

Homosexuality: Hope or Dilemma?

Barrington H. Brennen, August 7, 2003

Homosexuality, is this something Adventists need to deal with? Is it occurring among us? Thirty years ago, when I was a college student, many laughed and scorned, or sometimes publically ridiculed any one they suspected of being a homosexual. When it became certain that a person was a homosexual, many turned their heads in disgust and joined in spreading vicious rumors through the gossip lines of self-righteousness, hatred, arrogance, and pride. We built many walls of separation between the hurting one and those who should have been helping. We shot the wounded in their feet and did not care. Our self-righteous attitude has actually driven many out of the church, when all they were seeking was a listening ear, understanding, and healing.

WE HAVE THEM IN OUR CHURCHES

Why am I talking this way? Because the Adventist Church has come to the painful realization that we cannot put our heads in the sand anymore. Many of our Adventist youth, and even adults, are grappling with the issues of homosexuality. They are asking themselves these questions: "Is it okay to express my homosexual feelings as an Adventist?" "I felt I was a homosexual from I was a child, why can't this be just accepted as the norm." Others struggling Adventists are saying: "I've personally struggled with this issue of homosexuality for years, and all I want is relief and recovery. Could you please help me." Is there hope for me?" In the West Indies, silently the Adventist Church is deciding whether it is our Christian duty to bring hope to homosexuals or to let them suffer the dilemma.

In Jamaica, it is illegal to practice homosexuality, and many, including some Christians are openly intolerant to anyone exhibiting the slightest form of effeminate behavior to the point of beating him publically. In the Bahamas, where there are no sodomy laws and two recently formed pro-homosexual groups who are making their voices heard, many Christians are even more intolerant, expressing their disgust and hatred towards homosexuals in vocal and sometimes violent ways. Sadly, many homosexuals feel reluctant to open up even to their friends and brothers and sisters in the church because they feel they will not be understood and they will be ostracized.

A few months ago the Adventist Counseling Services of the Bahamas Conference had a three-day video series on the homosexual lifestyle, roots, and recovery. In response to my advertisement about the event, I got a few emails and calls from persons who identified themselves as homosexual Christians and a few who said they were Adventists, but who really were hurting inside and were seeking help for years. Their only problem was that they were afraid to come to the video showings because they did not want to be ridiculed. I have published eight articles on homosexuality. Each time I got responses from pro gay individuals who were disgusted with the article; but more often responses were from people who identified themselves as Christians who wanted help in dealing with the personal issues of homosexuality.

What should be the Adventist Christian's response? Before I answer this question let me first deal with other issues about homosexuality.

OUR POSITION

Here's a quote from the Seventh-day Adventist Church Official Statement on Homosexuality. "Seventh-day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. This was the design established by God at creation. The Scriptures declare: "For

this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24, NIV). Throughout Scripture this heterosexual pattern is affirmed. The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships. Sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden (Lev. 20:7-21; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). . . . Seventh-day Adventists endeavor to follow the instruction and example of Jesus. He affirmed the dignity of all human beings and reached out compassionately to persons and families suffering the consequences of sin. He offered caring ministry and words of solace to struggling people, while differentiating His love for sinners from His clear teaching about sinful practices.."

BORN THAT WAY?

Can one overcome homosexuality. Yes, one can overcome homosexuality. There seems to be a great controversy in the psychological and theological arenas whether a person is born a homosexual or not. One of the latest findings, according to a 1993 study at the University of Colorado and the Whitehead Institute of Biomedical Research in Cambridge, Massachusetts, suggests that there might a homosexual gene that predisposes a person toward homosexuality. Wow! Wouldn't it be frightening to be controlled by chemicals in our bodies without the possibility of making cognitive decisions. On the other hand whether or not there is a homosexual gene is not an issue for the Christian. Why not? Because the Bible does say that we are "born in sin and shapen in iniquity." There are "genes" that give us the tendency to do evil things, but they don't control behavior

Strictly speaking, one cannot be born a homosexual because homosexuality is a learned behavior, as are anger, fear, lust, prostitution, and even love. Certainly, however, one can be born with the predisposition toward homosexuality. A homosexual may be defined as a person who willingly engages in homosexual acts. In other words, tendencies, genetic make-up, or biological deficiencies, should not dictate to us. I am certain that if the genetic scientists checked even further, they might find a gene for every deviant behavior and attitude in the human race. Interestingly, the Times Magazine, July 1995 issue, presented a cover story entitled "Infidelity, It May Be in Our Genes." In the early 70s, a scientist supposedly discovered that serial killers have an extra "y" chromosome, which is believed to make them more violent. Recently researchers "discovered" that there is a gene for alcoholism. What next?

If we are dictated to by our genetic structure, hormonal flow, and impulses, we are no better than the animals. Many of us, heterosexuals and homosexuals, do act like them. Humans were made with a special gift called the power and freedom of choice. This freedom to choose, controlled by the Holy Spirit, should help us conquer the natural, sinful inclinations of our body cells and nerves. The brain cells are designed to function independently of all cells in the body. We ultimately decide who we are, what we want to be, and our destiny in life.

WOULD SOMEONE PLEASE SHOW ME A HOMOSEXUAL?

It is difficult to identify most homosexuals. Some homosexuals get married to cover up their orientation. Others keep their activities discreetly limited to a select group of individuals. We can't always tell who's who. First impressions are not always true, and you can't truly judge a book by its cover. Most homosexuals are **not effeminate**. In fact, research tells us that about 85% of effeminate men are **not** homosexuals. They are usually dedicated, committed, and loving husbands and fathers.

The new term evolving today is "metrosexual male." Who is he? Here's how one author describes him: "He's been defined as a straight, sensitive, well-educated, urban dweller who is in touch with his feminine side. He may have a standing appointment for a weekly manicure, and he probably has his hair cared for by a stylist rather than a barber. He loves to shop, and his bathroom counter is most

likely filled with male-targeted grooming products, including moisturizers (and perhaps even a little makeup). He may work on his physique at a fitness club (not a gym) and his appearance probably gets him lots of attention -- and he's delighted by every stare. He is not a homosexual.

It is a terrible mistake to attribute the soft voice, gentle walk, and usually hand motions, to a homosexual. The homosexual can be that incredible hulk-of-a-man you admire, the masculine boss, the most enjoyable person on the job, the charming secretary, the committed father or mother, the affectionate spouse, or the most beautiful, feminine nurse. Not all homosexuals accost or flirt with other people. What then is my point? While we speak out against homosexuality, we must find ways of keeping the lines of communication open between us. Why change our attitude towards someone simply because we learned something different about him, especially when he has never caused harm to you or made you feel uncomfortable in his presence.

Sometimes it is wise to adjust our ways of relating to each other when there are serious lifestyles differences we believe are not wholesome. However, we need not ostracize or belittle someone just because we are sure our lifestyle and sexual orientation is the right one.

LET'S HELP

Many homosexual and lesbians are afraid to come out of the closet and seek help because they feel that will not be accepted and they will be treated with disdain. Our responsibility as decent Christian citizens is to respect and love everyone in spite of their sexual orientation. We need not encourage their homosexual practices, but we can support the basic human rights they are entitled to under the constitution. We all have (including the homosexual) a right to life, liberty, and the security of our person. Our churches should be a refuge and welcome center for all, including the open or closet homosexuals. Martin Luther once said "Those we want to change we must first love."

Certainly, without a doubt, God loves the homosexual. God does not like homosexual practices, but he did come to earth to die for **all**, including the homosexual. John 3:16 says "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." God's love to us is unconditional. However, we must accept his love and allow the transforming power of his love to make a difference in our lives. I love the way God deals with sinners and hurting people. He accepts us where we are, then empowers us to transform our lives. In other words, God's unconditional love is not transforming until we open our hearts and minds to Him. God will never force us to do or be anything. Yet, he still loves us.

The Christian's duty is to provide an avenue for healing to those homosexuals who want a change in their lives, and to present a compassionate, respectful attitude toward those who choose not to change. We can love the homosexual and disagree with the homosexual lifestyle. We can condemn the sin, but show compassion to the erring ones. Let's create a balance between condemnation and compassion. Let's bring hope. If you are interested in starting a recovery ministry for homosexuals in your church or community please email me at sdacounseling@coralwave.com or call at 242-361 6355 or write to Barrington H. Brennen, P.O. Box N-356, Nassau, Bahamas