

The Hope Update | **SEPTEMBER 2015**

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Restoring Hope • Proclaiming Truth • Equipping Churches

Anne Paulk, Executive Director

Much has happened this year, to say the least. On the morning of June 26th, 2015, the US Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage on a national scale and on very shaky legal ground. The announcement came during the opening keynote session of our annual Hope Conference as Christopher West delivered a triumphant expression of Pope John Paul's Theology of the Body. West's message was brilliant and profound--the testimony of our bodily design testifies to the delightful intent of our Creator. National conference keynote videos can be rented or purchased from our Vimeo page beginning late September.



During 2015 Hope Conference, we discussing the court's decision and how it simply will not change the hope we offer individuals of transformed lives through the power of Jesus Christ. As Hebrews 13:8 says, *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."* Yet the decision solidifies a national value of immorality and will impact many with an intensified weight of sin and its consequences. We also posted responses by denominational and church leaders on our public Facebook page.

Thankfully, our conference held wonderful stories of redemption and the opportunity to respond to God in surrender. The Lord met us powerfully in that time as He always does. We also gave our first annual **"Best New Healing Resource"** award to our member Mastering Life Ministries for their terrific DVD "Such Were Some of You." This resource is available [here](#) in several different languages and has won numerous awards in film festivals.

Our network team has been busy this year. We have adopted a **third position paper** — **"Gay Christian and Spiritual Friendship?"** This statement responds to the oft wedded terms "gay" and "Christian" proposed by by those attempting to confuse the Church into embracing some form of same-sex sexual expression. It also addresses the assertion by some that exclusive, abstaining, same-sex relationships akin to a romantic relationship should be a concession for those dealing with same sex attraction in the Church. To read our statement, click [here](#).

We created a manual for those wanting to get a ministry in their church or area off the ground: **"How to Start a Ministry."** Some of the topics covered are practical building blocks for church and para-church ministry, leadership decisions, Restored Hope ethics and standards, small group considerations, curriculum options, and training opportunities. There are sample forms included: intake forms, letter of intent, leader and small group ethics and boundaries and a member ministry application. Copies are available for \$10 including shipping and handling-- info@restoredhopenetwork.org

Office changes this year included renting office space and hiring a part-time assistant. I am so thankful for both. Our next objective is to hire a local part-time conference coordinator. The network and I need this key role filled. If you would, please pray that the Lord will bring us the right person and that He will provide for the funds to accomplish His mission.

The Restored Hope Network Board of Directors voted to join the **Common Ground Christian Network** this year. Common Ground is a group of denominations, organizations, congregations, and individuals who believe that 21st century Christians need to stand together for the cause of Christ. "The common ground upon which we stand is the affirmation of classical orthodox Christianity." commongroundchristian.com

Earlier this year, Janet Parshall hosted a National Religious Broadcast debate regarding, [“What does the Bible say about homosexuality?”](#) Dr. Michael Brown and I advocated the orthodox understanding of scripture while Justin Lee and Brandan Robertson primarily assessed homosexuality through the lens of their personal experience. Lee and Robertson failed to argue their viewpoints that some degree of homosexual expression is acceptable though they advocate those concepts in their respective blogs and websites. You can listen in [here](#).



Facebook. We post many relevant articles, life stories, and events on our public Facebook page each week which you can read at www.facebook.com/restorehopenetwork So far this year, over 354,000 people from 113 different countries have been reached by our information through our public page alone.

What a privilege to stand for hope, truth and love in the place it is needed most in this hour. Thank you for joining us in this endeavor!

MONTHLY DEVOTION

Dietary and Sexual Law in the New Testament

Robert A.J. Gagnon, Ph.D.

According to the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, sexual sins were never a matter of indifference. The Corinthians may have adopted the slogan, "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food" (6:13a) and done so to legitimize freedom from a variety of dietary

HOPE HAPPENING



Clarity Conference

Oklahoma City, OK

Today we live in a culture that is constantly trying to paint grey areas onto what The Bible has clearly painted as

taboos that they regarded as mere societal convention. Paul let this slogan stand but then drew a stricter line on issues of sexuality: "but the body is not for porneia but for the Lord and the Lord for the body" (6:13b). Believers, Paul argued, do not have the luxury to utilize their freedom in Christ to do with their bodies as they wish, "for you were bought with a price; so glorify God in your body" (6:20; cf 7:23).

What a believer does with his or her body drags into the muck the indwelling Christ, for "the one who is joined to the Lord is one spirit (with him)" (6:17). The slogan "all things are within my authority and power" (*panta moi exestin*) thus required qualification that "I will not be placed under the authority and power (*exousiasthesomai*) of anything" (6:12).

The point that Paul makes clear in 1 Cor 6:12-20 is similar to the one he would make a few years later when writing to Rome from the church at Corinth. In the letter to the Romans, Paul stressed that believers had come under the dominion of a new Lord. Whereas previously they were "free in terms of righteousness" (i.e., free to avoid living rightly) and headed for destruction, they were now "freed from sin and enslaved to God" with prospects for eternal life (6:16-23).

There is no sexual license for believers. Indeed, the Corinthians had left behind sexual license when they became believers. "These things some of you were; but you washed these away, but you were made holy, but you were made

black and white. Much of what Christian people believe and think about current events is based on emotion and experience rather than Biblical truth. The Clarity Conference is an annual event that is designed to bring Biblical clarity to contemporary issues. As pastors and ministry leaders we should be able to preach and teach the truth of God's Word, in love, and lead our churches to do the same.

This year we will be addressing what The Bible says about homosexuality. A lack of understanding in the totality of God's Word on this issue by both the church and the homosexual community can make the church an enemy to those who are living a homosexual lifestyle. This should not be so. It is time for the church to bring clarity, truth, and love to a very difficult issue in our world today. This will be a three day conference addressing The Old and New Testament scriptures regarding homosexuality as well as practical ministry application.

"Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is Christ." -Eph. 4:14-15

Cherokee Hills Baptist Church will host the Clarity Conference in Oklahoma City, OK. Speakers include Joe Dallas, Dennis Jernigan with Restored Hope's Andrew Comiskey, Robert Gagnon, Stephen

right, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11). In short, "Flee porneia!" (1 Cor 6:18)

[1] Gagnon, Robert A.J., *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, (Abington Press: Nashville, 2001), p. 294-5

Dr. Robert Gagnon is Associate Professor of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He is also a Board of Advisors, and Board of Reference, and founding member of Restored Hope Network. You can read more of Robert's work here: www.robagnon.net

RESOURCE OF THE MONTH

Naked Surrender

Andrew Comiskey

Jesus sees our bodies as our temples, houses where He wants to live. No matter what we've done sexually or what's been done to us, Jesus can reclaim us and make us His own. Whole. Restored. Pure.

Naked Surrender helps you see how deeply Jesus loves you and how He brings clarity, healing and restoration to your sexual identity and answers questions such as:

- How do I embrace my sexuality as a gift from God?
- How can I become sober and stay free from sexual idols?
- How can I become comfortable in my body?
- How do I love others as good gifts whether I am single or married?

Black, and Anne Paulk at this important event.

The Clarity Conference is a three-day annual event that is designed to bring Biblical clarity to contemporary issues. It helps equip pastors and ministry leaders to be able to preach and teach the truth of God's Word in love, and helps them lead our churches to do the same.

This year the Clarity Conference will be addressing what the Bible says about homosexuality from the Old and New Testament scriptures and offer practical ministry application.

Information and registration:

<http://chbcok.com/ccok15/>

MINISTRY OF THE MONTH



His Wonderful Works

Dee Barnes, Director

The ministry vision of His Wonderful Works is to strengthen the body of Christ to stand in the truth concerning God's plan for healthy family, relationships, and sexuality, by declaring a call to sexual purity and the transforming reality of Jesus Christ.

Our target group is the Body of Christ, both youth and adults. The society we live in today is soaked in broken sexuality. Internet, TV, and movies are filled with

Andy writes, "God cares about what goes on in the temple. He created the body and sexuality for holy purposes. His destiny for humanity involves our bodies!"

Naked Surrender reveals Jesus' authority to heal and restore.

Andrew Comiskey is the Executive Director and Founder Desert Stream / Living Waters and a founding member of Restored Hope Network serving as Chairman of the Board of Directors.
<http://andrewcomiskey.com/resources/>

sexual sin portrayed as a normal and healthy lifestyle. The sacred covenant of marriage is in a fight for survival as gay marriage threatens to radically alter God's divine plan for family.

Our mission is to strengthen the church with practical teaching and testimony of the power of Jesus in the areas of family, relationships, and sexuality.

"That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all your Wonderful Works!" - Psalm 26:7
www.hiswonderfulworks.com

Andrew's Story

by Andrew Franklin

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

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

After a few days of reading, I hit the floor of my apartment and cried out, "OK God, I'm yours. Do whatever You want with me." Immediately I felt waves of the kindness and love of God touch my heart, and I heard Him speak to me: "Andrew, I'm not mad at you." In a vision, He took me back through key moments of my life and showed me just how present He was, protecting me and keeping me alive. Instead of the judgment I deserved, He gave me forgiveness. I had encountered Jesus! But what this meant to me as a gay man, I had no idea. I tentatively told a few friends that I was going to give Christianity another try, but faltered when asked what that meant for my homosexuality. I was 23 years old and had never heard of anyone "leaving homosexuality". I was still sexually addicted and had

nowhere to go for help, because I feared shame and condemnation.

Eventually, the Lord brought me out of my isolation and I found a few avenues of healing and life that were especially helpful. I received one-on-one ministry from a gifted pastoral caregiver who had also been gay-identified but had left homosexuality and submitted every part of his life to Jesus. He gave me hope, and also challenged me. He said, “Andrew, there are reasons you struggle the way you do and feel the way you do and there are reasons you have done the things you’ve done. You owe it to yourself to get some answers.”

Counseling was complemented by participating in a Living Waters group. For the first time in my life, I began to learn how to actually LIVE Christianity rather than just talk about it. Jesus showed me the deeper-heart stuff going on underneath the surface of my sexual attractions and compulsions: the abandonment and emotional detachment I felt from my dad, my hatred and fear of my brother and my over-identification with my mom and sister. The bullying I endured from other boys at school had made me feel insecure and weak, hungry for strength and power but not knowing where to find it except in the arms of a man.

Jesus helped me forgive my family and my childhood bullies and spoke into my intense self-hatred. He showed me where I could find real strength through Him and from healthy men in the church. The church community was essential for me. I had left the closely-knit (albeit dysfunctional) world of the gay community. I needed friends! All the good healing I was receiving had to be worked out in real-life relationships with other Christians.

There I confronted patterns of narcissism and self-pity. And so I began to stop seeking power and attention inappropriately. It certainly wasn’t easy—that first year especially was probably the hardest of my life. I often felt like giving up. When I confessed my weakness (this freaked me out more than anything), I learned that I didn’t have to always have it all together. His strength kept me real and pressing into community.

Almost 10 years after first giving my entire life to Jesus, I can see the enormous blessings Christ has opened for me. A husband and father, Jesus’s call to embrace life encourages me when I am tempted to settle for less. I remember standing at my wedding ceremony a few years ago, unable to stop grinning and laughing: “Who would have ever thought that after all the years of wickedness & rebellion, after all the years of dying to my destructive-yet-powerful desires and choosing the difficult beginnings of repentance, that I would actually find myself making covenant with a woman, the actual love of God being poured through one another—who would have ever dreamed I could know the joy of that pure love?”

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

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



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Andrew Franklin currently serves as intern at Desert Stream/Living Waters Ministries.

He previously served as Men's Minister with First Stone Ministries in Oklahoma City.

Upcoming Events

August - October 2015

August

August 10, 2015—Pasadena, CA

Living Waters — discipleship and ministry program

Presented by Reconciliation Ministries

Now accepting applications for the next 24 week session of Living Waters, which begins September 14, 2015.

<http://www.recmin.org/> click on Upcoming Events

August 28-30, 2015—Fischer, TX

Journey to Joy: A Healing Retreat for Wives of Sex Addicts

Presented by Shadow of His Wings

Pre-registration required

<http://www.shadowofhiswingsministry.com/>

August 29, 2015—Bakersfield, CA

Youth For Christ Ministry Fair

Presented by Youth For Christ, Kern County

Workshop by Pastor Phillip Lee of His Way Out Ministries: Youth & Homosexuality

Registration is required; to register, call Youth for Christ at 661-323-9041

http://www.yfckern.org/events/ministry_fair_2015

August 30, 2015—Conyers, GA

Testimony and Teaching

Presented by His Wonderful Works

Hosted by The Father's House

http://hiswonderfulworks.com/ai1ec_event/testimony-teaching-2/?instance_id=145

August 30, 2015—Diamond Bar, CA

Hope Overflowing Fundraising Dinner

Hosted by Living Stones Ministries

<http://livingstonesministry.org/upcoming.php>

September

September 17-19, 2015—Oklahoma City, OK

Clarity Conference: What The Bible Teaches About Homosexuality

Promoted by First Stone Ministries

Hosted by Cherokee Hills Baptist Church

<http://chbcok.com/ccok15/>

October

Begins in October 2015—Portland, OR

Taking Back Ground — A 2-year Discipleship and Support Program

Presented by Portland Fellowship

https://www.portlandfellowship.com/taking_back_ground.php

October 2-3, 2015—Washington, D.C.

Safe Exit Summit

Hosted by PFOX, Voice of the Voiceless, Equality And Justice For All

<http://www.safeexitsummit.org/>

October 3, 2015—Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

Marriage, Family, & Sexual Health Conference

Promoted by His Way Out Ministries

Sponsored by Trinidad and Tobago Council of Evangelical Churches

<http://hiswayout.com/calendar/>

October 24-30, 2015—Kansas City, KS

Living Waters Leadership Training

Presented by Desert Stream Ministries

Pre-registration required

<http://desertstream.org/leadership-training>

[Restored Hope Network Regional Events/Programs](#)



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Contact Information

P.O. Box 22281 • Milwaukie, OR 97222

Phone: 503.927.0869

Email: info@restoredhopenetwork.org

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