

what some of you were

stories about Christians
and homosexuality

edited by Christopher Keane

LIBERTY CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

Includes
discussion
guide

what some of you were

stories about
Christians and homosexuality

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edited by Christopher Keane

Liberty Christian Ministries



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Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

I CORINTHIANS 6:9-11

Preface

Despite what the secular media and the gay community say, there are many Christians who do not wish to embrace a gay identity. These are people who, because of their commitment to Jesus Christ and their belief in the Bible, choose not to act upon their same-sex attraction.

Many, because of the shame involved for them or because of past hurts, will not disclose this in their own church. They prefer to go outside the familiar environment of their church fellowship for support. But where do these people go? Liberty Christian Ministries Inc. exists to provide a safe place for Christians who are seeking support in their choice.

Liberty doesn't talk people out of homosexuality. We don't proselytize the gay community. We believe that people have the right to make their own choices for their lives. If they wish to be actively homosexual, that is their business. If their choice is to live a life according to their Christian convictions, that also is their business and that choice deserves to be respected and supported.

In the following pages you will have the privilege of reading the stories of people, all known to us, who have made that choice. They wish to share their struggles and the way in which

God has brought about change in their lives. Their hope is that these stories will serve to:

- bring encouragement and hope to those who are also struggling with unwanted feelings of same-sex attraction;
- educate, inform and encourage the wider Christian community about how to respond to homosexuality, and in particular how to help those in our midst who are struggling.

We have also included stories of people who have been affected by the homosexuality (and in one case, the transexuality) of a person close to them.

All the stories are only as current as when they were given to us. Peoples' names have been changed to protect their privacy. The text of this book has not been edited heavily—these are the real words of real people, each of them on a journey. We have not tried to iron out their theology, or put words in their mouths.

Many people are confused by homosexuality, so we have included some articles which will hopefully shed light on this complex issue from a Christian perspective. It is our desire and prayer that this book will enlighten and help you in your thinking about the subject of homosexuality.

Christopher Keane

See 'Contact details' at the end of this book for how to contact Liberty or similar ministries around Australia and the rest of the world.

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What some of you were...

Edward Vaughan

It was just before the Mardi Gras one year. I was driving in my car listening to talkback radio. I listened as a spokesman for the Mardi Gras said, “It’s a celebration of love, creativity and human sexuality. Being gay is just another way to be human, to be a family, to be together”. He spoke with the voice of common-sense, the voice of reason.

Then the lines were opened to those who wished to comment. The callers fell into two categories. One group agreed with the spokesman, and also spoke with the same voice of reason. As for the other group—it was rabid, bigoted, angry, aggressive, simply embarrassing, often misinformed. And often claiming to be Christian.

I reached over and turned off the radio with a deep sense of

despair. I seemed to have only two options—to affirm homosexuality as a lifestyle choice, as acceptable as any other, or to be narrow-minded and hateful.

It doesn't seem like much of a choice to me.

The part of Scripture that has shaped my view on homosexuality is the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14). A bit surprising, perhaps, because it doesn't mention homosexuality at all.

Jesus addresses the story to “some who were confident of their own righteousness, and looked down on everyone else”. As so often in the hands of Jesus, the parable is an attack weapon, a subversive and offensive story. Who is forgiven by God? The good man or the scumbag tax collector? To our shock, it is the sinner, the one who knows he struggles and cries out to God in humility.

If you are a fine moral upright person—watch out! You are in Pharisee country! Christ's people are sinners in search of mercy.

Jesus taught forgiveness, but he also taught repentance. And we all need to repent, especially of our acts of homophobia. I was reflecting recently on a suburban church of which I was once a member. In that church, I think it would have been impossible for an adolescent in our fellowship to come out and say “I think I'm gay”. We didn't create a safe place for people to be honest about their struggles. We allowed a culture of fear, where being honest would have meant almost certain rejection and ridicule.

In that church, I think *we* were guilty of sin. The Bible is not homophobic. God is not a persecutor of homosexuals, and his people know only too well the depths of their failure before him. It's very hard to be violent to someone when you are looking them in the eyes with your hand around their shoulder saying, “I have sinned too”.

Look at Leviticus 18. Run your eye down the passage. It's a list of sexual practices that are unacceptable to God. You will note that homosexuality is included, along with a range of other practices.

We cannot walk away from this. But let's make it clear. The Bible does not say, "Straight sex is good, gay sex is bad". Heterosexual adultery is no more and no less of a sin than homosexuality. Christians do not argue for heterosexuality, but for obedience to God. That has implications for all of us, no matter what our gender orientation.

And we must be clear about this. There is a difference between saying homosexuality is unacceptable to God and being homophobic. When one says the Bible stands against adultery, one is not regarded as heterophobic. When one says the Bible stands against the performance of homosexual acts, that is not homophobic. It is not vilification to say that God rejects some human sexual behaviour. And it is no more homophobic than rejecting Christ and his messengers is Christophobic.

Paul condemns a range of human behaviours (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Homosexuality is on the list, alongside drunkenness and greed. Paul does not suggest one is better or worse than the other—these kinds of actions are incompatible with being the people of God.

But the part I love is verse 11—"That is what some of you were...". From the very beginning the church of Christ has been made up of people who were substance abusers, adulterers, liars, compulsive spenders—and homosexuals. The church is made up of people who have found mercy in Christ.

No matter who I am or what I have done, I am a candidate for regeneration in Christ. Praise God that he should have mercy on a sinner like me.

Our Stories

Christopher

My introduction to homosexuality came about through someone in my church. I became a Christian when I was sixteen, and had been attending a local church since my conversion. I had a strong desire to know God. I loved the Bible and I was learning about prayer. I was growing in my relationship with God and it was all pretty exciting. Although I was attracted sexually to other men, it wasn't something I was going to bring up at the Wednesday night prayer meeting.

An older man started attending our church. I had an instinct about this man, and it wasn't long before we both knew we were attracted to each other, and a relationship began.

I knew enough to realise that, for me, Christianity and active homosexuality were not a compatible mix. I suppose there were three choices I could have made. Firstly, I could have fought the temptation and continued with Christianity. Or I could have gone into the relationship and continued to attend church. But my choice was to leave God and to enter into what I hoped would be a lifelong, faithful relationship.

The relationship ended after a few months, and some of the gay people I had met introduced me to the bar and pub scene

which was part of the gay lifestyle in Sydney in the sixties.

At first my involvement in the gay lifestyle was exciting. I was young, many of the people were sophisticated and interesting, and I was receiving lots of attention from older men—attention I had never had from my father.

The lifestyle was also very seductive. The same-sex attraction I had been aware of before was now out in the open, and I was involved in a group where this was normal. Instead of feeling I had to *hide* my homosexuality, it was now a relief to be with this group where I fitted in because I *was* homosexual.

But the most important thing for me was the possibility of finding the long-term faithful relationship I had always so desperately wanted. My desire was to meet ‘Mr Right’ and settle down where all my needs were going to be met by this ‘Prince Charming’.

I was part of the gay community for fifteen years, and during that time I had four relationships. These were not the loving, stable, monogamous, ‘happy-ever-after’ relationships I had wanted. They were dysfunctional, destructive and damaging. After the demise of my fourth relationship, I seriously began to question my involvement with homosexuality.

I knew that morally it was not right for me. I had never lost my awareness of God, and I knew the day would come when I would have to sort out my relationship with him.

I was now beginning to question seriously much of the gay propaganda which I had believed, especially the myth of the stable, faithful, long-term relationship. I was looking closely at many of the people with whom I mixed, and I was beginning to realise how seriously damaged some of them were. I was also realistic enough to know there was damage in my own life. I was well aware of the alarmingly high abuse of drugs and alcohol in the gay scene, and I had begun to abuse these substances myself. I was acutely conscious of how unhappy I was. Although I

owned my own apartment, had an excellent job and as much money as I needed, when I took a good look at it, my life was a mess. I was now at the point of being completely disillusioned. It had taken me fifteen years to come to the realization that homosexuality was not working for me, so I decided to get out.

The only positive thing I had learned from my experience was that I now knew beyond any shadow of doubt there was nothing that lifestyle had to offer me.

The first thing I did after I left the gay community was to recommit my life to Jesus Christ. I gave him as much of myself as I could at first. Later, as my trust in him deepened, I gave him more. As far as I could at that time, I made a decision to trust him.

I wish I could say once I had done all of that I lived happily ever after, but I can't. In leaving the homosexual community, I left an entire culture. For example, it had its own dress codes, vocabulary, entertainers, music, humour and morality. I went into the church community and it had its own culture, dress code, vocabulary, music and moral code. Obviously this was a huge adjustment, and there was a lot of change and grief involved.

I was grieving over the loss of the lifestyle and some of the friends I had left. While I had no regrets about leaving the gay culture, I was missing some of the people I had been close to. I felt that if I had opened up about this at church, I probably would not have been understood.

There was also a big adjustment to the culture of the church. Everything was different and it took time to get used to the very different environment I had joined. I had come from the hectic, fast paced and at times bizarre homosexual culture, into the very sheltered and unworldly atmosphere of the church. Even getting used to the radically different way people expressed themselves was at times strange, and there were times when I felt we were speaking a different language. One day someone prayed for a

couple who were going on holidays. They asked God for “journeying mercies” for this couple. What on earth were “journeying mercies”? I wondered. The only thing I could think of was clean toilets on the way to wherever they were going!

I was now celibate after being sexually active for many years, and I found that difficult at times. I was also attempting to make a new set of friends, as I’d cut my ties with all my former acquaintances. I was learning to relate to heterosexual men—I’d never had a problem relating to women—and at times just finding things I had in common with the men in the church was difficult, as I had never been interested in sport or any of what is traditionally regarded as ‘male interests’. There were other things going on at that time as well. I had never dealt with any of the past hurts in my life. Now I found God was raising issues I needed to give some attention to.

At about the age of three or four I had been abused by an uncle, and I had never dealt with the effects of that abuse. I was also still carrying a lot of hurts experienced in the four failed gay relationships, and I had never really dealt with the grief involved in these break-ups. I was slowly becoming aware of the emotional deprivation I had experienced as a child. I can never remember my father showing me any affection. He certainly never seemed interested in me, or spent any time with me. Consequently, learning about God’s fatherly love for me was very difficult as I had no experience to use as a model.

It would have been helpful at that time to have had someone to talk with about some of these things. Someone who knew how to listen, who was understanding and accepting. This would have reduced my isolation, speeded up my recovery and supported me in the process I was going through.

Over many years, I went on to deal with a whole lot of things, including what I now see as the roots of my homosex-

uality. These were my childhood abuse, the emotional detachment from my father, emotional deprivation, rejection, and external labelling or name-calling

Labelling had been a very destructive thing for me, as I will explain. School was a lonely and painful time of my life. Although I had some friendships, there was a lot of name-calling or 'labelling' (poofter, pansy, queer), as I was effeminate and different from most of the other kids. This was not very surprising, seeing I had not had a healthy masculine role model in my family, and had modelled on my sisters. To deal with this labelling I had to be willing to forgive the people who had called me names. This was a process, and like any process, it took time.

I used many different means to deal with the things I believed God was showing me. I attended a lot of secular self-development groups. When I was eventually brave enough to confide in Christians, I had prayer ministry and also professional counselling. I spent hours reading and praying through the Bible, as well as any other books I thought would be helpful. Whatever was available, I used.

Over many years, as the roots of my homosexuality were dealt with thoroughly, and with God, I realized an amazing thing. I became aware that my sexual responses were changing.

I first became aware of this one day when I had decided to attend a service in another denomination. As I was waiting for the service to begin, I noticed a young woman sitting a couple of rows ahead of me. I sat there admiring her. She was a stunning-looking girl. Beautiful skin, lovely hair, and there was a purity about her that I had never seen in any of the men in the gay culture. As I sat staring at this young woman, I became aware that my response to her had quite a large sexual component to it.

I had to think through the ramifications of what had hap-

pened. One of the myths I had accepted was ‘once gay, always gay, you’re born that way’. My experience of responding to that girl in church had proved that to be wrong! I was also aware that for a long time, I had not been attracted to men in a sexual way. I now had to admit to myself that my sexuality was far from fixed—it was changing, and that was quite a revelation to me. I had to re-think all that I had accepted and believed up to that time. This was difficult, as there was no-one I could talk to, nor were there any books that I was aware of that would have helped me to do this.

Also helpful in my process were my friendships with other Christian men. I spent time with these men, and learned to relate to them in ways that were healthy. We shared with each other, listened to each other and prayed together. Apart from friendship, these guys provided me with the good role models I needed, as my father hadn’t provided for me in that way. The relationships were firmly based on mutuality. None of these men treated me as their ‘project’. I would have found this extremely offensive, and no relationship would have been possible if they had attempted to make me a ‘good deed’. I wanted friendship and respect as a person; I did not want to be patronized and paraded as a ‘good work’.

It’s been a long, and at times very painful road of growth and change for me, but the blessings have far outweighed any pain I have experienced. One of the blessings has been a change in my sexual responses, and from that change has come a wonderful marriage.

The marriage came *after* the change in my sexuality, not before. It is very important that people realise that marriage will *not* change them. We all bring our emotional baggage and the damage that has caused into our marriages with us, and I am very grateful that the bulk of mine was well and truly dealt with before I married.

Well, that's my story, but some of you may still ask, "What about other homosexuals? Is change *really possible* for them? And what exactly do you mean by 'change'? Is every one who deals with their same-sex desires going to end up with changed sexual responses and possibly married?"

No, of course they're not.

Joe Dallas is a man who has come out of homosexuality, and he has worked in ex-gay ministry for many years. In his book *Desires in Conflict*, he addresses the person who struggles with unwanted homosexual desires and says:

If you are motivated and willing to exercise patience and discipline, you have good reason to be optimistic about change... Change does not occur quickly. In fact, it happens so gradually that you may hardly notice it at first... change occurs to different degrees among different people. Some claim complete conversion of sexual desire from homosexual to heterosexual. Others experience reduction, not absence, of homosexual attractions. Still others allow that, although they are no longer aroused by their own sex, they could backslide or regress to homosexual attractions.^{1*}

There are voices within some of our churches that would opt for acceptance of homosexuality as a valid alternative lifestyle, and I'd like to comment on that. Some parts of the church say that we should bless those homosexuals who are in a loving, faithful union.

John Stott, in his book *New Issues Facing Christians Today*, says:

The concept of lifelong, quasi-marital fidelity in homosexual partnerships is largely a myth, a theoretical ideal

* Notes are found on p.115.

which is contradicted by the facts. The truth is that gay relationships are characterized more by promiscuity than by fidelity (p. 402).²

A good example of this is found in Joseph Nicolosi's book *Reparative Therapy Of Male Homosexuality*. He says:

...in 1984, McWhirter and Mattison published "The Male Couple", an in-depth study designed to evaluate the quality and stability of long-term homosexual couplings. Their study was undertaken to disprove the reputation that male relationships do not last. The authors themselves are a homosexual couple, one a psychiatrist, the other a psychologist. After much searching they were able to locate 156 male couples in relationships that had lasted from 1 to 37 years. Two-thirds of the respondents had entered the relationship with either the implicit or the explicit expectation of sexual fidelity. The results show that of those 156 couples, only seven had been able to maintain sexual fidelity. Furthermore, of those seven couples, none had been together more than five years. In other words, the researchers were unable to find a single male couple that was able to maintain sexual fidelity for more than five years.

The authors added: "The expectation for outside sexual activity was the rule for male couples and the exception for heterosexuals."³

After spending fifteen years in the lifestyle, my own experience confirms the findings of McWhirter and Mattison.

Just before I came out of homosexuality, a friend and I sat down one Saturday afternoon, and had a very sad but enlightening conversation. We came to the conclusion that we knew

no-one who was in a faithful relationship. The couples we knew had sex with others as well as their partners. Often the partners knew about the infidelity, but sometimes they didn't. Some of these couples had group sex or anonymous sex in public toilets or bathhouses. We could think of no-one we knew who was in a faithful relationship. We had both been active homosexuals for fifteen years, and we came to the conclusion that afternoon that between us we had spent thirty years chasing something which just did not exist. That day was the beginning of the end of homosexuality for me.

Thomas Schmidt, author of *Straight and Narrow*, sums it up well when he says:

Promiscuity among homosexual men is not a mere stereotype, and it is not merely the majority experience—it is virtually the *only* experience...In short, there is practically no comparison possible to heterosexual marriage in terms of either fidelity or longevity. Tragically, lifelong faithfulness is almost non-existent in the homosexual experience.⁴

As I have already said, this was my life experience for fifteen years.

I chose to leave the gay culture. There are many Christians who have chosen not to be involved in it at all.

For some of these people, celibacy will be their choice, as it is for many heterosexuals. Others will pursue a change in their sexual responses. Whatever they choose, their choice not to identify with, or to be a part of, the homosexual community needs to be respected and supported by the church.

How can churches make it easier for the Christians who struggle with same-sex desires, but choose not to embrace a gay identity?

First, we need to realise that discussion of homosexuality often raises strong feelings. It is painful for those who are affected by it, it invokes anger for those who are offended by the ‘in your face’ attitude of the gay community, and in many cases it engenders fear and confusion for those who are uninformed.

I think it’s helpful if we try to see homosexuality as a two-sided coin.

On one side, we have the gay community, which includes those who have chosen homosexuality as their lifestyle. Some of these people are angry and militant. There are also many in the gay community who have been hurt by the church and feel that they have no place in the body of Christ. This belief would be enforced by the behaviour of some Christians, as well as what the media says about the church’s attitude to homosexuality.

On the other side of the coin, we have the many Christians who are struggling with an unwanted same-sex attraction, in an environment (the church) which, for the most part, doesn’t understand—and in some cases doesn’t want to understand—the condition or the process involved for those who want change.

I believe that if the church wants to be an effective and helpful part of the change process, there are many within it who need to deal with their fear of homosexuality, and educate themselves about the subject. Many Christians are confused and disgusted by homosexuality, and unfortunately there are many who have incorporated their prejudices into their theology.

In the preface of his book *Same Sex Partnerships*, John Stott says, “[i]s there a Christian way to combine biblical thinking about God’s intention for human sexuality with an equally biblical attitude of understanding, respect and support for persons with a homosexual disposition?”⁵

I believe there is.

So how do we go about it?

1) *Respect the authority of Scripture*

We must not rewrite or water down the Scriptures. The Bible clearly states that heterosexuality is God's intent for humanity. It presents all sexual behaviour outside of marriage as sin, and not God's best for us. When I came out of the gay community, I was looking for truth and direction. My friends said I was a fool. My perception of the church at that time was that they could only put homosexual people down and had no idea of how to assist in the process of recovery. I found direction from the Bible. It was the Bible that gave me a true picture of God as a Father, and of his unconditional love for all his children, regardless of their struggles. I found through the Scriptures that God cared about me and loved me. I learned healthy boundaries for living, from reading the Bible. It was there that I learned the things I needed in order to function in a whole way. While the Bible didn't 'cure' me, it gave me the grounding I needed when I moved forward to counselling.

I shudder to think what may have happened to me if I had gone to a counsellor (or to a church) who had not upheld the Scriptures and had affirmed me in my homosexuality. If that had happened I may well have been dead from AIDS now. Many of the people I knew when I was part of the gay community are now dead.

2) *We need to uphold one standard*

I am constantly amazed at the double standards within the church. As Earl Wilson says in his book *Counselling and Homosexuality*:

We believe that lying is a sin, yet we reach out to liars.
We believe that adultery is a sin and find compassion

for the adulterer. We believe that the practice of homosexuality is a sin and close our doors to both the practicing homosexual and the person who is trying hard to obey God.⁶

He goes on to say, “We can’t help the hurting or bring life to those who need God when they only feel our rejection”.

Some people seem to put homosexuality in the ‘worst sin’ category even though the Bible doesn’t do that. Before we start judging the homosexual, we may need to look at our own lives. Do we watch R-rated movies? Do we fantasize over the girls (or the boys) in the office? Do we enjoy a little pornography? If we can say ‘yes’ to these questions, do we *really* think our sin is more acceptable to God because it’s heterosexual? If there are people who do think that way, they have a very peculiar belief system, which is certainly not biblical.

3) *We must provide for people*

With a little commonsense and thoughtfulness, any church can begin to help people who struggle in this area. Listening with sensitivity, providing educational opportunities or material, keeping a list of reliable Christian counsellors at hand for the people who may need them, and even providing a supportive setting for people in need, are all possible options.

It may mean reading and learning more about homosexuality, and asking God to help us to deal with any fears and prejudices we have about homosexuality. It may also mean telling people that jokes and put-downs about homosexuality are inappropriate.

During my many years of involvement in the church since I left the gay community, I have realized just how widespread the

problem of homosexuality is within the Christian community. Sadly, I have also realized just how ill-equipped, and sometimes unwilling, the church is to deal with it. The ignorance about the subject is frightening. Take for example the man who was told that if he married, his homosexuality would disappear. Or the person who was told what was really needed was a simple deliverance from the ‘demon’ of homosexuality. Women have been told that if they looked more feminine, wore lipstick and dresses and found themselves a virile male (even though many have been sexually abused by men), they would not have a sexuality problem. But perhaps the award for absurdity should go to the person who said homosexuality was caused by people eating Kentucky Fried Chicken. This person believed it was the female hormones fed to the chickens that were the cause of homosexuality.

Let’s sum up the points that I have given you as a way forward for Christian churches.

- 1) We need to respect the authority of Scripture.
- 2) We need to uphold one standard.
- 3) We need to provide for people.

We need to beware of thinking we are better than the person who struggles with homosexuality. We’re not. Christianity is a great leveller, isn’t it? I’m ex-gay, but as Christians we are all something.

Sy Rogers⁷ once said, “It’s not heterosexuality that gets us a ticket to heaven, it’s a relationship with Jesus”.

If you are struggling with homosexuality I want to say this to you: There is hope and healing for you as you deal with your unwanted homosexual feelings. You are not a second-class Christian because you struggle with this. Jesus’ death was for you as well. *You are not an unwanted child*. God is not ashamed of you. He is your Father and longs to lavish his love, forgive-

ness and care on you.

If you are struggling with homosexuality or any other problem in your life, I would like to suggest to you that the best place to begin dealing with that problem is with Jesus. For me, it started with forgiveness and turning away from my past life. From there Jesus took me on a journey of change and healing, for which I will always be grateful.

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Exodus will supply contact names of Christian Ministries for people wishing to deal with unwanted homosexual feelings worldwide.