. 5 (pp. 403-417) entitled, *Can Some Gay Men and Lesbians Change Their Sexual Orientation? 200 Participants Reporting Change from Homosexual to Heterosexual Orientation*.
 - a) Spitzer's study can be found online at www.narth.org
 - b) In an article posted on the website for the National Association for the Research and Treatment of Homosexuality, he is quoted, "*Like most psychiatrists, I thought that homosexual behavior could be resisted, but sexual orientation could not be changed. I now believe that's untrue. Some people can and do change.*"ⁱ
 2. But scientific research has yet to prove that homosexuality is an orientation akin to an innate biological condition.
 - a) Dr. Jeffery Satinover's book, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*ⁱⁱ shows how the goal of these studies to find a single biological feature to account for homosexuality such as the "gay gene" is quickly brought into question by other scientists.
 - b) Most researchers agree that human sexual behavior with its many expressions is complex and multiply determined.
 - c) They stress that a single biological feature cannot determine or cause sexual behavior of any sort.ⁱⁱⁱ
- B. Satinover documents the outcomes of fourteen Psychologists and Psychiatrists who have an area of expertise in treating homosexuality.
1. The success rates for these fourteen Doctors range from 37% on the low end to 82% on the high end.^{iv}
 2. Satinover concludes, "*All the existing evidence suggests strongly that homosexuality is quite changeable.* (p. 187)"
 3. He goes on to cite a 1984 Masters and Johnson program that reported *a five-year follow-up success rate of 65 percent.* (p. 187)
- C. Psychological treatments for homosexuality address many of the same issues.
1. They all begin with a central understanding of sexual identity formation within the home environment.
 2. Then they address fears and dynamics of relating to members of both sexes.
- D. There are numerous Christian ministries that offer help for those who desire to change their homosexuality.
1. Most of these ministries utilize psychological understandings in helping people come out of homosexuality.
 2. Exodus International^v is a coalition of over 100 ministries worldwide that minister to people desiring freedom from homosexuality.

3. Many Christians are writing books, developing programs and offer conferences that benefit men and women overcoming homosexuality.
 - a) Rev. Andy Comiskey, author of *Pursuing Sexual Wholeness*,^{vi} founded Desert Stream Ministries^{vii} and developed the *Living Waters* program.
 - b) I founded Redeemed Life Ministries, and wrote *Setting Love In Order*,^{viii} and developed the *Redeemed Lives*, *Alive Again* and *Returning Sons* programs.

IV. My own journey out of homosexuality and into heterosexuality included addressing both spiritual dynamics and psychological issues.

- A. Spiritually, my healing from homosexuality came as my conversion to Jesus deepened and I learned to repent of my sin.
 1. I first met the love Jesus at age 6 in the care of Roman Catholic Nuns who lived in my neighborhood.
 2. Then at age 14 I heard the Evangelical preaching of Leighton Ford, and was born again.
 3. But neither the Roman Catholic nor the Evangelical churches of my youth provide any help for people with same-sex attractions.
 4. In my early twenties, I had several immunity breakdowns and landed in a hospital room in Boston with the possible diagnosis of AIDS looming over my head.
 - a) While on my hospital bed in fear and despair, I prayed to the Lord Jesus.
 - b) He appeared to me saying, "I want to heal your whole person, not just your sexuality. Choose."
 - c) I recovered fully from my symptoms and was never diagnosed with AIDS and later tested HIV negative.
 5. The turning point in my life came when a few months later; I repented of homosexuality, was delivered from an infestation of demons and received the forgiveness of sins.
 6. My spiritual healing from homosexuality continued as I learned to forgive others and resist temptation.
- B. The Lord used psychological insights to address my lack of affirmation in my identity as man and fears related to men and women.
 1. I had to press through many layers of fear of relating to both men and women.
 2. As I continued growing in the Lord so did my desire for marriage and family.
 - a) I was abstinent for twelve years before I married.
 - b) Toward the end of those twelve years I began asking the Lord if He would give me the gift of Holy Celibacy.
 - c) In 1996 I married Nancy, and since then we have had four children under the age of seven.

- d) Today, my growth into manhood includes growing as a husband and father.
 - 3. Through His grace and the loving input of faithful Christians, I have learned of the areas of weakness in my soul that continually require His healing presence.
- V. Finally, as Christians we must remember the Lord has successfully helped people overcome homosexuality since the days of the Apostles.
 - A. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NIV), St. Paul gives a catalogue list of sins common to the human condition including two forms of homosexual behavior listed in verse 9, *malakoi* (μαλακοί) translated *male prostitutes* and *arsenokoitai* (ἀρσενοκοῖται) translated *homosexual offenders*.
 - 1. But, in 1 Corinthians 6:11 these encouraging words are given, “*And such were some of you, but you were washed, you were justified, you were sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*”
 - a) Notice the use of the past tense, *were*.
 - b) St. Paul is clearly stating that some of the Corinthians came free from homosexuality.
 - c) When properly equipped, we too can extend the same process of washing, justification and sanctification to all who desire freedom from homosexuality.
 - B. How do we answer our most common question, “How can I help someone who is struggling with homosexuality?”
 - 1. Make sure they are regenerated and converted to Jesus Christ.
 - 2. Urge them to integrate into a supportive local parish.
 - 3. If available, encourage them to participate in the nearest *Living Waters* or *Redeemed Lives, Alive Again* or *Returning Sons* programs.
 - C. Over these last twenty-four years I have been privileged to see Jesus free thousands of men and women from homosexual attractions.
 - 1. Some are living in abstinence, others in Holy Celibacy and still others (like me) are married.
 - 2. Most people who have come out of homosexual attractions do not want a platform from which to shout their change from the roof tops.
 - 3. Most of the people we help at RLM go on to live happy lives.
 - 4. Many never look back at the time when they were coming out of homosexuality.
- VI. Discussion Questions.
 - A. If a Christian young man or young woman came to you to confess he or she was struggling with same-sex attractions, but had never acted out on these attractions, how would you minister to them?

- B. What resources do you have for helping people overcome homosexual attractions and other sexual issues, such as infidelity in marriage and internet pornography?
- C. If you were offered a week long training course on how to minister to the sexually broken, would you take it?
- D. If you advertised in your church bulletin that your parish was offering a course on sexual redemption in Christ, would anyone come?

ⁱ <http://narth.com/doc/spitzer2.html>

ⁱⁱ Dr. Jeffrey Satinover, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*, Baker, Michigan: 1996.

ⁱⁱⁱ Dr. W. Byne and Dr. B. Parsons. 1993. Human sexual orientation: the biological theories reappraises. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 50:228-259.

^{iv} *ibid.* p. 186.

^v Exodus International North America, PO Box 540119, Orlando, Florida 32854. Tel. 888.264.0877, www.exodus.to

^{vi} Andy Comiskey, *Pursuing Sexual Wholeness*, Creation House, Florida, 1990.

^{vii} Desert Stream Ministries, 706 Main Street, Grandview, Missouri 64030 Tel. 866.359.0500 www.desertstream.org

^{viii} Mario Bergner, *Setting Love In Order*, Baker, Michigan, 1995.

^{ix} Redeemed Lives, PO Box 451, Ipswich, MA 01938. Tel. 978.356.0404 www.redeemedlives.org