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Reaching Out to the Sexually Broken

by Roger Jones

I am often asked questions about how to reach out to homosexuals. Typically, the question comes from a person who has a gay neighbor, coworker or a family member. I believe that many of the same principles apply to reaching out to anyone, whether they are homosexual or heterosexual. As Christians, we are often put off by sexual issues. I'm not always sure why this is so, because my experience with WGA has proven that Christians have plenty of sexual problems of their own! I suppose that is the root of the problem. We often feel shame or confusion about our own sexual feelings (or lack thereof), because the typical Christian church is not perceived to be a safe place to be real. "Am I the only one in my church with these desires and feelings? I must be, since no one else is talking about them." Our own strong mixed feelings and fears about our own sexu-

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ality cause us to feel uncomfortable around those who are sexually broken.

Sy Rogers, who is an international speaker on sexual issues, tells a story about a man who described his attempts to witness to his gay neighbors. His goal was to let his neighbors know how he felt about their lifestyle by scowling disapprovingly every time he saw them.

We know the Scripture says it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance. This man's approach may sound silly, but I wonder how often we unintentionally repeat this behavior, because we are uncomfortable and unsure about what to do.

There are some basic things to be aware of when reaching out:

Challenge perceptions. Ask God to help you to see through your own stereotypes, prejudices, and fears. Work to separate the person from the issue. For example, you may be repulsed by the issue of pornography, but remember that there are reasons this person has gotten caught up in this particular struggle.

It is also important to challenge the perceptions of the person to whom you are reaching out. I recently read

a study of how non-Christians age 16-29 view present-day Christianity.¹ In this study, "Antihomosexual" topped the list of how Christians are perceived. "Judgmental" and "Hypocritical" were the next two on the list. We know this isn't God's heart. We have a public relations problem here. We have our work cut out for us, particularly when these are the assumptions made about us.

Our own strong mixed feelings and fears about our own sexuality cause us to feel uncomfortable around those who are sexually broken.

Rick Warren, the pastor of Saddleback Community Church, has been quoted as saying, "There are two basic reasons people don't know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. One, they have never met a Christian. Second, they have met a Christian."² Our actions speak louder than our words.

Don't have double standards. I mentioned earlier that one of the perceptions of Christians is that we are hypocrites. When we say one thing, yet do another, we are confusing to people. This does not mean that we should compromise on what we know is the truth. It does mean that we need to show the whole picture. It feels safe to share the first part, "The Bible says that the only acceptable sexual relationship is between a man and a woman in marriage."

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I Can Only Imagine – Part 2

by Mary Heathman

The content of our daydreaming and fantasies can teach us about ourselves, our emotional needs and the presence of stress, when we may not otherwise be aware of it. In *What your fantasies reveal about you*, by Paula Derrow, in American Health, April 1995, v14, p68, we read, "Daydreaming is a healthy and natural part of human psyche. Like night dreams, it surges every 90 minutes and is at its peak from noon to 2Pm. Daydreaming provides insights into emotional needs. In children, it encourages creativity and imagination."

A woman, who was part of a WGA Survivors of Abuse group several years ago, couldn't understand why her most pleasurable daydreams and fantasies were always about situations in which she had no choices or responsibility. She said this was confusing to her because as a professional woman she was decisive and had a lot of responsibility. When she prayed and thought about this, she realized that she often felt overburdened and stressed by her responsibilities. When she took steps to delegate some responsibility and gave herself more time in decision-making, the content of her

fantasies changed. One day she called me laughing, and told me of a dream about floating on an air mattress in which she experienced extreme frustration because she wasn't getting anywhere. She wondered if she had overdone the relaxing bit!

Our imaginations can also be a tool for healing. In our early years, WGA did a program annually to give our group members a way to say thanks to supporters. We had musical numbers, skits (or theater pieces as the more serious actors call them), and funny narrations or readings. We found out quickly that the folks who participated in these events were more inclined afterward to open up in group about what was going on with them. They were affected by their involvement in the program in positive ways that are hard to describe, but nonetheless real.

Similar results have been documented in the mental health field. In *A Dramatic Remedy*, by Joy Horowitz, in the Los Angeles Times, Nov 22, 1992, v 111, pMag40 I read about how the Imagination Workshop used imagination and acting in their work with

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Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks

Backward Thinking

When the Apostle Paul was on the last leg of his missionary journeys, he was headed ultimately for Jerusalem and Rome. It is clear in Acts 20 & 21 that Paul knew that this journey would end in death. This became clear to the church in Caesarea as well when Paul paused there on his journey and was visited by a prophet who clearly foretold that in Jerusalem Paul would be bound and handed over to the Gentiles.

Understandably, everyone present begged Paul to give up his plans to go to Jerusalem. No one doubted that the grim forecasts for Paul were very likely, including Paul himself.

But Paul's response to the reasonable requests from those who loved him—begging him to protect his life--astounds me. Paul says, "Why all this hysteria? Why do you insist on making a scene and making it even harder for me?"

You're looking at this backwards. The issue in Jerusalem is not what they do to me, whether arrest or murder, but what the Master Jesus does through my obedience." (Acts 21:13)

Let me rephrase that for us, "The issue is not so much what happens to me, as it is what God is able to do through my obedience to Him." Stunning. Paul is more concerned about what God might be doing than he is about what might happen to him personally. He has somehow grabbed hold of a vision that he is part of something much greater than his comfort, or safety or even his life.

Please understand that I believe God Himself has knit into the very fiber of our being the will to live and the desire to avoid pain—good and healthy and right desires. But He also asks us to trust Him no matter what—even when obedience to Him will require crossing the boundary on those very God-created qualities of self-protection. I believe that those were exactly the forces ramming up against one another that re-

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sulted in Jesus sweating drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane as he struggled to put his will to live in submission to his obedience to God.

Could it be that we are part of a complex story that involves justice and mercy and resolution on a scale that would blow our minds? Could it be that God entrusts us with our bit parts in this epic tale knowing that we will live on long after we have played our small parts—eternally, in fact? Could it be that there is a moment in the drama that pivots on my obedience?

Paul casts vision for me for maturity—the shift from thinking only

about myself to thinking about the grandness of the big story unfolding all around me. I don't want to be so preoccupied with my own comfort and anxieties and growling desires that I miss it. I hope that the questions I ask will begin to change from:

What do I believe about God?

To: What is God doing and how is He inviting me to be a part of it?

What do I believe about asking God for things I want?

To: What does God want from me?

Does God hear me?

To: Am I listening to Him?

Do my desires really matter to Him?

To: Do His desires really matter to me?

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the mentally ill and incarcerated.

"Asked to analyze the long-term impact of the Imagination Workshop, some observers of the program leap to praise. Communication skills, self-esteem, memory and empathy all improve as a result, they say. Mental health professionals say they grow more sympathetic to their patients, sometimes even dumbfounded by the workshop's power.

About five years ago, for example, a patient in the UCLA playwriting workshop wrote a piece he ultimately performed onstage with outpatients. "In the workshop, we all thought his work was wonderful," recalls UCLA psychiatrist Kissell, who was then the group's resident doctor. "In the audience, his doctor came up to me after the show and said, 'You don't understand. I've never seen him so verbal. He sits in my office and doesn't say anything.' "

So, assuming there is truth to this, that our imaginations are God-given and can serve us in positive ways. How can we go about working this out in our lives?

The answer isn't so simple, because it will be different for every person. I can't even give a scenario as an

example, because that would surely form the vision awry. What I can say, though, is that we each need to ask ourselves if we will accept God's provision, even if it doesn't look like what we expect? (If not, then we are destined for lifelong dissatisfaction, because it is our expectations and perceptions that are skewed. God will provide our need not our perception of what will meet the need.)

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There are a few things I can suggest that will get us started:

- 1) Confess our misuse and abuse of our imagination; thanking God for His forgiveness.
- 2) Ask God for vision for a healthy imagination—ask, "What would that look like in my day to day life?"
- 3) Use our imagination to practice the vision He gives you; dream about the possibilities.
- 4) Choose to do that which lines up with the vision.

Imagination is a good thing, even a tool for healing. It is also our greatest stumbling block if we don't take charge of it. It belongs to us; we don't belong to it! It has to do what we say; we don't have to do what it says. I pray we all experience the blessing of a spirit-led imagination.

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What we often leave out is the second part of the story, “I struggle with the standard God has set before us in these ways...” When a Christian leader falls sexually, it is devastating. I believe the impact would be far less negative if our leaders could and would be honest about their struggles.

A big area where we have double standards is in how we view sin. Some sins are more palatable to us than others. A parent may allow their unmarried, heterosexual son to share a room with his live-in girlfriend when visiting for the holidays but draw the line when it comes to their gay son bringing home his partner. We need to be consistent in our message against sinful behavior, including our own. God did not set up a hierarchy of small and large sins. We should not do so either.

Be a Friend. Part of being a friend is building trust. We need to earn the right to speak into the lives of others. Trying to start a relationship with, “I’d like to be your friend, but I need you to know that I think you are in sin,” will likely get a door slammed in your face. Instead, we could simply say “I’d like to be your friend,” and then let our values be revealed

over time as they would naturally unfold in any other relationship. We have to find ways to connect, and if we are unwilling to be transparent about our own lives and struggles, our efforts will be in vain. It takes time to build relationships, and there is no short cut to building the trust needed to deeply impact the life of someone else.

We need to be consistent in our message against sinful behavior, including our own. God did not set up a hierarchy of small and large sins. We should not do so either.

I hope these few suggestions will be helpful to you in your efforts to reach out. I truly believe that we must demonstrate the love of Christ, not just tell people about it. As we reflect His love, men and women will be drawn to the light shining within us. Bless you in your efforts to love those God brings your way!

¹ *Unchristian: what a new generation really thinks about Christianity...and why it matters*, David Kinman and Dave Lyons, published by Baker Books, 2007

² *Loving Homosexuals as Jesus Would: A Fresh Christian Approach*, Chad W. Thompson, published by Brazos Press, 2004, pg. 11



October At a Glance

October 7th: WGA spoke at First Denver Friends Church

October 13th: WGA participated in Missions activities at Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church

October 16th: WGA spoke at Corona Presbyterian Church

November And Beyond

November 2nd: WGA speaking at a local small group

November 15th: Sy Rogers speaking at WGA Group

December 1st: Intercessory Prayer. Join us from 7:00–9:00 am at the WGA offices

December 5th: WGA speaking to Abundant Life Christian Youth

March 27th: Mary speaking at a MOPS group in Cheyenne, WY

March 28-29: Mary speaking at a Family and Friends Retreat for New Hope in San Rafael, CA

Thursday Night Group

October 4th: 43 people

October 11th : 44 people

October 18th: 44 people

October 25th: 40 people

Orientation meeting - 5 new people

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*Where Grace Abounds
exists to guide and support
men and women who seek to
understand sexuality and
relationship, and to inspire
all people to know and
personally appropriate
God's plan for their
sexuality and relationships.*

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