



Open to Life:

How Jesus Transforms Persons with Same-Sex Attraction



BY ANDREW COMISKEY

I am briefly paraphrasing the key points I make in our new booklet 'Open to Life.' It is written for persons with same-sex attraction (SSA) who seriously consider the person of Jesus Christ in their sexual decision-making, as well as for loved ones who want to represent Jesus' well to them.

Beautiful Jesus

Jesus invites us into a beautiful life; He invites us into relationship with Himself. Union with the living God becomes the basis for reconciling who we are with His beautiful will for our lives. Because God is always loving and always strong (Psalm 62:11, 12), we need not fret when we do not know how to fulfill His will. It is enough to entrust ourselves to Him. He is greater than our hearts (1 John 3:20) and uses His power to restore broken ones into the beauty of His design for our lives.

Beautiful Jesus is good news for persons with same-sex attrac-

tion. The world's 'good news' cannot compare. We are inundated today with 'it's OK to be gay' as if merely assenting to homosexual identity and behavior answered the deepest cries of our hearts. It does not; it cannot. Persons raised in a gay-affirming culture are not satisfied by the world's indiscriminate approval of gender 'diversity.'

Blurred Vision

In spite of social pressures to applaud gay culture, we question the blurring of sexual and gender boundaries. Something is unraveling before our eyes; our humanity is being diminished,

not liberated. Laws and TV shows that champion mono-gender marriages and drag queen inmates cannot extinguish what is written on human hearts (Romans 2:15): God made us in His image as male and female. Until we are reconciled to the beautiful gifts we are for the other, we squander that beauty in false liberties.

It hurts us to live according to worldly distortions while knowing in our hearts that we are lying against the truth. How beautiful and apt the Cross becomes for conflicted ones, for us! What better witness of our brokenness than the beautiful

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*One thing
God has spoken,
two things I have heard:
"Power belongs to you,
God, and with you, Lord,
is unfailing love"; and,
"You reward everyone
according to what
they have done."*

Psalm 62:11-12





God made us in His Image as male and female.

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for the other, we squander that beauty in false liberties.

Change: How Jesus Heals Us

continued from page 1

God, stripped and shamed for our shameful nakedness. At once the Cross invites us into beauty and brokenness, a testimony already alive and well in our hearts. Somehow we know that the sheer force of same-sex attraction registers a need that no one human being can satisfy. Only the Beautiful God, broken for us, will do. The Cross conveys both in an instant.

Broken and Beautiful

We learn to not despise our brokenness but rather to offer it. We enter into the great exchange of what ails us for what can heal us. God gives all: His water to cleanse us, His blood to cancel sin and to give us new life, and His Spirit that raised Him up from the dead with power to raise us too. These spiritual truths—water, blood, Spirit—do not set us free instantly but their impact grows as we partake of them and grow in awareness of His freedom ‘gifts.’

A truth begins to dawn: our hope for a new life is rooted in Jesus Christ, not a program nor an insight nor a particular set of people. All may be helpful to the degree that we keep one truth before us: Jesus is God’s justice for us. At work in a host of ‘friends,’ Jesus is the answer to our SSA.

Beautiful Jesus alerts us to the truth of how He made us; He is the key to our creation and our redemption. We go through Jesus to get back to the garden and we go forward with Jesus into becoming the people He made us to be. One thing is clear: gender and sexuality matter to Him. The Bible begins with the creation and union of man and woman, and culminates in Paul comparing the beautiful love between man and woman to Bridegroom Jesus giving all for His bride; it finishes with Jesus’ consummation of love with the Church, His bride.

Renewed Vision

Who we are as men and women matters to God. Though we may possess deep feelings for our own gender, we can know the truth of our design and delight that we are made to be good gifts for the opposite gender. No matter the depths of our affliction; we have never ceased to be beautiful representatives of His very being. We represent Him well, not primarily in marriage, but in gender complementarity. We take that call seriously, and understand in our yearning for the ‘same’ a kind of longing that God can redeem. He helps us to know ourselves and others in a way that encourages us to resume the journey toward gender wholeness and fruitful relating.

Jesus’ friends make the difference here. We cannot know Him without them. Persons with SSA face relational problems that can only be adequately resolved through new relationships founded on worshipping this one God whose love surpasses all other loves. True worship of the One frees us to grow in communion with others. As members of His very body, God calls each

They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, Their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them. **Romans 2:15**

of us to chastity, which involves reconciling our gendered sexual selves with our spirituality. Together, united under one Cross, we eschew the 'LGBTQ' ethnos and recognize one human family at various stages of integrating God's best for our humanity.

One Healing Family

In other words, integrating our beautiful sexual humanity can only occur if we are progressing into the believing community. Personal integration involves a corporate integration. We do well to discern communities that value the whole Gospel—grace, truth, and Jesus' healing power combined. That means we need to identify churches which point to a clear path of integration and who help persons with SSA find that path alongside of others.

Good Christian therapy can be of value here. We need skilled helpers who understand that gender dis-complementarity is a problem for which sound psychological answers exist. We live in a day that opposes any social scientist who counters


the flawed popular wisdom that homosexuality is morally neutral, inborn, and impermeable to change. Motivated Christians know better. Same-sex attraction reveals gender disintegration; we are still longing for our own image! Seeking to know and to resolve the core issues behind that longing helps us proceed onto wholeness.

Wise helpers help individuals sort out the obstacles in one's path—both past and present—that empower broken ways of relating to self and others. An inspired therapist can function as a 'surgeon' for a soul alongside the 'family doctor,' or pastor. We need the whole healing team and must rely humbly upon a range of support, included faithful ministers and skilled therapists.

Healing Gifts to the Church

Part of that team may involve specialized ministries like Living Waters. Effective small groups help us to grow in trust as we covenant with persons

who like us are seeking to live in chaste interdependence upon other members of Christ's body. Here we learn to listen and to pray for others; we discover that we in our brokenness possess a healing gift that others' need, even as we need their witness of hope. Healthy groups exist in good relationship to the local church as they link us to our greatest need, which is to participate in the life of local church.

God made us gifts—we discover this truth as we walk out SSA with integrity. We can be faithful because of His faithfulness to us. Jesus helps us stay open to the life He won for us at Calvary; He pours out that life constantly to us through His Word, Spirit, and the love of His members. We accept ongoing struggles as small crosses. We learn to carry them with dignity, ever open to Him and trustworthy ones. Hardship facilitates His will because we trust in Him. His glorious Cross makes a way for us to live chaste, fruitful lives. 

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One thing is clear:
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It finishes
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Church, His bride

Keys to Helping Persons with Same-Sex Attraction

7 Keys

1

How beautiful is your version of Jesus? Do you reflect His beauty as you engage with persons with SSA? Our lyrical 'good news' is often accompanied by a dirge, not a jig. Do concerns for others' souls cancel out the joy of our salvation? A seasoned Christian friend recently remarked that she cannot witness to the Risen Christ when she is depressed, weighed down. Cast your cares on Him and shine on your SSA friends as one raised from the dead of sin and sorrow.

2

Consider your own brokenness and how faithful Jesus has been to help you, even when you resisted Him. Then consider your joy when you finally let go and let Jesus be Lord over that area of your life. If that does not inspire gratitude for Love's power in your life then nothing will. Remember His unfailing mercy for you. Leave room next to you at the Cross for your loved one. He is not finished with you or the beloved. Mercy wins.

3

Remember the truth: God created man and woman to complement each other and to create new life together. Male and female are the two natures He gave humanity and so we cannot agree that He makes anyone 'gay' or can ever 'bless' sexualized same-sex friendships. Uphold 'gay-identified' ones as beautiful expressions of God's image who are deceived by the world, flesh and devil. Do not alter the truth just because someone you love has. You may be one of the few who still sees her or him as (s)he really is.

4

Help build healing communities. Churches are capitulating at an alarming rate to the world's understanding of homosexuality. Do more than cast a stone; use your stones to build up the Church that represents Jesus, full of grace and truth and healing power for persons with SSA. Let your pastor and elders know what you know about transformation. If they defend a false gospel, go somewhere else. Prepare God's house for the repentant.

5

Educate yourself on the origins and healing of homosexuality. Refute clearly the folly of 'born that way' and 'must stay that way' thinking. Discover the therapists in your area who offer skilled help to persons with SSA. Read good books on the subject and stay connected to clinical networks like NARTH (www.narth.org) and pastoral ones like Restore Hope Network (www.restoredhopenetwork.com) and Courage (www.couragerc.org).

6

Do Living Waters. Anyone can benefit from this healing group that helps all persons seeking sexual wholeness. Get in the water yourself. If no local group exists to attend then come to one of our national trainings. Deeper insight into your own brokenness can make you more responsive to the mercy you need. That will make you a better witness of Love for all.

7

Stay true to Jesus who can open anyone to His Life, including persons with SSA. What really is at stake in the whole 'gay' debate is the power of the Gospel. Does Jesus' death cancel the power of homosexual sin? Does His life have power to raise persons with SSA from the dead of the 'gay' self and its practices? Of course it does. But that truth is rarely heard these days; it requires intrepid, vocal witnesses. Declare without ceasing the power of Jesus to redeem persons with SSA for life through His Life.

Recommended Resources:

Compassion without Compromise: How the Gospel Frees Us to Love Our Gay Friends Without Losing the Truth by Ron Citlau and Adam T Barr (Bethany House). Available through Amazon or your local Christian bookstore.

The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Text and Hermeneutics by Robert A. J. Gagnon (Abingdon Press). Available through Amazon or your local Christian bookstore.

Living Waters Training: October 24th – 30th, 2015. www.desertstream.org/leadership-training or contact lwtraining@desertstream.org

Open to Life: Andrew's Story



BY ANDREW FRANKLIN

In May 2006, I woke up from a drug-and-alcohol induced blackout and couldn't remember why I had cuts on my body and a sinking feeling about the night before. Usually I laughed at mine and my friends' antics, but today was different. I found out that my behavior the night before had crossed new lines. I had dis-respected my friends and had sexually assaulted a guy at the party. I had just enough of a moral compass left in me from my Christian upbringing to feel completely sick to my stomach and in despair at the man I had become. I couldn't respect myself.

My friends had very little hope to offer me. Their prevailing advice was just to not drink so much, but I didn't know how to do moderation. So I decided to dig out the Bible that I had stashed under my bed. All of a sudden, the power and the reality of the man Jesus Christ confronted me, and I wept as I read the gospel of John.

After a few days of reading, I hit the floor of my apartment and cried out, "OK God, I'm yours. Do whatever You want with me." Immediately I felt waves of the kindness and love of God touch my heart, and I heard Him speak to me: "Andrew, I'm not mad at you." In a vision, He took me back through key moments of my life and showed me just how present He was, protecting me and keeping me alive. Instead of the judgment I deserved, He gave me forgiveness.

I had encountered Jesus! But what this meant to me as a gay man, I had no idea. I tentatively told a few friends that I was going to give Christianity another try, but faltered when asked what that meant for my homosexuality. I was 23 years old and had never heard of anyone "leaving homo-

sexuality". I was still sexually addicted and had nowhere to go for help, because I feared shame and condemnation.

Eventually, the Lord brought me out of my isolation and I found a few avenues of healing and life that were especially helpful. I received one-on-one ministry from a gifted pastoral caregiver who had also been gay-identified but had left homosexuality and submitted every part of his life to Jesus. He gave me hope, and

also challenged me. He said, "Andrew, there are reasons you struggle the way you do and feel the way you do and there are reasons you have done the things you've done. You owe it to yourself to get some answers."

Counseling was complemented by participating in a Living Waters group. For the first time in my life, I began to learn how to actually LIVE Christianity rather than just talk about it. Jesus

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Open to Life: Kelsie's Story

BY KELSIE GARTNER



I had just been dumped. I knew if anything was going to sustain me it'd have to be a miracle. God had planned this moment before I had been born. Chapter 8 of Romans "And those He predestined He also called... (v 30)" It was the moment of surrender and entering the life of the Spirit.

Eucharistic adoration prepared me for the confessional. I looked the priest straight in the eyes and said, "Father, I'm begging to be used by this woman and there's got to be something wrong with that..." It became clear to me that I had been settling for less in my same-sex relationships. I wasn't choosing to love myself in a healthy way by following my flesh.

After my confession, during adoration, I grieved over family wounds I'd kept locked up and numbed for years. My parents, especially my father's drug addiction, had traumatized me in different ways. The effects of neglect, abuse and rage poured out. It was like a waterfall that increased in power as I listened to praise and worship lyrics about how deep and unconditional Christ's love is. I'd been forgiven for drinking, smoking, relational idolatry, promiscuity and even cutting. In the washing, I could receive truth and hope. I always believed in God, but I never knew He cared about my pain. In the lyrics I realized that through all the void fillers it was really Jesus my heart so wanted and needed.

I was ready and allowed Him to be my new constant. In doing this I was shifting from turning to a man-made God to the

Creator Savior. I'd been in therapy and continued to do so with an entirely open heart to God. The same Campus Center that put on the retreat offered heaps of spiritual formation. I dove in head-first, thirsting for the One. I started seeking Him in the body of Christ and in community I started receiving affectionate nurture within healthy boundaries. The Lord was fulfilling emotional needs I had never received growing up. In discipleship through Fellowship of Catholic University Students, I was not only loved, but challenged. I was challenged to grow in virtue and knowledge of the Church and Holy Spirit. The verse in chapter 8 of Romans continues: "...And those He called He also justified..."

After leaving the gay lifestyle, there was and still is much transformation to be done! The Lord

has been restoring my whole self in three ways: the precious body of Christ, Living Waters, and good Christian therapy. Therapy has worked wonders. Unconditional acceptance and healing prayer weekly meet the parts of me that were traumatized. This means parts of me that now have a place to get their hidden needs met in a healthy setting. Counseling is allowing traumatized parts of my heart to get to know Jesus. I am in a process of interior integration and did not know I needed it until Christ revealed to me this deeper need for emotional healing.

As God touches and heals me, my desires continue to become reordered. I am learning to listen to the Lord's voice in prayer. Living Waters has also planted a deep desire for this listening and showed me it is possible!

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...Andrew's Story*continued from page 5*

showed me the deeper-heart stuff going on underneath the surface of my sexual attractions and compulsions: the abandonment and emotional detachment I felt from my dad, my hatred and fear of my brother and my over-identification with my mom and sister. The bullying I endured from other boys at school had made me feel insecure and weak, hungry for strength and power but not knowing where to find it except in the arms of a man.

Jesus helped me forgive my family and my childhood bullies and spoke into my intense self-hatred. He showed me where I could find real strength through Him and from healthy men in the church.

The church community was essential for me. I had left the closely-knit (albeit dysfunctional) world of the gay community. I needed friends! All the good healing I was receiving had to be worked out in real-life relationships with other Christians. There I confronted patterns of narcissism and self-pity. And so I began to stop seeking power and attention inappropriately.

It certainly wasn't easy—that first year especially was probably the hardest of my life. I often felt like giving up. When I confessed my weakness (this freaked me out more than anything), I learned that I didn't have to always have it all together. His strength kept me real and pressing into community.

Almost 10 years after first giving my entire life to Jesus, I can see the enormous blessings Christ has opened for me. A husband and father, Jesus's call to embrace life encourages me when I am tempted to settle for less.

I remember standing at my wedding ceremony a few years ago, unable to stop grinning and laughing: "Who would have ever thought that after all the years of wickedness & rebellion, after all the years of dying to my destructive-yet-powerful desires and choosing the difficult beginnings of repentance, that I would actually find myself making covenant with a woman, the actual love of God being poured through one another—who would have ever dreamed I could know the joy of that pure love?"

Occasionally I can still experience same-sex attraction. When the

challenges of life feel overwhelming to me, I can find myself resisting an open posture towards Jesus, struggling with familiar feelings of abandonment and fear. In those times, I find same-sex attraction is heightened—I kind of feel like an adolescent again, insecure and wanting to find strength and affirmation in lustful ways that prevent me from faithful reliance on God. In those times, I am greatly helped by the Christian men in my life with whom I can pray and ask for wisdom and encouragement. I also continue to learn how to open myself up to my wife in a way that increases our intimacy rather than compromising it.

My greatest strength comes from Christ himself. When I quiet myself before God in prayer, I find the true desire of my heart—Christ Himself, and His perfect generosity toward me that is every bit as available to me now as it was in my brokenness 10 years ago. "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32) I continue to be amazed at the life-giving generosity of Jesus in my life. 🙏

stolen away. I can only say that God has brought good out of bad and has worked for my good what was intended to harm me! Interning at Desert Stream has been a product of this new life. "...And those He justified He also glorified (Romans 8:30)."

Right now I am single and overall loving it! I have time to walk with the Lord in an undistracted way. I've come to a place of recognizing my need for good masculine brothers in Christ. FINALLY. In guarding my heart at an unhealthy level I had NO

IDEA what I was missing out on!! Men are beautiful! I am finally receiving intimacy from them by beautiful, holy brothers through St. Paul's Outreach.

I have also come to deeply desire marriage and a family. I know I want it and believe I'm called to it, but in God's timing. He'll be faithful to lead me into that when His timing is right. For now I strive to be satisfied with Him as primary holder of my heart. And let me say: He does a pretty good job of it. 🙏



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...Kelsie's Story*continued from page 6*

Christian counseling and now leading Living Waters provide much practice.

My life looks so different now than it did just four years ago. I'm not that crazy, rebellious young person in the party scene hopping from one dating relationship to the next. God has brought resurrection from death. He's redeemed things that were broken and restored much of what the enemy had

Corporate Corner



BY ANNETTE COMISKEY

There are many things happening this summer. The most exciting is the release of our new booklet, *Open to Life: How Jesus Transforms Persons with Same-Sex Attraction*.

This was written by Andy to address the question of healing for those with unwanted SSA. This book offers the hope of transformation!

This newsletter highlights some of the booklet—it is a wonderful resource for pastors, lay counselors, family and friends as well as those who seek healing in their own lives. *Open to Life* may be ordered on our website: www.desertstream.org/resources.

There are some changes on our staff as well. Lori Butler has been on staff for 6 years. She and her husband Mark are moving to Atlanta. She will be missed! We are grateful for her contributions to many aspects of Desert Stream, particularly administratively. We are also glad to announce another Lori to our staff! Lori Harry has been a friend of DSM since we moved to Kansas City. She will come on staff as our part-time bookkeeper.

The summer often brings changes with our interns. Andrew Franklin and family are moving back to Oklahoma where he will join the staff of a church in Norman. Becky Turner's internship is ending but she will stay involved as a "permanent" volunteer! Daniel Delgado comes on staff this June as our newest intern. Daniel has a heart for the gender confused and for the Latin community. He will help Andy and Maite further the growth of Aguas Vivas.

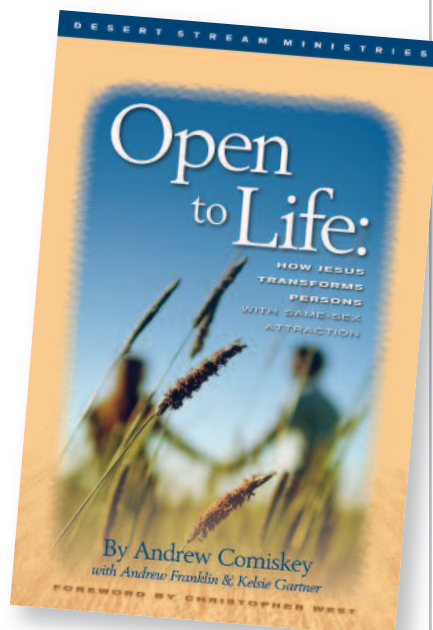
We continue to support the growth of Living Waters outside

of the United States. Andy recently returned from a Living Waters training in the Philippines. He also was with Sue Hunt in Ubon Thailand where she is leading a Living Waters pilot group.

In April he was a part of conference in England with Core Issues Trust (www.coreissues.org). Despite the push to ban reparative therapy in England and the recent referendum legalizing 'gay marriage' in Ireland, CIT proclaims the Biblical truth on both homosexuality and marriage.

As I write this we await the US Supreme Court's decision on whether or not same-sex marriage bans are unconstitutional. No matter the decision, our beliefs stand—upholding traditional marriage—one man and one women. Each day we read news of the culture becoming more embracing of homosexuality. More distressing are the number of churches which embrace homosexuality or simply won't take a stand either way.

We value greatly those churches that stand with us and continue to open their doors weekly to Living Waters groups. This past year we had five Living Waters groups in Kansas City, we are hoping for a sixth church to start one this fall.



We also value greatly the continued prayer and financial support of those of you who stand with us. Thank you! There are many important prayer needs and ministries that are equally worthy—blessings to you for choosing to give part of your time and resources to Desert Stream.

As the message of transformation becomes more marginalized that message needs to be heard by those who desire healing. The new booklet, training of interns, conferences, Living Waters and other resources are just part of the way Desert Stream continues to proclaim Biblical truth amidst a darkening world. 

2015

MID-YEAR REPORT

Publisher/Editor
Andrew Comiskey

Art Direction
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Desert Stream Ministries publishes the following:
 Newsletter (Spring and Fall)
 Mid-Year Report (Summer)
 Year-End Report (Winter)

Mission Statement

Based on the biblical foundations of compassion, integrity, and dependence on God, Desert Stream Ministries proclaims to the world the transforming power of Jesus Christ. We equip the body of Christ to minister healing to the sexually and relationally broken, through healing groups and leadership training for the local church.

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