

Healing Wholeness & Homosexuality

A Christian perspective



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Dennis Wrigley & Linda Stalley

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Identity and Sexuality

1. Introduction

Human relationships are at the core of civilised society.

Strong and permanent relationships based on mutual trust, respect and love undoubtedly strengthen society. Relationships which are temporary, shallow, debased and exploitive clearly weaken society. Relationships in which there is indifference and detachment are not neutral, they can be positively destructive.

The breakdown of relationships is a characteristic of contemporary society and with the obvious breakdown of marriage and the destruction of so many family units the issue of sexual relationships is increasingly the subject of public debate. Simultaneously with changes in legislation, the consequent alteration in behaviour patterns and the emergence of the AIDS crisis have also placed the issue of homosexual relationships in the arena of public discussion. This has undoubtedly caused much pain and deep divisions whilst partisan protagonists seek to normalise what others regard as abnormal behaviour. Much of the debate has sadly been driven by aggressive 'gay' pressure groups which have used considerable public influence to obtain both platforms and funds for their movement. Their activities frequently involve coercion, threat and occasionally violence although doubtless the vast majority of homosexuals, being ignorant of these activities, would themselves disapprove of this behaviour.

On the other hand however it can be argued that many homosexuals, lonely and unhappy, have felt vulnerable and rejected. The emergence of a strident gay subculture often driven by commercial and political interests has tended to create exclusively gay ghettos and thus to separate homosexuals from the rest of the community. It has tended to divert attention away from the need for an understanding, caring and loving approach to the whole issue of male or female homosexuality.

2. What is Homosexuality?

Homosexuality is essentially a confused condition and therefore there is confusion in its definition. Lawrence J. Hatterer in his book 'Changing Homosexuality in the Male' defines the homosexual person as "one who is motivated, in adult life by definite erotic attraction to members of the same sex and who usually, but not necessarily, engages in overt sexual relations with them". To have a pre-disposition or propensity for members of one's own sex may not be a permanent situation. J. J. West in 'Homosexuality Re-examined' (Duckworth 1977) stated, "Few people pass through life without at some stage experiencing homosexual feelings". He emphasised, "Like other aspects of human behaviour, sexual orientation is the outcome of a complex interplay of different factors." He pointed to these being mostly environmental, including general cultural habits and expectations, family upbringing and personal circumstances.

In one sense the homosexual through his or her orientation is expressing a profound psychological need or deficiency. Hence, according to Dr. Elizabeth Moberley to stop 'being a homosexual' means "to stop being a person with same sex psychological deficits".

Our starting point in considering homosexuality therefore must surely be that God does not put labels on anyone. All human nature is wounded and in need of healing and the one who is called "a homosexual" must primarily be seen as a human being to be loved and treated with the same respect as any other person. The fact that one aspect of their life differs from the norm must never be an excuse for them being robbed of their dignity, worth and uniqueness.

Christians believe that every man and woman is created in the image of God. In spite of weaknesses and problems we are each of inestimable value in His sight. We believe that our relationships with each other are of immediate concern to God. They are directly influenced by the nature of our relationship with Him.

The current debate about homosexuality must be seen in the context of the rapid growth of promiscuity, the devaluation of marriage and in the encouragement of child sex instanced in the distribution of condoms to young schoolchildren.

Driven by commercial interests which are ruthless and amoral we have become a sex-obsessed society with a totally unnatural emphasis upon the sex act, often in the context of violence, as distinct from normal, healthy, loving human relationships. Bruce Gyngell, Managing Director of Yorkshire/Tyne Tees Television, speaking to the Royal Television Society, asked, "What are we doing to our sensibilities and moral values and, more important, those of our children when, day after day, we broadcast an unremitting diet of violence, extremes of sexuality and negative behaviour?". As these commercial interests have become stronger they have become more greedy and have not hesitated to debase, degrade and devalue the relationships which should be valued for their gentleness, dignity and modesty. Children, in particular, have had ugly and sometimes frightening sexual images imposed upon them by irresponsible adults. The so-called 'National Condom Week' Report boldly proclaimed "serial monogomy is the buzz phrase for the 1990's" and there is no doubt that there are now heavy pressures militating against life-long partnership in marriage. These pressures are of course generating immense human suffering, particularly amongst children.

Jesus comes to put right our relationships with God, with ourselves and with others. He specifically says "Whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me". (Matt. 25.40)

A judgmental attitude can be deeply wounding and highly offensive, but on the other hand, a desire for good relationships should not blind us to the truth. In the emotionally charged debate on homosexuality which is currently taking place both in society at large and in the Church there is all too often a readiness to compromise the truth in order to be politically correct.

The first truth emphasised is that the incidence of homosexuality is far lower than we are led to believe. In the U.S. Government General Social Survey of 1989, Professor Tom Smith of the University of Chicago undertook a survey of sexual behaviour. This showed that 98.5% of adults were exclusively heterosexual. Studies carried out in other countries show a remarkable consistency. A survey in the United Kingdom sponsored by the Wellcome Trust reported 1.4% of males having had a homosexual partner in the previous five years and 1.1% in the previous year. The Report claimed that the results were "consistent with those from other recent studies in Europe and the United States".

The second truth emphasised is that a high proportion of homosexuals are deeply unhappy in their condition and would wish to change. In the 1992 SIGMA study funded by the Medical Research Council and the Department of Health no fewer than 34% of homosexual men expressed regret at being homosexual. Possibly more than this proportion felt regret but did not express it. 17% "had considered giving up being gay" and 9% "would take a pill today to make them heterosexual (if one were available)". Recognition of this is important in really meeting the needs of those who are caught up in the 'gay' scene.

Homosexual practice for many participants creates in its own right a stress level which makes the homosexual hypersensitive to criticism and to competition. Therefore, homosexual relationships are fraught with jealousies and angers and these are made worse by the promiscuous practice of multi-partnering. For the Christian the sex act is sacred and not to be taken lightly. Yet, sadly for many male homosexuals the physical sexual encounter is ephemeral as a result of encounters while 'cruising'. This in itself is a devaluation of relationships and inevitably has a high exploitive content. Love is about giving and receiving, not taking and dominating.

Promiscuity and multi-partnering robs the participant of their human dignity and debases sexuality. During this century we have seen countless examples of the way in which the value of individual men and women has been swept on one side. Privacy has been invaded. Modesty, a fundamental ingredient in civilised society, has been ridiculed. The gentleness and beauty of sexual relationships in marriage have been scorned and torn apart. The process of dehumanisation has continued apace assisted by the media and militant secular humanist influences. We, by omission and apathy, encourage our children to have sex. Moreover, we teach them about sexuality without any real guidance on spiritual and moral factors, frequently imposing upon them the dogmas and doctrines of a very bigoted and intolerant humanistic minority.

3. The Background

The predisposing factors and circumstances which may give rise to homosexuality are complex and numerous. The current debate about homosexuality centres largely upon basically whether it

is genetic or acquired. If it is the former there ought to be considerable evidence available to show that it is genetic and/or organically determined. This evidence does not exist. As Laurence Hatterer, the American Psychiatrist state "homosexuals are not born but made and genetic, hereditary, constitutional, glandular or hormonal factors have no significance in causing homosexuality". (Quoted in 'The Church and Homosexuality' - Green, Holloway, Watson).

Dr. Frank Lake, who pioneered clinical theology, discovered considerable evidence of the significance of disorders in infant years being directly related to the homosexual condition. All 50 male homosexual patients to whom Lake and his colleagues administered LSD between 1950 - 1966 relived a traumatic incident or painful period of babyhood in which life in the woman's care had been horrific. (quoted in 'Christian Attitudes to Homosexuality' by Peter Coleman, pub. SPCK).

Doctor Charles W. Socarides of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York states that homosexuality is not innate, it is learned, acquired behaviour. Even Masters & Johnson in their book 'Human Sexuality' have written "the genetic theory of homosexuality has generally been discarded today". Dr. John Money of the John Hopkins School of Medicine and Director of the Psycho-hormonal Research Unit states "Whatever may be the possible unlearned assistance from constitutional sources, the child's psychosexual identity is not written, unlearned in the genetic code, the hormonal system or the nervous system at birth".

There is a remarkably high success rate in leading homosexuals into heterosexuality through Christian healing. Countless examples of this are to be found in the ministry of Leanne Payne. Rev. John. Hampsch has given much evidence of the healing of homosexuals through the work of 'Desert Stream' one of twenty-five groups listed in the central referral agency of Exodus International. The way in which we perceive ourselves and others is fundamentally changed when a person grows in Christian faith.

All the evidence points to the fact that homosexual orientation in adult life is the result of pre-birth and early childhood experiences.

As Doctor Elizabeth Moberley states "from the present evidence it would seem clear that the homosexual condition does not involve abnormal needs, but normal needs, that have abnormally, been left unmet in the ordinary process of growth. The needs as such are normal; their lack of fulfilment and the barrier to their fulfilment is abnormal".

4. There is Hope

Many people who are wrestling with problems of homosexuality and sexual identity come for help feeling hopeless, trapped and guilty. They are often hypersensitive to what they perceive to be other people's critical attitudes. Their hurts - and the arrogance that sometimes flows from these - must be treated with great sensitivity and love, not judgement. Often they are very lonely or alternatively have been dragged reluctantly into a sordid 'gay' scene. This environment may have temporarily enabled them to put on a cloak of respectability and public acceptance but this rarely enables them to escape from a sense of degradation, despair and guilt. The task of the Christian is not to intrude upon other people's personal lives but rather to respond to them constructively and in love when they cry for help. We are called to give hope to the seemingly hopeless, and to share deeply and confidentially with all the inner conflict and turmoil which afflicts the homosexual. We must do this in the full knowledge that most of us experience conflict and turmoil of equal magnitude in various other aspects of our lives.

When homosexuals discover that their condition is not irreversible and that Christ's power to heal covers every part of their being, they may expect to experience a new self-worth and self-esteem. The radical change they will encounter may be quite sudden or spread over a period of months or even years. It is our experience that God leads those He is healing along the path which is right for them. He never demands more of us than we are able to give. His grace is truly sufficient for all our needs. It must always be recognised, however, that the Gospel demands change and many of us are afraid of change. In this respect the homosexual is no different from any one else. We all need to hear and receive Jesus' words, "Behold I make all things new" (Rev.21.5).

5. What is Healing?

The subject of healing has been exposed to much debate and controversy within the Christian Church. When faced with the evidence, however, it is beyond doubt that Jesus heals today and

the main channel for His healing is His Church - His Body on earth. In looking at the subject of healing, therefore, we are in the same position as the early writers in the church who stated simply, "we proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us" (1Jn. 1.3).

Many of the misconceptions and disagreements about healing seem to be related to differences in the interpretation of its meaning. Some confine healing to the proven cure of a physical or mental condition, but this definition is damaging in itself, leading to the conclusion that someone who is physically or mentally ill is unable to attain greater wholeness without the curing of their physical or mental condition. This disappointment in turn has a negative effect upon the individual's understanding and experience of the love of God in their lives, and thus damages faith. For this reason, some have decided that the healing ministry was only seen during the life of Jesus. This interpretation denies the healing ministry given to the disciples, both when Jesus sent them out in twos and as reported in the Acts of the Apostles following Pentecost. It also denies the experience of the Christian Church throughout the years and the promise of Jesus that "anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." (Jn. 14.12)

So, what is healing and how is it seen in lives today? Very simply, healing may be described as putting right what is wrong. Healing is bringing wholeness in place of impairment. Healing is bringing peace in place of disturbance. Healing is bringing equilibrium in place of imbalance. Healing is not just an isolated or even spectacular event, neither does it simply relate to one area of our lives. Healing is a continuous process. Healing may perhaps best be described as a journey upon and during which we come closer to God. In coming closer to Him we become the fullness of the person He created us to be and are gradually transformed into a greater measure of His likeness. This is wholeness.

On our journey God is at the same time both the Father who accepts us just as we are yet who awaits us at the end of the road, calling us to our true home, and our companion Jesus who seeks to share in every pain and joy along the way.

We can only come closer to God when, in the depth of our being, we desire to do so. This desire in itself comes from His presence within us, His imprint, His Spirit planted within each being at their creation, the source of the love which so naturally flows from the heart of each member of humanity. Our desire to come closer to God and to be at peace with Him is our response to His call to us. As St. John wrote, "This is love : not that we loved God, but that He loved us...". (1 Jn 4.10)

6. The Healing Ministry of Jesus

The way of Jesus is in stark contrast to the way of the world. He comes to serve, not to be served. He comes to give and not to receive. He points to the way of forgiveness, not retribution. His way is the way of total love, a love which is without condition or limit. His way is the way of peace.

Followers of Jesus were initially called people of the Way. They were called to serve, to give and to love. Followers of Jesus were called to be ministers of reconciliation, leading others on the path of forgiveness, bringing peace into a troubled world. The same applies to His followers today.

The ministry of healing was central to the life and teaching of Jesus and this ministry was basically about changing people's lives. All of the miracles reported in the Gospel narratives were signs of an encounter with the Son of God. The physical cures were the direct consequence of the authority of Jesus exercised upon a person's life and pointed to a far deeper healing of mind and spirit. Jesus came to announce the Kingdom, the place where God rules, and claimed to have all authority in both heaven and earth. Thus, wherever Jesus went there was healing. What was wrong was put right.

Jesus chose to become one of the people. He did not remain separate from the sick and the outcasts. He deliberately sought out the company of prostitutes, tax collectors and those considered to be 'unclean'. He touched the leper, He allowed a Samaritan woman to give him a drink, He stood by the woman caught in adultery, He welcomed the children. His whole life demonstrated love for the loveless - healing for those who knew they were sick.

The hallmark of Jesus' ministry was that He knew the real need of each individual who came to Him. Their encounter with Him was an encounter with the Truth and they were set free. To the

man who was lowered through the roof of the house by his friends, Jesus said, 'Your sins are forgiven' (Matt 9.2). He was set free from the paralysis of guilt, not simply the dysfunction of his legs.

Similarly, the woman who had suffered bleeding for 12 years needed to know that she was accepted and loved by God. The cessation of her bleeding which made her an unclean outcast was not sufficient to bring her the deeper healing which she really needed. Jesus sought her out to meet that need.

Today Jesus comes to each man, woman and child in the person of His Holy Spirit. To each of us He announces, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me". (Rev. 3.20). Today, Jesus still chooses to eat with sinners, bringing healing to those who recognise they are sick. There is no difference in Jesus' offer to those with problems of sexuality than for any other individual. As St Paul said, "...righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus". (Rom. 3.22-24).

The person who experiences homosexual tendencies is an individual, unique in the sight of God and loved by Him, who needs His healing in body, mind and spirit. The healing of sexuality is a facet of the healing which is needed for the whole person, not a problem to be addressed in isolation. When real needs are identified by God, the healing and fulfilment of sexuality follows. The healing process for the homosexual, as for all of us, flows from a fuller understanding of forgiveness and love.

7. The Healing Body of Christ

The Church of Christ - that is Christians of all traditions throughout the world - is Christ's Body on earth today. Jesus still lives, and His Spirit gives life to His Body, bringing His presence, His love, His light and His peace wherever His followers gather together. Just as God's power to heal was seen in the earthly ministry of Jesus, so the Body of Jesus is used by God to bring healing here and now. The miracle is that God chooses to use sinful men and women with all their faults and failings to bring His healing love to the world. The only requirement is that those who would be used by God have the same attitude as Jesus, who "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant". (Phil. 2.7).

The power of the Church to heal comes only through the name of Jesus. When He is acknowledged as Lord, He gives believers authority to heal the sick and cast out demons, just as He did when He sent out His disciples. (Lk.9.1).

Healing, therefore, may also be described as the recognition that God loves us and calls us to Himself. Healing involves an admission that we are damaged, impure and incomplete and that we need God. Healing is the recognition that wholeness comes from God. Perhaps most importantly healing is accepting the authority and rule of God in our lives. Thus on the journey of healing, which leads to ultimate wholeness, we invite God to rule over more and more of our lives and so we become more like Him.

8. Broken Relationships

From this definition it is easy to recognise that we all need healing. We live in a sick world and we all contribute to its sickness because we are all sinful. The sickness in our world is a symptom of human alienation from God. It is the result of the rule of man rather than the rule of God in our individual lives, in our nations and in our societies. Alienation from God is the source of all discord, disturbance, disease and imbalance.

Our refusal as individuals to accept God's authority and His rule means that we inevitably submit to other powers or that we endeavour to exert authority over others. Our rebellion against God means that we are alienated from others whom we perceive to be different from us, whether by class or colour, race, belief, or attitude. Alienation and separation inevitably cause pain in our relationships with others, in our societies, and within ourselves, whether in body, mind or spirit.

The fundamental healing which we all need is in the relationships which make up our lives. Namely, our relationship with God; our relationship with ourselves; our relationship with others and our relationship with the whole of creation.

The evidence of broken relationships is to be found in a world experiencing separation and pain. We are surrounded by casualties as broken relationships have become the most dominant characteristic of contemporary society.

It is always in the midst of need that we discover Jesus.

Wrong relationships are manifestations of sin - such as selfishness, intolerance, pride, greed and lust. They are characterised by inhibition, guilt, anger, resentment, fear, sadness and sometimes violence. Wrong relationships generate a distorted understanding of the value and role of people. This, in turn, may lead to destructive processes such as ruthless exploitation or unhealthy subservience.

History proves that the cost of continuing wrong relationships is very high. Inner city deprivation, class division, colonial exploitation, racial hatred and religious bigotry are all evidence of this. We are alienated from God, estranged from each other and in conflict with God's creation.

Jesus came to restore all broken relationships by offering to each individual the opportunity of reconciliation with God. This surely is the meaning of the word righteousness - to be in a right relationship with God. This is why Jesus taught, "Seek first his Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well(Matt 6.33)". By "these things" Jesus meant everything that we ever need in life. God's Kingdom is the place where His rule and authority is accepted by everyone. Jesus urges us to seek the Kingdom of God in our own lives, characterised by a right relationship with Him, and promises that everything else will follow. Thus by pursuing God's righteousness, our relationships with ourselves, with others and with creation will also be put right. This is the path of healing which leads to wholeness. It is a path of reconciliation leading to peace.

9. Identity and our Search for Peace

Most people, when asked the question, "What do you want most in life?" respond with the simple answer, "peace", but the peace that humanity is searching for is not simply the absence of conflict and war, it goes beyond this. Because we are damaged people we often find it difficult to accept ourselves, love ourselves and forgive ourselves. We need to recognise that as well as being damaged by the world, we have damaged ourselves. In a restless world, the peace that every man and woman is seeking is that which comes from the knowledge that each one is accepted and loved unconditionally. Jesus teaches us about our value - "You are of more value than many sparrows" (Matt.10.31). God gives us our identity - "I have summoned you by name, you are mine" (Is.43.1). The Hebrew word 'Shalom' describes a state of well-being in which a person is at peace with God, at peace with themselves and at peace with others. It is this peace that Jesus promises to His disciples, clearly indicating that it is not available by worldly means. "My peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives"(Jn. 14.27). Only God can bring peace and fulfilment in the heart of our being, the place which has been reserved for Him since our creation. This is healing.

The peace for which humanity is searching is the peace which comes from the establishment of right relationships. Firstly, a right relationship with God, but also a right relationship with ourselves. Our attitude to ourselves should be neither lauding nor condemning. We should think of ourselves neither too highly nor too lowly. We are called to see ourselves as God sees us - as children, who need the love of a Father, as sinful men and women who need the redeeming love of a Saviour, each one known and called by name. Above all, God wants us to love ourselves as He loves us. When we accept and love ourselves as we are, then we discover a new peace in the depth of our being.

From the earliest moments of our lives we set out on a journey of self-discovery, or as the teenager may term it, "my search for my identity". This search is frequently seen as an adolescent phase and indeed its intensity is often greatest during these years of change,. However, the process of self-discovery and the formation of self-image begins even in the womb and continues into late adult life. In posing the question, 'Who am I?', the teenager soon affirms, 'I am not the person others think I am' but it perhaps requires the hindsight of greater maturity to recognise, 'I am not even the person I think I am'.

Our walk through life in development and self-perception- our identity - is not a walk that can be made in isolation. We discover our identity through our relationships with others, initially within the family, but also within the many realms of experience and people which influence our life.

Our identity is to be found in our uniqueness. There is no-one with the same identity as another. The world paints a picture of individuals based upon skills and attributes, their status in society and place in the family. The world defines identity in terms of physical characteristics and behavioural tendencies. We perceive one another on the basis of categories. Thus, a person may be described as the conscientious accountant who is kind-hearted, giving much of his time to charity work, the son of the university professor and husband of the vicar's daughter. The accountant's wife's description of her husband would doubtless suggest a completely different person and his description of himself would be different again.

Our relationships with others are governed by the category in which we place them or, put another way, the label which we apply to them in relation to ourselves. We may regard them as superior or inferior. We may regard them as a potential threat or as a potential benefit. We may enjoy their company or dislike them.

The danger in categorising people according to their condition, disposition, race, colour and nationality is that the labels which we apply prevent us from seeing the person who is in need of healing as a person with God's imprint upon him or her, with his or her uniqueness and great value. Thus we refer 'to the person who displays homosexual tendencies' or 'to the active homosexual', with all the preconceptions which we would attach to these labels.

We must recognise that the homosexual experiences a personal identity crisis of enormous magnitude and tends to be in conflict with himself or herself and often with society. Many researchers believe that same-sex love is itself a striving for completion of the discovery of identity.

For the homosexual, as for all of us, the healing love of God can restore and bring to fulfilment that true identity for which each individual is searching. This brings about a new self respect.

10. Our Perceptions

It is important to recognise that the perception we have of ourselves and others, which we believe to be identity, is based upon and influenced by our own observations, our knowledge of the person from the accounts of others and our relationship with that person ourselves. It is also important to recognise that this is only a perception of a person's identity - the view of one human being through the eyes of another - and not the true identity of that person which is usually hidden and actually still being discovered.

It is not difficult to recognise that our perception of someone changes as we get to know them. This is achieved through repeated and varied encounters with them. Our perception of someone whom we have never met is formulated in our imagination and is subject to the reports we have heard about them from others, who, for their part, have already made their own assessment of the person based upon their encounter or experience.

We readily believe the stories of the boy in the next street who must be very wicked to have done the things that our neighbour reports. We are also quick to comment upon the character of national figures based upon what we read about them in the press, not stopping to reflect that the politician whom we thought to be so praiseworthy a few months ago on reading a certain magazine, has now become, in our eyes, a devious scoundrel according to what we saw on the television today. Our perception of a person changes frequently, almost with the change of direction of the wind, if it is based solely upon reports and speculation.

Personal encounter brings us closer to an individual, but even then our perception is coloured by the situations in which we meet and the roles which we play. A child, who has only encountered the teacher in the classroom has a fixed and narrow perception of the teacher's identity. He or she exists simply as a good or bad teacher, a nice or nasty person, perhaps confined to a knowledge of only one subject and limited to a certain style of dress. On a school field trip, this teacher is suddenly transformed, almost as if another person. He or she becomes a younger person who wears trainers and is nice to talk to. He or she plays rounders rather well and knows a lot about cars.

In a similar way we are deceived into thinking that the club treasurer is honest and diligent. He or she is always very pleasant and quick to help anyone in need. When he appears in court for defrauding his company we question whether this is really the same man. Our perception of his character is not in keeping with the reality of a new situation.

When we encounter someone in only one situation, our perception of them is restricted to the role which they play. We do not see the person they really are. Similarly, our perception is governed by the role which we play. The way in which we perceive another person is governed literally by "the glasses" that we wear, the eyes through which we see. An Englishman, seeing an African, sees a black man. An African seeing the same man, sees a man from another tribe. A man from that tribe, seeing the same man, sees a brother.

Varied personal encounters with a person broaden our perspective, and certainly more intimate encounters as in family relationships deepen our understanding of an individual, but even then our perception of them is coloured by our personal interpretation of what we see, which in turn is entirely influenced by our own life experience.

When we are damaged, through emotional trauma in our own lives, it is as if we wear broken glasses and our perception of others is distorted. Failure to recognise our dignity and worth as unique individuals robs us of our full humanity and blinds us to God's love and to that of others. This impedes our ability to communicate and share with them. Wrong perceptions cause separation as restricting as any physical disability..

This separation is especially evident in relationship to God in a society in which many have dismissed this relationship as being non-existent and irrelevant. Their perception of God is governed by what they think they know about God and also by their perception of those who claim to be His followers.

If we perceive God to be absent and believe that there is nothing beyond our temporary earthly existence, the value of our life is diminished. If we perceive God as severe and punishing, we view ourselves as unworthy. When we encounter God personally, as a loving Father, we are overwhelmed by His intimate care for us as children.

11. Self-discovery

Our perception of others is coloured and influenced by our own experience of life. Our perception of ourselves is governed by the nature of our relationships in early childhood. Contrary to the belief of some, we do not discover very much about ourselves in isolation from others. In fact the truth is that we will never discover our true identity except through the eyes of God.

Despite all our "learning" and understanding we are left with the statement 'I am not the person I think I am'. Despite all our techniques and therapies, we cannot arrive at that place of peace and wholeness by ourselves or even through others. We are left in the position of the psalmist who simply states, "O Lord, you have searched me and you know me..... For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made..... When I was woven together in the depth of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body..." (Ps 139 v 1, 13-16).

The only person who knows us through and through, who knows our true identity, is the one who created us - God Himself. He created each human being out of the expression of His own creativity, each a unique work of art, or as one lady put it, "each one is the dream of God". If we regard ourselves purely as the result of a biological event, we deny our true identity which goes far beyond the description of our characteristics and attributes. Our identity goes beyond our membership of a tribe, race or nation, beyond the colour of our skin, the language we speak and even the gender that we are. We are firstly unique beings made in the likeness of God. We are secondly human beings with physical bodies, still unique, but taking on human traits from the moment of our conception. It is from this moment that we develop our own individual personality. This is the expression of our identity.

Most psychologists would agree that our personalities are largely formed by the age of 10 years. The way in which we behave and respond to situations during the majority of our living years is governed by the full range of our life experiences before our tenth birthday. Our personalities are most strongly influenced, therefore, by the situations which we face in early childhood, but, more importantly by the relationships which make up this foundational period of our life. Our experience of family is central to the expression of our identity. Healthy relationships affirm our

true identity and generate personal security. Unhealthy relationships mar our true identity and create personal insecurity.

Understanding Sexuality

1. Bonds & Bonding

In order to understand the way in which our relationships in life affect us physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually, we need to understand a little of the way in which bonds are forged.

In the context of relationships a bond may be described as a connection between one person to another. This bond is primarily a spiritual connection and is like a rope with many strands representing the different areas of mutual sharing. This is, in essence, a sharing of attitudes and experiences which may be reinforced through gifts and physical expression. Thus the bond between two people who have experienced infrequent and superficial encounters is weak, whereas the bonds between close friends and especially family members are strong. The varied encounters between two individuals have either a constructive or destructive effect upon their relationship. Thus bonds may be described as good or bad, positive or negative.

In the context of the healing of relationships good bonds need to be strengthened. Bad bonds need to be broken.

Positive bonds have a beneficial effect on the lives of both the individuals involved encouraging personal growth. They are characterised by love, trust and freedom. Negative bonds have an adverse effect on the lives of the individuals involved and inhibit, or sometimes even destroy, personal growth. They are characterised by resentment, unforgiveness and a lack of freedom.

Bonds are not only established between individuals who know each other but between those who have any kind of connection. This is most obvious in the generations of families where the bond of connection between family members who have never met is visible in physical features, mannerisms or temperamental characteristics common to the family.

The strong bonds in a family influence the attitudes and beliefs of subsequent generations. Where these beliefs and attitudes are positive and constructive, they provide a foundation of security. Where, however, there are negative or destructive practices or beliefs, they operate to taint future generations which may be held in bondage. This is particularly true when there has been allegiance, by a family member, to a secret society or an occult grouping. In a very real way, the family is subject to the power or god worshipped by its forbears.

A negative bond between two people is not simply a relationship in which there is discord. A strongly negative bond, such as that between an abused child and their abuser, is actually a relationship in which one person controls and limits the other - this is bondage.

Negative bonds between people can be very destructive and can be the root cause of physical and emotional disease. Bondage is a sure sign of a wrong relationship.

We have not been created to live in isolation. God has created each individual to live in relationship to Him and others. His intention is that all the bonds in our lives are good and strong so that we are secure and fulfilled in our relationship with Him, with ourselves and with others.

2. The Unborn Child

From the moment of conception within our mother's womb, we become part of a family, itself the product of the union of our mother's and father's families. Physical features, temperamental characteristics, strengths and weaknesses become a part of our very being. We cannot be separated from the parents who conceived us. Neither is the relationship a purely physical one. We are literally born out of the union of two people. A union which goes far beyond the physical act of intercourse. It is a union which is primarily spiritual.

The unborn child is not merely an appendage to the mother's anatomy, but, literally, a part of her being, and whilst not physiologically joined to the father, is already strongly bonded to him also.

The growth and development which takes place in the child within the womb is strongly dependent upon inherited genetic factors, but, is also affected by environmental influences.

Although the unborn child is well protected within its mother it is vulnerable to her experiences during pregnancy. What the parents do the child does, where the parents go the child goes, what the parents feel the child feels.

It is medically proven that the child in the womb responds to both external stimuli, such as loud noise or physical assault, and the emotional state of its mother. Strong maternal feelings of fear or shock provoke a reaction in the child which is measurable on scans. A strong desire or unsuccessful attempt by a mother to abort the child which she is carrying also appears to produce a reaction in the infant, planting a sense of rejection. A similar sense of rejection may also be planted in the child whose parents, before its birth, had expressed a strong desire for a child of the opposite sex. There is considerable evidence pointing to the existence of foetal memory from a very early age.

3. The Childhood Years

It is easy to see the way in which some situations in childhood influence future behaviour. For example, the child who has a frightening encounter with a dog, may go on to fear dogs during their adult life. Similarly, the child who has to undergo unpleasant tests in a hospital may experience nervousness in hospitals as an adult.

Our experiences in childhood not only influence our future reactions to events but they also mould our perception of associated places and people. The person admitted to hospital as a child may hold to the perception that all doctors are cruel or that all hospitals and medical establishments are places of fear.

It is important to recognise that what is traumatic for a child is not necessarily a major event in the eyes of an adult and therefore, in looking for reasons for a child being withdrawn or disobedient, a rational deductive approach is often unproductive. Similarly, when as adults we search for reasons to explain our fears or misgivings, we are often unable to find satisfactory explanations.

Just as events and encounters in childhood leave their imprint upon us, so too do words and phrases. The words spoken to us during childhood have at least the same, if not greater influence upon our perception of ourselves as those of our later life experiences. The spoken word is a powerful tool, especially when it is delivered by someone whom we recognise to be in a position of authority over us. Therefore, the words of parents, close family and teachers are especially important in childhood. They have the capacity to build up or destroy the fragile personality which is emerging. The child who is repeatedly told and showed that they are loved, irrespective of their wrongs, will grow up with a sense of personal security. The child who is only allowed rewards for good behaviour may grow up feeling the need to please people. The child who is told it is stupid is less likely to achieve good results at school, whereas the average child who is encouraged is more likely to perform to its maximum potential.

Conversely, the child who is smothered with inappropriate affection, and the child who is urged to achieve beyond his or her capability also suffers as a result of adults seeking to fulfil their own needs through their children.

The effect of the spoken word is often related to the circumstances in which it is spoken. Hence the child who is reprimanded by a teacher in front of the class will react in a different way to the same words spoken in private. The association of words with a feeling of shame or guilt remains as part of the imprint made upon them.

It is an interesting exercise to ask a room full of adults if they can recall a word or phrase spoken to them in childhood. Our experience is that within 15 seconds approximately 70% of those present are able to recall such a word or phrase and it is always in the negative. We all carry within us the unhealed hurts of unjust or unkind words spoken to us many years ago. Contrary to popular belief, time does not heal.

The power of words is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the way in which some people, most notably satanic and other occult groups, use specific words to 'programme' a child to react in a certain way. This may be in the form of inducing a hypnotic state in order to require the child or adult to do certain things without subsequent memory, or by the use of word associations which alienate the child from good things and especially God. It is a common experience, therefore, for those born into such a setting to have had pain inflicted upon them whilst being told, "this is love". Another example is the speaking of a name such as 'Jesus' in association with being burnt

by a cigarette. The pain associated with the word spoken goes far deeper than the physical pain inflicted and is consistently reproduced even years later when the same word is spoken.

Childhood is the time when we observe, absorb and adopt role models. Our adult perception of specific role models, such as those of mother and father are formed during this time and these role models may be subconsciously accepted or rejected during childhood and adolescence.

Wrong sexual role models can cause considerable suffering. With the growth of more single parent families a child may be completely deprived of the influence of an adult of the opposite sex.

It is not only the perception of role models which is significant in childhood, but more importantly the child's relationship with the people who have that particular place in their life. Thus, the child who has an apparently good role model in an upright father may actually have a poor relationship with him. Similarly it is possible for a child to have a warm and loving relationship with a father who gets drunk every night.

The relationships between key members of the family influence a child's understanding of interpersonal relationships in the world and especially the relative roles of men and women. A boy brought up in a family which is cruelly dominated by the father may seek to dominate women as he progresses into adult life. Conversely, he may subconsciously reject the role of the man (as he has experienced it) and, in later years, pursue a relationship with another man, seeking the love of which he has been deprived by his father. There is no predictable behavioural pattern because each child is unique and will react and compensate for their childhood situation in different ways.

Undoubtedly, our relationships with our mother and father are the most important and the most influential in the whole of our life. Our relationship with both parents begins at the moment of our conception; this is our foundation in life. Our relationships with each of them individually and with both of them as parents are the basis upon which our identity is either built up, diminished or even destroyed. These two relationships are fundamental to our sexuality and to our self-discovery and expression.

4. Gender & Sexuality

The term gender refers to the biological sex of an individual and is determined by the chromosomal make-up of the fertilized egg at the point of conception.

The sexuality of an individual is the expression of their identity in the context of their gender. It is not confined to sexual practices, although this is an obvious expression of sexuality. It includes physical attributes, attitudes and the manner of relating to other people.

The human body produces both male and female hormones which vary both in quantity and relative balance throughout life from conception through to early adulthood. At the same time the developing individual is subject to a varying balance of male and female influences through key relationships.

The gender of the individual is fixed, but, the expression of their identity and sexuality is dependent upon the interaction of three main influences which themselves are variable and interdependent. These are firstly, their intrinsic hormonal balance, secondly, the relative male and female external influences upon their lives and thirdly, the surrounding environment of family, culture and society.

The personal and sexual development of the child begins in the womb where there is obviously a dominantly feminine and maternal influence.

The unborn child is inextricably bound to the mother and totally dependent upon her for life. At birth, when the umbilical cord is cut, the child emerges as a small person in its own right and sets out on its road of self-expression and self-discovery. Although set free from total dependence, the child is still heavily dependent upon a maternal relationship for the first five years of life. Any event which causes an interruption of this early bonding by separating mother and child is a threat to the fundamental security of the infant. This insecurity often persists in the grown adult.

Damage may be inflicted upon a child unwittingly, even in the moments after its birth. Parents may express disappointment at the arrival of a son when they wanted a daughter and vice versa and may subconsciously and sometimes even consciously superimpose their preconceived sexuality upon their child. Sadly we have encountered a number of men who were dressed up as

little girls during the first few years of their lives, with disastrous consequences. Ambiguity of identity at this early stage inevitably leads to confusion in later years.

When the process of birth itself is difficult, dangerous or traumatic, a variety of fears may arise, and even a basic denial of life and identity. The sexual consequences can be highly destructive and life-denying. An example of the physical expression of one who has experienced trauma early in life is found in the man who, still seeking the security of his mother's womb, dresses in women's clothing, often in secret.

Although the influence of mother is especially important during infancy, the presence of father is also important in a variety of ways, particularly in bringing a balance to male and female influence and in the creation of stability in the home. Different parts of our personality need to be affirmed at different stages of development by those in key relationships.

Early childhood is the period in which the affirmation of mother is needed for the development of personal identity and security. It is during adolescence that the role of father is most important in the affirmation of the sexuality of both boys and girls. Most would agree that adolescence is the time when the child develops the independence of a young adult by being fully weaned from maternal dependence through the influence of father. Affirmed in their own identity, both personal and sexual, the young adult goes on to seek out new adult relationships.

The absence of mother and/or father during any part of childhood may be compensated for by the presence of other female or male role models but such a relationship must be permanent and secure in order to meet the need of the child for both maternal and paternal influence and affirmation. Insecure or temporary relationships only exaggerate the unmet need, rather than fulfil it. New partners and step-parents inevitably have a disturbing influence upon children, particularly in threatening the security of the relationship with their natural parent.

When the closeness, gentleness and security of an early maternal relationship has been lacking or absent, this unmet need is carried by the child into adulthood and becomes almost like a vacuum demanding to be filled. Conversely, a child who has been smothered by maternal love may remain dependent upon this type of relationship and fail to fully enter adulthood, remaining unaffirmed in their own sexuality. Similarly, the child who has not experienced a father-child relationship, for whatever reason, will subconsciously seek to meet this need in future adult relationships.

Every child has a natural need for same-sex love. He or she, in this way needs affirmation and acceptance. The homosexual condition is a continuing and usually unconscious attempt to compensate for earlier unfulfilled needs and these same-sex deficits lead to impermanence in relationships especially of a sexual nature. One man told of his ongoing deep yearning to be held by a man. Despite many homosexual relationships his yearning was never satisfied. His real need was to be held by his father as a child. Doctor Elizabeth Moberley states "there is no basis for permanence in this structure of the homosexual condition". Men are often cut off from their masculine identity because of lack of affirmation as children.

There are parts of our being which need to be affirmed by the influence of someone of the same sex and if this affirmation is not effected during childhood, same-sex relationships become important in early adulthood.

'Crushes' upon school teachers or older pupils in secondary schools have been well-recognised for years, particularly amongst girls. There is no evidence to suggest that any of these bonds are in any way precursors to a homosexual orientation in adult life and, hitherto, have been accepted almost as a normal part of adolescent emotional development. In single-sex establishments such as boys' boarding schools, where there is an unnatural absence of family life, same-sex encounters may include sexual activity which may or may not set a pattern of sexual relations for life. Such imposed patterns of behaviour may, sadly, convince an immature boy that he is homosexual, particularly if this reinforced by others such as gay 'help-lines' or an adult abuser.

A factor which seems to have a direct influence upon sexual orientation is early genital interference or sexual activity, initiated by an adult. This may be in the form of childhood sexual abuse which is readily recognised by most as being a traumatic event. Equally traumatic, however, is the sexual approach to a child in early teenage years by an older person, especially if of the same sex. The mixed sensations of sexual arousal associated with an unnatural situation causes intense confusion and the need is for the child to be affirmed and set free from the associated fear and shock.

A young woman who has been subject to sexual assault by a man may reject future male relationships and seek the companionship of women. This may be compounded if, coincidentally, she rejects, consciously or subconsciously, the female role as encountered in her mother.

Similarly exposure of the child or adolescent to pornography, which sadly is a rapidly increasing occurrence in contemporary society, causes confusion and damage to their future relationships.

The period of life from childhood to adulthood has at each stage a varying male or female emphasis.

Any significant traumatic event occurring during a period of female emphasis in the life of a boy, or male emphasis in the life of a girl may cause 'freezing' of further development. This means that their normal and healthy maturation process is halted or distorted, resulting in damaged sexual identity. When this interruption happens during adolescence, the person may remain for many years in a state of excessive self-consciousness and introspection.

The tragedy of many homosexuals lies in the fact that, having experienced a trauma and its consequences, they put themselves into a fixed position which, consciously or unconsciously, they believe to be permanent and this precludes any hope of a progression towards a normal process of sexual maturing. Sadly, homosexual militants may, quite wrongly, confirm homosexual orientation in the lives of young, impressionable teenagers and consequently inhibit and impair their natural growth to sexual maturity. If this uncertainty is compounded by a physical homosexual encounter the resulting confusion may lead them into a variety of abnormal sexual experiences. A considerable number of men who have been guilty of sexual offences against children and young people have themselves entered into an unnatural homosexual relationship during their teenage years through encounters with people or by fantasy through pornography. They subsequently go on to express their immature sexuality by sexual encounters with those younger than themselves and who are often under their authority, although this expression does not always necessarily take on an overtly physical nature.

Deep within every human being there is a basic need for intimacy. From the moment of conception, the child is in a deeply intimate relationship with its mother. The intimacy continues after birth with feeding, touching and cuddling and, in healthy family relationships, continues through childhood, not just with the mother but also with other family members. We need to be understood, accepted and loved in the context of trusting self-disclosure.

A considerable number of people enter into homosexual activity because of a fundamental identity crisis, often rooted in an insufficient closeness and healthy bonding with the same-sex parent. The desire in the adult to compensate for what he or she appears to have been deprived of as a child is a very powerful influencing factor in sexuality. This being the case, the question arises as to whether this compensation can be achieved retrospectively. It is the experience of many within the Christian healing ministry that this is certainly the case.

The personal identity of every human being bears the fruit but also the scars of their life situations. Each of us, on our journey through life is in a process of 'becoming'. Our sexuality is but a part of the expression of our whole developing personal identity. When we allow our sexuality to have a dominant influence upon our life we are robbed of our true selves.

Healing and Wholeness for the Homosexual Person

1. The Truth

The starting point of all healing is the acknowledgement that there needs to be change, whether in attitude, lifestyle, or physical or mental state. Without the recognition of the truth of the situation, there is no recognition of the need for change.

Jesus promises “The Truth will set you free” (John 8.32). We live in a society in which we are sold the fundamental lie that truth is relative and not absolute. It is this creed which leads to the assertion that it is acceptable to hurt or even kill someone in certain circumstances and it is the same creed which reduces God to the person, being or power that you want Him to be. Absolutes have been rejected in favour of personal preferences, especially when it concerns what is right and wrong. The distinction between what is understandable and what is normal has become blurred, as has the difference between what is forgivable and what is acceptable.

To deny the truth of humankind’s sinfulness is to deny the opportunity of healing. Put more simply, the person who denies they are hungry will not receive food or eat it. In the context of the homosexual person, the denial that this is an unnatural sexual orientation is a denial of the need for personal healing.

The Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, is by nature Truth and Love. It is God’s Spirit who leads us into all truth. He reveals the absolute truth in any given situation. Those who listen to the Holy Spirit are given an understanding of the Truth which is not relative to circumstances or dependent upon human knowledge. God always reveals His Truth in love. Jesus stated that He did not come to condemn the world but to save it. In revealing Truth, God’s purpose is to see creation set free, not to bring judgement. The Holy Spirit comes to convict the world of guilt in regard to sin. Put another way, the truth is that we live in a world that is sick. The truth is that as individuals we are sick and each of us contributes to the sickness of the world. The truth is that God can and wants to heal our sickness. With specific regard to homosexuality, the truth is that genital homosexual acts are biologically unnatural and damaging.

The majority of sexually active homosexual people have had more than one partner and often have many. The truth is that God loves every human being, regardless of their sinfulness and that He can heal any damaged area of our identity, including our sexuality.

The Bible points us to the truth, but even here, the interpretation of passages referring to genital homosexual activity have been subjected to distortion or open denial by those who seek to justify their lifestyle. The reason that homosexual acts are forbidden by God is because they cause damage and disorder. This is the basis of all God’s law - not to simply be a moral code, but, more importantly, to provide guidelines for avoiding sickness and disease of body, mind and spirit.

Homosexual orientation, in itself, should not be seen as inherently sinful, but there can be little doubt that Biblical teaching both in the Old and the New Testaments clearly warns that homosexual activity is against the will of God. The Church has consistently taught and endorsed Biblical teaching on this matter. Archbishop Runcie, speaking at the Synod of the Church of England was very clear about this when he said “I do not deny, and cannot, that homosexual acts are condemned in the biblical and Christian tradition”. (Gay Christians by Peter Coleman pub. SCM).

As a whole, St Paul’s teachings repudiate homosexual behaviour. It is presented as a vice of the gentiles in the letter to Romans. It is seen as a bar to the Kingdom in the letters to Corinthians. It runs contrary to the basic precepts of the rabbis and was seen by the early church as in direct conflict with the Christian way of life.

There can be little doubt that those Christians who deny the immorality of homosexual acts, do so on the basis of discarding the relevance and authority of biblical teaching to life today. An example of this was seen in 1977 when an Episcopal Bishop in the United States justified his decision to ordain a practising lesbian by saying “there is a timelessness to the message of God’s love that outweighs the datedness of so many biblical injunctions rooted in ancient societies”. (quoted in 'The Church & Homosexuality' by Green, Holloway, Watson. pub. Hodder & Stoughton).

The Old Testament quite clearly depicted homosexual activity as sinful in itself. The problem confronting society today is the phenomenal degree of promiscuity which is associated with homosexuality. This, beyond doubt, was a major factor in the early spread of AIDS. In this respect it is interesting to note the views of Cardinal Basil Hume of Westminster, "AIDS is neither the problem nor the central issue. It is a symptom of something deeper and more deadly. AIDS is but one of the many disastrous consequences of promiscuous sexual behaviour. Promiscuity is the root cause of the present epidemic. It has always been sinful; it is rapidly becoming suicidal". (The Times 7th Jan. '87).

In responding to the needs of the homosexual it is important to recognise that promiscuity, as such, inevitably inflicts deep and lasting damage upon the emotional and spiritual well-being of the person concerned. The damage inflicted by promiscuity, in many cases, overshadows the initial problem of homosexuality. Wrong relationships between people reflect a wrong relationship with God.

The Bible points to the truth that Jesus comes to set the prisoner free and to lead us into a right relationship with God, ourselves and others. He clearly stated "I am the way, the Truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me".(Jn.14.6) We have a simple choice - either we follow Him or we go our own way. Similarly, we can choose to receive His healing and transformation in our lives or we can attempt to satisfy our needs and desires by other methods.

The point currently being asserted by the militant homosexual movement is that their condition is not one of disorder or abnormality, that it is not a condition of un-wholeness. This conclusion is often reached for reasons of self-defence and self-justification.

The way of Jesus is the way of healing. Whether homosexual or not, we all need healing. We fall perhaps into three categories - firstly, those who recognise their need for healing, secondly those who do not recognise this and thirdly those who recognise it but refuse to receive healing.

The Truth is - we cannot encounter Jesus and remain unchanged.

2. The Healing Power of God

It has been our privilege and the experience of many involved in the healing ministry to see men and women discovering and expressing their identity through the power of healing prayer. This has not been by inward-looking self-analysis but by the simple yet profound encounter with the healing love of Christ for them personally. Jesus draws us out of our introverted individualism into the recognition and experience that we are all a part of God's creation with a unique role to play, not as isolated individuals but joined together by relationships in families, communities, societies and nations. Thus our personal healing brings healing to our family, our community, our society, and the world in which we live.

The following are examples of the way in which we have personally encountered God's healing in the lives of some of those who have come for help over several years.

3. Deprived of Father

A distraught young man approached us because he felt a strong and what he considered to be unnatural attraction to men. He also had a fear of women who he envisaged as being interfering and intrusive. It transpired that he had been brought up in an over-protective and virtually all-female environment both at home and at school. He had been deprived of a father who could have been a male role model for him in his early teens. He had been severely punished and publicly embarrassed by a rather cruel woman teacher. After much struggling he was able to forgive the teacher in the name of Christ for the suffering she had caused him. He was brought to a real understanding of the role various women had played in his childhood years and he was set free from what he recognised to be an unnatural attraction to men. In particular he was able to establish a loving relationship with his parents. He soon established a rapport with women and, in due course, entered into a happy and fulfilling marriage with the joy of children. He now recognises the need for a male role model for his children.

4. Domination and 'Consumption'

A twenty-five year old man came in great distress because he had been drawn into the gay scene in such a way that he had become emotionally unbalanced and he was riddled with guilt and fear. On three occasions he had gone through the experience of believing that he was HIV positive. He described about how he had been searching for a hero figure. Whenever he met a man whom he admired or envied he had a deep desire to exercise power over him and to possess the qualities which he had. In a very real sense he was seeking to consume that which he liked. In praying for the roots of this disorder it became clear that his father had treated him brutally and had therefore been rejected as a male-role model and, to some extent, he had been searching for a father substitute ever since. After considerable prayer he recognised this and gave his searching to God. He also in the name of Christ forgave his father and within a very short period of time abandoned his homosexual behaviour. There was a fundamental change in his attitude and although he did not have or seemingly want to have a girlfriend, he was seen by all his friends to be liberated and at peace.

5. Cleansing of Memory

A man came for help because he had totally lost confidence in himself and shared that many of his friends considered him to be 'gay'. It transpired that both his parents died when he was a baby. In his teens he had been indecently assaulted by a group of male homosexuals and after this he had developed a deep revulsion towards all sexual matters. He was very confused, lonely and afraid of women. He was wary of men but nonetheless experienced some 'pull' towards them. On forgiving his assailants in the name of Jesus he was immediately set free from many of the inhibitions which had plagued him for more than ten years. He went through a delayed and adolescent period for about two years and gradually developed a natural and a healthy attitude towards women. He also experienced a cleansing of what he considered to be his soiled and unworthy self.

6. Gender Affirmation

A young man, filled with anxiety and lack of self confidence, came to us urgently seeking help. He was actively homosexual and over several years had had numerous partners. When he was born his mother was disappointed because he was not a girl and repeatedly told him so in his early childhood. He received little affirmation as a small boy and, indeed, was dressed as a girl until he was four years of age. Not unnaturally he had a profound desire to escape from women and yet felt effeminate. In his early uncertain teenage years he became involved with two older homosexual men who, as often happens, superimposed their wills upon him. He freely admitted that he was searching for his real identity and that his homosexuality was, in fact, a cover for his real emotions. He began to realise that what had been presented to him as normal was not so. In prayer he forgave his mother for what she had said to him and he gave to God all the years of promiscuity. As he did this he discovered his true manhood, turned away from homosexuality and within eighteen months had fallen in love with a girl and was engaged to be married to her.

7. No Relationship with Parent

One man recounted to us how he had been interfered with by a scoutmaster when he was in the scouting movement. The man responsible convinced him that he was homosexual by birth and that nothing could change him. For two or three years he was shown gay pornographic videos and introduced to other friends of his scoutmaster in the gay scene and also to drugs. He went through a period of intense sexual activity with many partners. Looking considerably younger than his age he seemed to attract older homosexual men who clearly exploited him. For a short period he was virtually a 'rent' boy. By this time he had lost all self-respect and was totally confused about his identity. Offering his life back to God in prayer, he realised that he had virtually 'frozen' at a particular stage of adolescent development. He recognised that his relationship with both his parents had been distant and cold and that he had responded to the first affection ever shown to him. He reaffirmed his love in Christ for his mother and father, forgiving them for being distant from him. He forgave the scoutmaster, after considerable heart-searching. He forgave all who had exploited him. He then went through a painful process of emotional maturation, and reached a point of spiritual self-discovery in which, as he put it, his

'disorientation' disappeared and he rediscovered his manhood. His entire lifestyle changed. The tensions disappeared.

8. Broken Trust in Mother

A middle aged lady confided in us that she had been involved with a series of lesbian relationships over a period of years and was extremely unhappy. She was very possessive by nature and had gone through the pain of successive rejections. It transpired that she had been sexually abused as a young child over many years both by her own father and other male relatives. Understandably she had a deep antagonism towards all men and she experienced fear and unease in their presence. She was also resentful of the fact that her mother had failed to protect her and felt she had been searching for a mother substitute. After a considerable period of intimate sharing she was able, in the name of Christ, to forgive by name each of the men who had so cruelly assaulted her. She was able to give to God the circumstances and places of the assaults and to affirm His presence then and now. She was able to break the negative bonds forged with the various sexual partners. Her lesbian activities ceased and the tension so evident in all her relationships came to an end.

9. Childhood Traumas

One lady recalled how, as a nine year old girl she had arrived home one day and experienced the trauma of confronting her own mother in bed with a strange man. She was immediately filled with repulsion and developed an antagonism towards all men. As time went on she began to search for trustworthy love from other women. In her late teens she was drawn to a woman whom she later discovered had lesbian tendencies and with whom she soon established a close physical and emotional relationship. On her own admission she had great unease about this and came to us seeking help, because she felt she had a dangerous dependence upon her partner who was exerting increasing control over her. In identifying and acknowledging her continuing anger towards her mother and her mother's male companion she was able to forgive both of them in the name of Jesus for what they had done to her through their action. Empowered to do this by the Holy Spirit she had an immediate and radical change of attitude towards men and towards her mother, with whom she developed a belated but deeply loving relationship. She began to see men in a different light and her lesbian relationship ended within a short period. Forgiveness was at the heart of her healing.

10. Corruption

From the age of eight years, a young boy had been regularly shown pornographic films by his uncle while his mother was out working in the evenings as a barmaid. These films depicted male homosexual acts and soon became the prelude for repeated sexual attacks. His uncle then introduced this boy to other homosexual men who also drugged and repeatedly abused him. By the age of fourteen he had grown to accept this as normal, because virtually all the men he met were practising homosexuals. Eventually, he became suicidal and alcoholic and approached us in great despair. He rediscovered motherly love from an elderly lady who took him into her home. After experiencing the cleansing of his memories in prayer, he became able to relate to women in a normal way for the first time in his life. His homosexual desires gradually diminished as he found his faith and was eventually set free at the age of twenty from those influences which had plagued him since childhood.

11. Broken Home

A young boy of four was confused and deeply hurt when his mother married to a man with a drink problem left home with him to live with another man. This man repeatedly beat both him and his mother, who eventually ran away with him and proceeded to live with a succession of different men, living in squalor. At the age of fourteen he was totally bewildered and depressed. A wealthy businessman befriended him, showing him great understanding and affection and showering him with presents. Eventually this man abused the boy and after having been initiated into homosexual acts he was led into a homosexual lifestyle. He was injured in a sado-masochistic act and the shock of this, together with the discomfort of suffering a series of sexually transmitted diseases, led him to question his lifestyle. After considerable heart searching he

sought forgiveness and reconciliation with God and was given the power to forgive all who had damaged him. He found his faith and got married at twenty, although it took a further two years before he was set free from occultic bonds which had been formed during the years of promiscuity.

These examples have been given in order to illustrate the ways in which God both identifies and heals the roots of the homosexual condition. The process of healing may be very quick or may progress slowly over a period of months or even years. In ministering to many of those who have been caught up in a homosexual lifestyle, there is usually a need to deal with other associated problems.

Hurting people frequently look for ways of soothing their hurt and supporting them in their weakness. Thus, some homosexuals who have been traumatised in their childhood become involved in alcohol and drug abuse and in the occult, although it should also be recognised that all these influences themselves may activate a latent homosexuality or predisposition to abnormal sexual behaviour. It is well known that in many occultic ceremonies such as meetings of witches covens, abnormal sexual acts frequently take place which disorientate and even traumatise the participants.

Homosexual neurosis frequently leads to the desire to own, to control and consume another or to be owned, controlled and consumed by another. Frequently, homosexuals subconsciously seek out partners with specific attributes which they feel they lack, for example sporting ability or certain physical features. Subconsciously there appears to be a desire to possess these qualities by possessing or 'consuming' the person.

Sometimes this insatiable appetite leads to sexual practices including physical bondage and forms of sado-masochism which involve the receiving or inflicting of pain. In a very real sense these physical practices are the acting out of an underlying compulsion to devour and be devoured, to hold and be held in bondage.

The bonds of love which God forges through Jesus have the power to destroy all chains of bondage. The demonic powers behind obsessions, compulsions and the acting out of fantasies are expunged and a new and exciting gift of freedom is given.

Cross dressing and transvestism are becoming more apparent in contemporary society, largely due to commercial exploitation. The man who wears women's clothes actually seeks to experience excitement and this may become a fetish. It is rooted in his failure to establish a healthy relationship with his mother. This relationship can be restored in prayer. He is usually heterosexual.

The homosexual who cross-dresses, ie. the transvestite, attempts to relate to men by wearing women's clothing.

Transsexuals believe themselves to be a male held prisoner in a female body or vice versa. Their inability to satisfactorily identify and confirm their gender and sexuality inevitably leads to extreme depression which is rarely helped and often exacerbated by surgery.

The basic question 'Who am I?' remains unresolved. Those who have been held captive to this condition have usually found their healing in what, to them, is a startling discovery that first and foremost 'I am a child of God', not in the first instance a son or daughter. They recognise that it is God who created them and that He calls them by their name which reflects their character and personality, not their gender.

The condition of homosexuality can be changed. There is considerable evidence to show that homosexuality is not a fixed all-life condition. Many heterosexuals have been drawn into homosexuality through a variety of different influences and encounters, often reverting with considerable pain and guilt to their original condition.

Many homosexuals have spent years searching for an alternative life-style and for a release from what they perceive to be an incurable state. When they discover that it is God who is searching for them, and when they acknowledge His desire to find them, they frequently experience a total change of inclination, attitude and belief. The concept of a passive God is revealed in its falsity. They experience, first hand, a sharing with God in their deepest feelings, fears, hopes and aspirations.

The only way in which we can be fully set free from past events, traumas and perceptions is through the healing love of God. It is only He who can heal the scars of the past because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Heb. 13.8) God's healing is not limited by time.

Past guilt and hurts may be dealt with today. Forgiveness for past wrongs can be given and received today. Wrong relationships from the past can be put right today.

12. Praying for Healing.

There are different ways of approaching a person who is in need and seeking help. We may adopt a 'professional' approach and maintain our distance from them, or we may follow the example of Jesus and love them as a brother or sister. We may depend upon our acquired skills and attained knowledge or we may simply pray to be filled with God's Spirit who will guide us into all truth.

We may help the person to intellectually understand the basis of their need and help them to address it, or, we may support and encourage our brother and sister to welcome and receive the healing of Jesus.

In responding to the cry for help, there is a need to listen and pray. The listening skills learned through courses on counselling can be helpful, but, only prayer can bring about true healing. The counsellor may be able to help identify and manage negative emotions and harmful patterns of behaviour but only prayer will heal the roots of these problems.

Counselling may achieve some understanding of the roots of the homosexual condition, but, only prayer, guided by the Holy Spirit, will reveal the hidden and often subconscious memories from the time in the womb and early childhood of the individual man or woman who has sought healing.

The starting point in praying for healing is our readiness to be used by God as a channel of His love and peace. This means that we put to one side the human tendency to analyse and discuss in favour of a quiet waiting in openness upon God.

In praying for and/or with anyone in need, including the homosexual person, we must recognise that we too are in need. The basis of our praying is sharing as equals not as people who are superior to others. In a very real sense we are beggars telling other beggars where there is food. Jesus knelt and washed His disciples' feet. His teaching is that we are all of equal value in God's sight and that those who seek to be first will be last (Mt.20.16).

To pray for and with someone is a privilege and requires those ministering to put aside all pre-conceived ideas, being literally emptied of all but love. Just as we need to be loved for who we are, so we must love others as they are, rather than as we would like them to be. The one with whom we are praying must be assured of total confidentiality and of our love and respect for them as individuals, irrespective of what is revealed.

Our attitude is one of awareness, listening and loving - awareness of God's immanent presence, listening to the voice of God through His Holy Spirit, loving and responding to the person to whom we are ministering unconditionally. Whenever possible it is better not to minister alone and preferably in a mixed-sex team of two or three people.

13. Listening in Prayer

Our praying always commences with a time of silence followed by prayers for peace in body, mind and spirit. It is often helpful to use scripture such as Psalm 139 or Psalm 23.

We ask for the gift of God's Holy Spirit both for ourselves and the one for whom we are praying. Together we ask the Lord how to pray for our brother or sister, relying totally upon His direction. In praying we give God the opportunity to speak to us. In a world of distraction, noise and confusion, the Lord wants us to wait upon Him. He says "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46.10).

We listen to God by firstly focusing the whole of our attention upon Him, having placed the one for whom we are praying into His care. Each of us 'hears' God in a different way, some are given visions, some may hear a voice. Some may have a physical sensation, or, even be able to smell a particular scent. A word of knowledge may be given as a gift of the Spirit. In this instance, a word comes into the mind of one who is listening which is not understandable to the one who receives it, but which is immediately recognised by the one for whom it is given. A word of

knowledge and other sensations or images are all pointers to a particular memory or relationship which God wants to heal.

A person who believes that God is speaking simply shares what they have heard with those present. That which is of God is confirmed through another of those praying and most often through the person who is receiving ministry. We all accept that we may hear wrongly, therefore any prompting which is not confirmed is simply left to one side.

By listening to God together, the direction of prayer is revealed step by step through the individuals present.

14. Life Prayer

There is one particular pattern of praying which has been greatly used by God to bring healing to the whole of a person's life. We have simply called it Life Prayer. It is not a technique but, rather, a spiritual discipline. It is primarily a prayer of thanksgiving for a person in which we place before God, in prayer, every part of their life from the moment of their creation. In doing this we ask the Lord to identify any events, situations and relationships in their lives that need His healing touch.

The first step towards healing is giving ourselves in our entirety to God, placing all our experience and feelings in His hands. The second step is giving the situation, image or memory which has been identified to God for Him to receive and transform.

When an area of need is identified, there is invariably a recognition by the brother or sister with whom we are praying of buried pain, fear, anxiety, anger or guilt. We support our brother or sister in the giving of their negative feelings to God, encouraging them to loosen their grip on the hurt, holding on to nothing. This is often helped by the posture of holding up their hands with palms upwards so that having released the burden carried they might physically express their freedom and receive the healing which God wants to give.

This first step may be likened to the cleansing of the wound which then needs to be healed.

Secondly, therefore we ask God to heal the root cause of the wound. This deep healing usually involves the giving and receiving of forgiveness and love, in prayer, for those who have caused hurt.

After firstly praying for peace and the gift of God's Holy Spirit, we thank God for the gift of our brother or sister. In recognising that we are the fruit of the generations of our family tree we offer to God the entire family and ancestry of our brother or sister. We thank Him for all the good they have inherited and we ask Him to strengthen those bonds with our forebears which are good and honourable.

We offer to God all that they have inherited which is tainted and ask Him to purify and cleanse the family tree breaking any bonds with forebears which are negative and destructive. We do this in the name of Jesus. During this period of prayer we also silently ask God to identify any person in the family with whom our brother or sister has a negative bond or wrong relationship, and to reveal any patterns, attitudes or beliefs by which they are held in bondage. At each stage of our praying we ask God to heal wrong relationships and bring freedom from bondage in the way He directs. Having thanked God for the whole family of our brother or sister we quietly uphold them before the Lord with reverence and love thanking Him for the gift of their life. We acknowledge that our brother or sister is created by God and that He knew them before even their parents knew of their existence.

We thank God for our brother or sister's parents offering their relationship to Him, and especially the moment of our brother or sister's conception.

We thank the Lord for each month of our brother or sister's development in the mother's womb, thanking Him for the security and love of this special place. We recognise that the child in the womb senses the feelings and reactions of the mother and responds to many outside influences and so ask Him to remove any trauma our brother or sister may have experienced through any shock or other negative experience of their mother.

We offer to the Lord all the relationships during this period and all the words spoken. We ask the Lord to identify and heal anything which has caused damaging feelings such as rejection, pain, fear or insecurity.

We particularly pray that God would affirm the special moment of their birth, thanking God for this event. We acknowledge that Jesus is present every moment of our lives, from the very moment of our conception and because for Him 40 years ago is as today, we ask Him to bring healing into those situations in the past when we were unaware of His presence. We offer to God all the years of childhood and relationships both at home and at school. We offer to Him all the years of adolescence and adulthood. As, step by step, we offer these years in thanksgiving, God identifies the roots of any disorder, including that of homosexuality.

Both before birth and in all the subsequent years, we recognise that there are things which need to be healed - attitudes inherited from parents and family, words which have been spoken, actions which have been hurtful, situations producing guilt and fear.

We recognise that in looking back over our brother or sister's life, we are not just relying upon their memory, we are asking God to identify that which needs healing through His Spirit of Truth. In each instance brought to mind we simply ask Him to put right what is wrong.

In sharing Life Prayer there may be laughter and tears, but, as we support our brother or sister gently and lovingly we find the Lord gives to us His sensitivity and discernment which is then shown in words and actions.

Our experience is that at almost every crucial stage of healing there is a relationship which needs to be put right. This can only be done through forgiveness in the name of Jesus. The giving and receiving of forgiveness requires the help of the Holy Spirit. In purely human terms to forgive those who have deeply hurt us is sometimes impossible - but in the power of God all things are possible.

In the context of Life Prayer, God identifies the people whom He wants us to forgive by reminding us of situations where there has been hurt, separation or division. The forgiveness is always specific to this event. Thus we are not simply asked to forgive someone for everything they ever did to hurt us, but for that one word or deed of unkindness which God brings to light. Sometimes during a Life Prayer the same person needs to be forgiven several times for different situations which caused hurt and sometimes there is a need for the person who is receiving ministry to ask forgiveness of someone whom they have hurt.

The giving and receiving of forgiveness in prayer is through Jesus. We ask Him to be the reconciler of the two parties. In this way it is possible to be reconciled with someone who may have since died for a hurt inflicted in childhood simply because Jesus is the same yesterday as He is today and forever.

On identifying the need for our brother or sister to forgive someone, we first ask God to give them the desire to forgive. It is impossible to truly forgive unless there is the desire to do so. This is the most important stage of the prayer of forgiveness and in situations where there has been grave hurt, such as sexual abuse, it may be necessary to pray for some time before our brother or sister is able to receive that desire in their heart.

When there is a desire to forgive, we pray that God would give our brother or sister the power to forgive and this is spoken by them aloud, addressing the person concerned by name, in prayer saying "I forgive you in the name of Jesus".

The next stage in the healing of relationships is the release of Christ's love into each situation which has been identified, and we pray that God will give to our brother or sister the desire to love the person who has hurt them. If they are able, there and then, to receive from God the desire to love, we ask for God's Spirit to give them the power to say to the person in prayer "I love you in the name of Jesus".

The declaration of love for a person who has hurt us may happen weeks, months or even years after the first stages of forgiveness but once this process is started, God will bring it to completion if we continue to seek His healing.

Life Prayer is gentle and unhurried and emotional expression such as tears are often an outward sign of God's healing grace at work. It may be that God will move rapidly over a period of years until a particular need is identified, whereas on some occasions we do not even progress beyond

the day of birth. We ask the Lord to show us when to close our prayers. The Life Prayer may continue for one or two hours after which it is important to thank and praise God.

On some occasions a person has had their Life Prayer in stages, seemingly to allow the effect of one area of healing to be deepened before going on to the next. When praying for someone with problems of sexuality, there is frequently a change in attitude and practice which is recognised and welcomed by the person.

The experience of the person having Life Prayer ministry varies, but, is always positive. Some experience a sudden and radical change in their life, others experience a more gradual transformation over weeks or months, but without exception everyone who asks for healing receives healing. It may not be in the way that they expect, but always in the way that God knows they need.

The average length of time to pray Life Prayer is around two hours and following this we would often pray a prayer of abandonment. It accords with the mainstream of Christian traditions of praying over the centuries.

15. Abandonment

The Prayer of abandonment is an act of total surrender to God, offering to Him all our senses, our minds and our hearts. In praying this prayer we desire to be as clay in God's hands and we specifically put ourselves into a position of being vulnerable to Him, relinquishing all power and control by Him.

The act of surrender to God is reflected in the chosen posture of lying on the floor, facing upward, with hands upturned in an attitude of giving and receiving. Out of respect for the person, only those of the same sex would usually pray this prayer together.

We begin by affirming that God's love is all-powerful and everlasting and that our total security is in Him. Those praying then gently touch in turn the parts of our brother or sister related to the five senses. We offer to the Lord everything they have ever seen, whilst touching the eyelids, asking God to cleanse and heal anything which has caused harm. We then pray that they will be given the eyes of Christ. We pray for their ears and offer to God everything they have ever heard, asking for this cleansing and healing and that they be given a new gift of hearing. In similar fashion we offer to God all memories associated with the sense of smell, taste and speech and then pray for their hands and sense of touch.

The cleansing of the senses is especially significant for the homosexual who frequently has sensory associations with past events which distort their understanding, perceptions and feelings.

We would then offer to God all the thoughts, dreams, imagination of our brother or sister, whilst gently placing a hand on their forehead. Having asked for cleansing and healing we pray that they would have the mind of Christ.

We offer to Him all their emotions and feelings whilst placing a hand on their chest, over their heart, praying especially that God would heal all the wounds of their lives, giving to them the heart of Christ.

Finally we place a hand on the abdomen of our brother or sister, symbolising the place where fear is experienced and pray that the perfect love of God would cast out all fear, bringing deep and lasting peace in body, mind and spirit.

This prayer, in itself, has been a means of great healing and blessing and has been especially powerful in praying for those who have suffered any kind of abuse.

When praying for someone who has been involved in wrong sexual relationships, there is frequently a need for prayers of deliverance. These prayers are in two parts. Firstly, there is always a need to pray for the severing of the negative and controlling bonds which have been forged. Secondly, there may be a need to pray for the removal of demonic entities, together with a prayer for the cleansing and protection of all present.

Where there has been deviant sexual behaviour and where pornography has been viewed, there is almost certainly a need for deliverance from specific demonic entities such as lust which are associated with these practices. This requires the renunciation of all evil by the person receiving

ministry and the verbal confession of the Lordship of Christ. This process of cleansing through deliverance may take many months to be completed.

It is often appropriate after prayer for healing to use oil to anoint the one who has received ministry.

16. Conclusion

A culture which manifests abnormal and excessive emphasis upon sex is in need of healing. If we see sexual relationships primarily in terms of a physical act, we are degrading and diminishing a relationship upon which society depends for its health and well-being. If, as in our society, an obsession with coitus is so actively and unnaturally encouraged, we will inevitably witness the collapse of loving, respectful relationships and the fall of our culture into a chasm of degradation. The recognition that sexual instinct is given to us by God must also be matched by an admission of our personal responsibility to use that instinct for His glory and not merely our personal gratification. Contemporary society is characterised by a lack of real intimacy. We have substituted shallow physical encounters for deep spiritual relationships. The experience of intimacy with God inevitably means that we can establish close and loving relationships with others without inhibition and fear.

The person who has received little or no love as a child, will constantly seek love, affection and security offered from any source. These individuals are open to abuse and are extremely vulnerable to homosexual advances. The security of a same-sex relationship does not carry the personal threat or challenge of the heterosexual encounter. The real love and security which the vulnerable need is within family relationships. This is one of the basic roles of the Christian church - we are the family of God, caring for the orphans and outcasts of society. We are ourselves adopted into this family. Sadly even this has sometimes itself been a place of abuse.

When people discover their true identity as children of God, they generally develop a clear perception of their sexual identity and role. While recognising basic sexual preferences they also recognise that God gives them, through His Spirit, a very real power over their sexual desires and drives. This is not to be confused with inhibition and frustration but rather to be seen as fulfilment.

God's confirmation and affirmation is the foundation of our physical, emotional and spiritual maturity. Without this we cannot accept or love ourselves.

As Christians we are called to give hope to a hopeless world. We are called to be the Body of Christ, ministering healing to a broken world.
