



"And such were some of you..."

Transformation of Persons with Same-sex Attraction: Becoming Who We Are

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." (Rom. 12:1-2, NASB)

Jesus Christ calls and unites broken humanity to the Father's good will for us. His invitation applies to any person with same-sex attraction (SSA). He seeks those who face many options as to how to resolve their homosexual tendencies. He offers Himself as the answer, the relationship through which the person with SSA becomes the man or woman of God's design.

The unique authority of Jesus Christ to restore persons with SSA lies in the belief that He is both Creator and Redeemer of that person's life (Col. 1: 15-20). He knows who (s)he is unlike any other. One with the Father, Jesus made him/her in His image as male and female. (Gen. 1:26, 27; Matt. 19:4-6) An essential component of such image-bearing involves the freedom to become a good gift to the opposite gender, inclined to dignify and become fruitful with him or her (1). RHN upholds that call as basic to all of humanity, including those with SSA.

Like other sinful tendencies in humanity, same-sex attraction reveals the person's need for Christ as Redeemer. Those who turn to Jesus Christ discover His cross as the locus of change. His crucifixion bears every burden that impedes who we in truth are. That requires a kind of death, or surrender, on the part of the person seeking transformation. RHN provides an oasis for those who courageously submit their sexuality and humanity to Jesus Christ as Lord. Likewise, the biggest barrier to transformation is the refusal to surrender wholly to Jesus Christ (2).

Christ Resurrected is the image of our new humanity. United with His new life, we look to Him as our path and walking partner to freedom. 'The resurrection of Christ is a sign of God's purpose and power to restore His creation to its full stature and integrity.'(3)

The blueprint of our true selves lies in Christ; He activates and restores the man or woman of His design. In that process we discover that there is no such thing as a homosexual per se, only men and women with certain wounds and deprivations who have yet to find their true selves in Him. (4) We who are united with Him become who we are as bearers of His image, male and female.

Transformation requires two things: the awareness that we in our distinct genders are a gift to our fellow humanity, and the willingness to grow into mature expressions of that gift (5). Jesus enables us to resume the journey toward loving others well, and sustains us upon it.

Transformation is at times rigorous. Becoming who we are requires hard work. Insights from developmental psychologists can help the person with SSA to understand the needs underlying his/her experience of attraction and to tend to those needs maturely. A large body of literature details how same-sex attraction can result from the frustration of normal needs for same-gender bonding and identification in childhood (6).

Those disruptions impede normal development and can result in some children experiencing profound gender shame and SSA. The latter masks both the injury and the need for emotional identification with his/her gender. It takes courage to probe beneath what is obvious and face real needs and wounds.

The transformation from gender disintegration to wholeness requires Jesus' whole healing community. RHN encourages persons with SSA to take a multi-faceted approach to restoration. That includes skilled Christ-centered helpers who help the person with SSA to resolve hurtful events and to offer healthy alternatives to sexualizing the need for same-gender friendships (7).

RHN also advocates for a variety of small groups and other pastoral care offerings that support the true man or woman as (s)he sorts through real wounds, sins, and needs. Three keys govern these offerings: sensitivity, compassion, and respect for the dignity of each person (8).

At core, RHN urges persons with SSA to resume the journey to wholeness on which Christ calls all Christians. A secure sexual identity is a secure human

identity, a transformation Jesus wills for everyone. We urge persons with SSA to partner with those who struggle differently en route to the same goal of loving others well. RHN values integration with the whole body of Christ as a central tenet of transformation (9).

Transformation results in several significant changes for persons with SSA who have resumed the journey to wholeness. One takes his/her place as a part of God's whole creation: man for woman, woman for man, with same-gender friendships supporting the call to dignify this other.

Same-gender desires fluctuate but tend to decrease while many experience an increase, to varying degrees, of sexual desire for the other gender. Usually one member of the opposite gender will attract the majority of these feelings (10). When that is the case, the community surrounding the two should exercise special discernment to ensure that both parties are ready to reckon with unique issues that can arise from one's history of same-gender attraction (11).

Whether (s)he unites with a member of the opposite gender or lives as a single person, wholly for Christ, Jesus is in all and through all. He is the Source of transformation. He invites and enables us to live honest, humble, and generous lives. That means being authentic with others about our struggles and disciplined about tending to the needs for love that remain in us. At the same time, we seek Jesus to strengthen our love for others because they are worthy of love. In that way, we exercise the new creation and grow into maturity.

The cross remains the sign and seal of our transformation. Like all serious Christians, we must continually let go in order to take up. We let go of pretense, lust and selfishness; we endure suffering with Christ, take up forgiveness and extend it, and arise in our true selves. We become powerful in love.

Some wonder why this 'cross-walk' takes a lifetime. At times it may feel as if the depth of same-gender attraction supersedes the power of divine love. The truth is deeper still. Jesus is taking ground in our very depths, preparing for Himself a people who know Him in the very center of their thoughts, desires, and motives. Transformation means that the mystery of His redemption is overtaking the complexity of our sin (Rom. 6: 14). We are being made ready to see Him face-to-

face (Titus 2: 11-14). We are becoming who we are, testifying to the truth that the transformation of the 'homosexual' is a witness of how God transforms us all.

1. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/1, *The Doctrine of Creation* (trans. J. W. Edwards et al.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), p.18.
2. Frank Worthen, lecture at inaugural RHN Conference, September 2012, Sacramento CA.
3. Alistair McGrath, *What Was God Doing on the Cross?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) p. 73.
4. Leanne Payne, *The Broken Image* (Westchester: Crossways Books, 1981), pp. 63, 4.
5. John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline, 1997) theme
6. Janelle Hallman, *The Heart of Same-Sex Attraction* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008); Elizabeth Moberly, *Homosexuality: A New Christian Ethic* (Cambridge: John Clarke, 1983); Joseph Nicolosi, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1991); Joseph Nicolosi, *Shame and Attachment Loss* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005)
7. Concise definition of reparative treatment from Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, April 2013.
8. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Commission of Cardinals and Bishops, *Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition* (Wash. DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000) #2358, p. 566.
9. Andrew Comiskey, 'Beyond the Ex-Gay Plateau,' *Living Waters* (Anaheim: DSP, 1996) pp. 256-58
10. James E. Phelan, Neil Whitehead, Philip M. Sutton, 'NARTH's Response to the APA Claims on Homosexuality', *Journal of Sexuality* Vol. 1 (2009), pp. 1:12-1:18.
11. Father John Harvey, *Same-Sex Attraction: Catholic Teaching and Pastoral Practice* (New Haven: Knights of Columbus, 2007) pp. 35, 36.