



ONE TO ONE

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NEWSLETTER NO 8 ISSUE 3

OUR PURPOSE: Seventh Day Adventist Kinship Australia is a non-profit support organization which ministers to the spiritual, social and physical well-being of former and present SDA Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender and Intersex individuals and their friends and families. Kinship is not supported by the SDA Church. Kinship is a confidential organization which supports the advancement of human rights for all people.

Communication

To thyself be true!"--Shakespeare

Over my lifetime I can think of many, many times when I've had a strong inner conviction which I felt I must pursue but at the same time had a fear about what others would think of me. Would I lose my friends? Would I be rejected by society in general? Could I bear the cross of being somehow different than the masses that were going in a different direction?

I've found again and again that when I'm true to myself that I function the best in life and that if I try to stifle who I am it brings suffering and also I don't function nearly as well in society. Yes, at times I've lost some friends because of being myself but usually I've gained others in their place who like me for who I am and respect me for living up to my convictions. I've noticed that those who really were my friends in a true sense of the word stayed with me even if they didn't understand the reasons for my decisions. These friends have been lifetime friends and some of them have long since passed away and others are still here and are still standing by my side in unconditional acceptance. I give thanks for them everyday.

I'm very careful NOT to try to force on others what works best for me in life and if others try to do this with me I gently ask them to please not do this. We each one must grow, learn, suffer, find joy, stumble and rise again in life as is best for us and we must be careful not to interfere with others or try to "fix" them. I believe if we are open to God we shall be guided as to just what we need to learn at a given time. That has been my experience over and over again. "Live and let live" is always a good guideline to have more peace in life.

You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness of your intuition. What you'll discover will be yourself. ~ Alan Alda

Sent in by, Tom Durst. Tom can be contacted at tomdurst1@msn.com

Moving On

By David Coltheart

We all experience grief and loss at some time in our lives. At the time, we wonder how we will ever get out from under the dark shadow that hangs over our lives. Memories haunt our thoughts, tears spring to our eyes and we can't sleep at night as we our mind endlessly relives the dramatic events that led to the loss. Whether it be death of a loved one, separation between friends or lovers, or loss of a job or treasured possession—even the death of a much-loved pet—we still cry out in the darkness at the pain of loss.

I am reflecting on my own experience as I write this. Two years ago I went through the trauma of coming out. I experienced the grief and loss of separation from a wonderful job that I loved, my home and family, my beloved church and virtually all my friends. Before the break came, I feared that it would be the "end of civilisation" as I knew it. I could not even imagine what my future life would be like.

After I had said the few words that would change my life forever, and devastate the lives of those I loved, the world was suddenly very different. On the one hand there was an incredible sense of relief—for months I felt as if I could fly. But on the other hand was the cold reality that, for the first time in my life, I

was alone. I had to find a job, a home and a reason to live. I had to find my own new world. It was the end, but it was also a beginning.

Now, two years of tears and joy have passed. And what have I learned about grief and loss? The most important lesson I have learned is that there is light at the end of the tunnel. I have discovered that you can do more than survive—you can even thrive. And I have found that there are things you can do to help yourself cope. I am no expert, but here are my suggestions.

1. Time is a great healer

It is true – the passage of time does make a difference. Two years on and it seems as if the life I lived before is a universe ago. And although things from the old life sometimes cross over into my new life to remind me of the past, on the whole, the longer time goes by, the easier it is to be more dispassionate and objective about life. With the passing of time, the wounds heal and the scars start to fade.

2. Make new friends

I now have entirely different friends from those I had before—interesting people, great people, different people, challenging people, rewarding people. I now have a wider circle of friends than I could have ever imagined. I would never have met any of them if I had not made the leap of faith into what seemed like total darkness. During the journey, I have learned something from every one of them that has made me more tolerant and given me more understanding. I am wiser and calmer for knowing all these new people. And talking with them, pouring out my soul and being heard, helped ease the pain.

3. Enjoy life

With a change of job, I now have much more free time than ever before. I now enjoy going on a picnic with friends, wandering through a museum and even browsing an art gallery. There has been a movie or two, more time to watch interesting documentaries on television, eat out at restaurants and walk along the beach. There is time for music and singing, reading and chatting. The result has been laughter and sheer joy, the best medicine for a hurting heart. In short, I am enjoying life and every time the sun lights on my face or my feet feel the green grass around my new house, the wounds heal a bit more.

4. Get physical

One of the best remedies for stress and grief is physical exercise. We all need a minimum of 30 minutes or more of moderate exercise each day. I have learned that regular exercise provides an incredible sense of calm and well-being. Walking provides an opportunity to think, reflect, and talk with God about my problems, while more vigorous activity like swimming produces the natural high that endorphins produce.

5. Hang on to the roller coaster

The last two years have been a wild, momentous and sometimes torturous ride—the ride of my life that beats the biggest, scariest ride at any theme park. The important lesson is, hang on for dear life. Don't let go, because all roller coaster rides eventually even out. The highs become less severe and the lows flatten out. Choose to be positive about life and your future—stick with the ride and see the journey through.

6. Look for the providences

During my journey I have learned to look out for the small events, those strange, fortuitous circumstances, apparently happening by chance. Only later do you look back and suddenly see that those seemingly random chance events all had a purpose. In my case, it was a series of events, linked like a daisy chain that finally led me to where I am now, living on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland and enjoying my new work. Random chances? No, there were too many miracles to say that they happened by chance. I call them providences. I am convinced that those strange events were used by God to get me to where I am now.

7. Keep your faith

It is easy to blame God when things get rough—in our loss we assume God is responsible. As if a God of love would deliberately hurt us or cause us pain! The very idea that he is somehow responsible for our loss is a travesty of God's personality and nature. Blame the enemy of God if you must blame someone! Meanwhile, keep the faith with the one who said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

If you are walking in the valley of the shadow now, don't give up. There is good reason to look forward and up. I know—for me, life is good again. I have moved on.

Time to Recapture the Art of Listening.

The Rev. Tom Bentley

The growing noise level in our culture says to me we are addicted to talking at one another and often unable to listen. Most folks I know think our American experience is out of balance.

Could this be because we no longer know how to listen? Could our tendency to talk first and listen later be what made our teenage pregnancies in Gloucester an international boondoggle? How many of these girls would have chosen pregnancy, if only someone had listened first?

At Trinity Church here in Gloucester, we have decided to take on listening as a spiritual discipline in the coming year. We have turned to contemplative prayer where the focus of meditation allows for the hearing of that mystery we can call God. We have set measurable goals to listen to others. We have committed to setting aside time to be quiet in self-reflection: There is a special trinity in this activity: listening to God, listening to your self, listening to your neighbor.

For the chatty types like me this is tough. So how can we listen more?

Answer: "Ask questions!" Questions invite sharing. Statements do not.

Questions encourage learning. Statements block the information channel. Questions are inclusive. Statements tend to be defensive.

If you don't believe this, try it out for a day. At work, at home, in your social life — ask questions and avoid those statements. You will be amazed how much you listen and learn.

Questions do not only help us to share. They help us to act. The foundations of compassion and its necessary companion justice are formed through the making of questions.

Socrates, Jesus, and most of the other martyrs for moral change used questions to transform their adversaries.

In this time of "blah-blah-blah," I invite us all to take on a more powerful listening. Such an opportunity can begin with these simple questions: "Is there someone in your life who needs your listening?"

"When was the last time you were in quiet solitude with your self and the universe?" "What are the deeper questions in your life?"

Peace and best wishes.

The Rev. Tom Bentley is based at Trinity Congregational Church, Gloucester.

Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot today, at least we learned a little, and if we didn't learn a little, at least we didn't get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn't die; so, let us all be thankful.

Buddha

Metropolitan Community Church.

Please be aware of these churches in Australia. They are on the East Coast of Australia and are welcoming of all peoples. People who attend MCC often come from widely diverse Faith backgrounds as well as from no identified faith tradition.

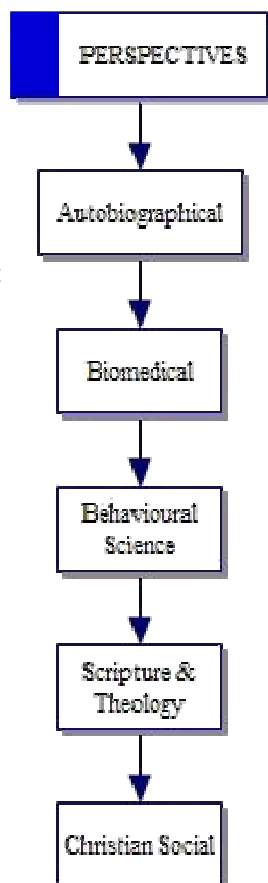
All are Welcome.

Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives.

Review by Steve Parker, South Australia

Christianity and Homosexuality has an interesting structure (see the diagram). I'd like to make a couple of comments about this structure because I think it is highly significant. Notice the location of the scriptural and theological perspectives. Most conservative Christians would want to place the Bible and theology at the beginning of the book and filter all other perspectives through its lense. However, the editors of this book perhaps recognise that placing the Bible at the beginning of the discussion would destroy any chance of an open inquiry into the subject of homosexuality.

I don't think there is any doubt that the majority of Christians would make the assumption that the Bible condemns homosexuality outright. Beginning from this premise, a great deal of what this book discusses would be dismissed from the outset. However, by taking the approach they have, the editors lead us to the text after considering a whole range of extra-biblical material that makes us realise that the text needs, perhaps, to be read afresh and our traditional understandings rigorously critiqued. Let me lay out the journey the editors take us on -- at least as I read it.



1. **Autobiographical perspective.** At the very beginning of the book, we are introduced to real people who have had direct experience living with a homosexual orientation or who are related to someone who has. This first section of the book brings home the degree of pain and suffering experienced by an individual with a homosexual orientation. Whatever one may think about homosexuality, the reality is that the issue is not some abstract theological one that doesn't affect real people. The person living with a homosexual orientation either has to keep their experience to themselves,

struggling to come to terms with what the church generally labels as sin while suffering intense guilt for being different or not being able to "overcome" their "sin".

2. Alternatively the person with a homosexual orientation may "come out" and share their struggle with others. Often this results in isolation, exclusion, emotional (and often physical) abuse, or unsuccessful "reprogramming" by those who claim it can be cured. The person's friends and family are also affected in various painful ways as they struggle to come to terms with what they often see as an abnormality, perversion, or sinful behaviour.
3. By situating the entire discussion within the context of personal experience, the reader is forced to personalise the issue. Theological debate is, in this case, about *real people*. Whatever we may believe about homosexuality, it is impossible to ignore the fact that Jesus commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves.
4. We are then led on to the **biomedical perspective**. For those who are well informed, there are no surprises here. There is mounting evidence that there is a biological predisposition toward a homosexual orientation that has nothing to do with choice. Many Christians want to avoid this fact but it cannot be avoided.
5. Many people make a lot of the fact that homosexuality was removed from the DSM (the psychiatric diagnostic manual) in response to political action. What they don't realise is that homosexuality was originally included in the DSM without any scientific basis in the first place. There is a chapter in this section that tells this story and is a very interesting read.
6. Part Three of the book surveys **behavioural science perspectives**. The chapters that make up this section discuss the psychological and social experiences of gay and lesbian Seventh-day Adventists as well as asking whether the SDA denomination lives up to the ideals it holds as a caring, welcoming church. The assessment is not good, to say the least.
7. Only after dealing with the realities of experience and science does the book turn to scripture and theology. By now it is difficult not to be convinced that much of what we thought we knew about the homosexual experience has to go. But what does the Bible have to say on the subject and how should it be read? This section, in my view, is the most controversial of the book and is likely to provoke the most scrutiny.

8. The most significant alternative understanding of the Bible's teaching on homosexuality offered in this section is that the biblical writers knew nothing of what we know, in our time, about sexual orientation. Every reference to homosexual behaviour in Scripture occurs in a context where immoral actions are performed and the relationships are distorted. (One author rather unconvincingly suggests that there are actually positive examples of homosexual relationships in the Bible. This author himself admits that his view is highly conjectural.)
9. The argument is that homosexual acts in mutually beneficial, monogamous, long-term committed relationships are just not addressed in the Bible. Instead, we need to follow similar trajectories of interpretation as has occurred with slavery and the treatment of women. We need to accept that for a percentage of the population, homosexual orientation is normal. Rather than trying to "cure" them of that orientation, we need to accept it and focus on developing the moral foundations and parameters on which healthy partnerships can be formed between same-sex partners.
10. Of all the responses at the end of each section, Richard Rice's response in this section is probably the most critical. It is as if the other sections of the book present ideas that are basically indisputable - it is hard to argue with personal experience or science. But it is obvious that, when it comes to Scripture an enormous amount of work needs to be done to develop better, deeper, and broader understandings of the text than we have so far.
11. The final section of the book turns to **Christian social perspectives**. Coming from the SDA perspective that underlies the whole book, this section asks how SDAs should relate to the development of public policy in relation to homosexuality. What does it mean to pastor a gay person in the church? How do we evaluate public policy? What does a biblical sexuality look like? How does the biblical teaching on love imply what=2 0a same-sex marriage might look like? These are just a few of the tough questions dealt with in this part of the book.

Reading through *Christianity and Homosexuality* is an enlightening, provocative journey. I learned a great deal by reading this book. And the responses at the end of each chapter provided sensitive counterpoints to the material in the previous chapters.

This book probably raises more questions than it answers. But it is urgent that the questions be asked and discussed.

So many Christian gay men and women are hurting deeply as a result of misunderstanding, prejudice, and demoralising treatment.

Although *Christianity and Homosexuality* is clearly written from an SDA perspective there is much of enormous value for any Christian considering this important issue. The best books bring greater understanding by challenging our thinking, pushing us beyond our present limited perspectives, generate discussion, and remind us that the freedom and grace of the gospel are the central tenets of our faith that should inform all that we do. If these are the criteria for a good book then *Christianity and Homosexuality* is a good book. But it is not just a good book - it is an urgent call to leave the pages and look out to our brothers and sisters who struggle to work out how to live out their faith while experiencing a sexual orientation they did not choose but defines much of who they are. It is up to all of us to love our gay brothers and sisters as Christ has loved us.

Steve Parker, Morphett Vale Church, Adelaide, South Australia

Our Health

You are invited to take part in the Mapping Gay Communities survey from The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) La Trobe University.

The survey is part of a project funded by the Department of Human Services to look at the ways gay men (and other men who have sex with men) use Victoria's gay communities.

The survey will only take 10 to 15 minutes; it will ask about you and your connections to Melbourne gay communities, and has a focus on sexual health. The survey is completely anonymous and confidential. This survey is only for men and you must be 16 years of age or over to participate.

For more information and to complete the survey please go to <http://www.gaycomsurvey.org/surveys/N5FZ-LWS6/R2CJ5P8G/?E131>

If you have any questions please contact Henry on 1800 219 121. Your contribution to this project is highly valued.

Look at Our Events

Kampmeeting

Australian Kampmeeting will be 3-6 October 2008 in Lismore, Northern NSW. The theme for Our conference is "Rejuvenation." Check our events page for the details.

This has had a change of venue because of unforeseen circumstances.

I think you will be surprised at the level of comfort the venue has.

So come and be part of it "Rejuvenation".

My Son, Beloved Stranger

By Carrol Grady

This excellent book has been reprinted with an added epilogue. This is a great book to have in your library and to have extra copies to give to parents, pastors, friends and anyone else who deals with having a loved one come out to them.

Open Heart, Open Hand

Three conversations about homosexuality and the family—a life and death matter. Introduced by Dr David Larson, a professor with the Faculty of Religion at Loma Linda University, this new resource features interviews with Adventist parents of gay and lesbian people.

Christianity and Homosexuality

Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives

The Book of the decade is out.

Kinship is offering a special price for all three items. This book has been two years in the making and is collaboration between the Adventist Forum and SDA Kinship International. For more information go to www.sdagayperspectives.com

Support for the Parents of Gay/Lesbian Adventists

Someone to Talk to.... Carrol Grady
(Aka Kate McLaughlin My Son, Beloved Stranger),
Coordinator.

Web-Site <http://www.someone-to-talk-to.net>

P-flag Australia For parents
and friends of GLBT people
Web site: www.pflag.org.au

Associations of Kinship around the World
SDA KINSHIP INTERNATIONAL
www.sdakinship.org

SDA KINSHIP AUSTRALIA - Principal Office:
P O Box 8097
Maroochydore DC 4558, Queensland Australia.
www.sdakinshipaustralia.org

MEMBERSHIP FOR KINSHIP IN AUSTRALIA IS WELCOME.

Membership is **FREE** in Australia, but relies on donations, to reach out to other people within the GLBTI community.

Finally: Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently. You can practice any virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage. Maya Angelou

Articles in this News Letter are not necessarily Kinships view: Contributions to this news letter are welcomed and encouraged. (The Newsletter One to One has been prepared by N Thorpe --- Coordinator.)