

Redeemed! Ten Ways to Get Out of the Gay Life, If You Want Out

by Charlene E. Cothran, Venus Magazine Publisher

NOTE:

This article was reproduced and added to the *Christian Life Tools* web site by the permission of Charlene E. Cothran.

Over the past 29 years of my life I have been an aggressive, creative and strategic supporter of gay and lesbian issues. I've organized and participated in countless marches and various lobbying efforts in the fight for equal treatment of gay men and lesbians. I have kept current on the issues and made financial contributions to those organizations doing work about which I was most passionate.

As the publisher of a 13 year old periodical which targets Black gays and lesbians, I have had the opportunity to publicly address thousands influencing closeted people to "come out" and stand up for themselves, which is particularly difficult in the African-American community.

But now, I must come out of the closet again. I have recently experienced the power of change that came over me once I completely surrendered to the teachings of Jesus Christ. As a believer of the word of God, I fully accept and have always known that same-sex relationships are not what God intended for us.

I don't expect that this message will be widely received, quite the contrary. But, I do know that there is someone, possibly reading this very article, who is tired an unhappy living this way. Someone, in your heart of hearts, is searching for a way out, but you just can't seem to break free on your own. I am speaking to my gay and lesbian brothers and sisters who want real peace; the kind you've heard about, sung about, read about. It is simpler than you think to acquire it and there is no condemnation once you've entered it.

Although I have lived as a lesbian for my entire adult life, it is without a doubt my soul's purpose to use my gifts to LOVINGLY share the truth about how we got here: how we came to be gay or lesbian, how we came to enjoy our "lifestyle" and how we can to believe that this was OK with God. (Romans 1:21-28)

Many argue that each individual should determine for themselves what God intends for him or her. This would indicate that we each have a separate set of biblical rules to live by. This is untrue. If you are ready for change and willing to open yourself to the truth, God's love can bring your current belief system in line with His Word. Jesus will cleanse and forgive all confessed sin from a willing heart. Homosexuality is only one such sin. It is no greater sin than any other sin, but it is sin.

By now you're asking, "Has she lost her mind?" My answer is NO. I didn't lose it. I gave it away! In fact, I traded it in for a new one! (Romans 12:1-2)

ONE TUESDAY MORNING

I was minding my own business one fine New Jersey morning when I received a call from a local pastor, the Rev. Vanessa M. Livingston. I had never spoken to her previously. She was calling to add a statement to an article about her gospel group in another paper we own called the *Kitchen Table News*.

I don't remember how we got on the subject of salvation, but she could not have known how much I had been struggling with trying to reckon my spiritual upbringing with my lesbian lifestyle.

My stiff-necked resistance to the truth arose in me as she ministered. I honestly figured that if I simply mentioned the "L" word that she'd drop the phone, anoint it with oil and that would be the last I'd hear from her. But that's not what happened. The pastor prophetically confirmed what I've known for years, "One day you will come out of the world and bring many gay and lesbian souls out with you." She asked if today was the day that I would choose, but I said no. I felt the power of conviction upon me as she spoke, but I resisted and hardened my heart against the truth as I had done many times before. I was not willing to hear her or give up my all to God, especially knowing that I had a confirmed speaking engagement scheduled the following week at the Schomburg Center during New York City Gay Pride.

HAVE MERCY

As I blurted out that I was a proud card-carrying lesbian, the pastor reminded me that God's mercy allowed me to survive my experiences as He developed my gifts, all as a part of His plan to lead others to Him, others who will not perhaps hear her or other ministers who have not LIVED this experience.

She could not have had a clue about my encounters with the mercies of God. Mercy had indeed covered me during those dark 1993 days when my good friend Venus Landin, for whom this magazine is named, was shot and killed. I recalled how I went with her to her ex-lover's home to recover her things, how the woman had built a fire using Venus' precious journals as fuel, how she burned her clothes and how the flames and debris had fallen out of the fireplace's box and were ablaze along the carpet.

I remembered the look on the woman's face and in her eyes. I know in my heart that she had intended to murder Venus that night but she did not expect me to arrive with her. There, I stood at the very gates of hell. Given her state of mind, there was no reason for the woman not to have killed us both, then turn the gun on herself as she did Venus a week later. When I received the call that they were both found dead, I knew instantly that mercy had covered me, but why?

I YIELD

The Spirit of God spoke directly into my soul and said you will choose this day whom you will serve and if you make the wrong choice, I will allow you to drift so far away from me that you will never hear my voice again.

I gave God my heart and soul in the parking lot of the mall, right there in my car. A river of tears flowed as Jesus washed me and forgave me and redeemed me for His work. I intend to be just as "out" about my transformation as I was about my lesbian life. I have given every gift I have back to God, including VENUS Magazine. The target audience will remain the same, but the mission has been renewed. Our new mission is to encourage, educate and assist those in the life who want to change, but can't find a way out. My brother, my sister, please follow me out of this.

THE TEN WAYS

1. Establish and accept for yourself that God's Word is true AS-IS. Do not allow gay theology to divorce the Old Testament from the New or the written words of the Apostles from the spoken words of Jesus Christ. Gay theologians have deceived many, but their tricks will no longer work because God is preparing to bring millions of gays and lesbians back to His feet. He has already chosen many of us for this specific purpose and He is waiting for YOU to accept his call.

2. Seek the truth within the Scriptures about homosexuality and it will be revealed to you as you read and pray. Know that we were NOT born this way. This myth was fashioned by the gay establishment as a basis for changing laws in favor of gay rights. Again it works for their purpose, but it is biblically UNTRUE. There is no way that anyone, without an agenda, can come away from the Bible with an endorsement by God of the gay lifestyle. Gay theology starts with an agenda ("Let's let the Bible say gay is O.K.") in order to arrive at its conclusions, but it is a lie.

3. Do not resist God's call on your life. Get alone with God and let Him minister the truth directly to you. That conviction you feel is a gift to keep you near the cross. If you keep resisting Him and hardening your heart, He will eventually stop calling you. You can then have a great time fulfilling all the fantasies of the flesh without feeling a thing, but what awaits you at the end of such a life? (Romans 2:28)

4. Know with certainty that you are loved by God exactly where you are and that your experiences are of great value for kingdom work. I had BEEN tired, but the enemy kept my mind trapped for years by convincing me that I could not be of any real use to God having lived as an openly gay publisher, but that was a lie.

5. Say "Yes." That's really all it takes to accept the truth – which is accepting Jesus Christ. Pray this prayer of repentance with me now: "Lord, I'm coming to you because I believe your Word and I need your help. I can't change myself. I've tried. Please forgive me for everything I've done that did not glorify you. I believe that you ARE the Word, I believe that Jesus IS your Son, I believe that He DIED for my sin, and BECAUSE I believe this, I AM NOW SAVED BY YOUR GRACE. Thank you for saving me! Amen."

6. Make your salvation real. Keeping the good news of your personal salvation a secret is another trick the enemy uses to buy time as he tries to pull you back to your former life. We must believe with our hearts AND confess with our mouths. You don't need to "out" yourself, but clobber the enemy by immediately sharing your testimony with SOMEONE about how the Lord has revealed the truth directly to you; about the level of joy and peace you have which you could not reach without full repentance; about the welcomed change this brings in you life, and all the wonderful things He has done for you. (Romans 10:9)

7. Experience paradise NOW! Consult God first, then go ahead and live your life! Welcome new friendships, start that new venture, expand you're experiences, obtain nice things, just don't put them before God. Enjoy your life to a new degree, without the burden of sin AND with the confidence of ALL of God's promises on your side! It is totally possible to live for God in this present age and enjoy yourself immensely. When I say live for God I mean totally "sold out" for God. But you cannot be "sold out" for God and live a gay/lesbian lifestyle at the same time. (Titus 2:11-12)

It's possible to have a BETTER time than you did in the clubs, in the parks, BETTER than all those secret encounters with folks whose names you've long forgotten, BETTER than your long-term relationship, BETTER than all your priceless possessions, BETTER than money! Most of us have experienced some of this AND WE WERE STILL MISERABLE. But thanks be to God's mercy and saving grace we don't have to wait years and years to get to heaven to experience paradise. The earth is the Lord's, the fullness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein. Enjoy God's earth now. (Psalm 24:1)

8. Walk carefully or "circumspectly" as the Scriptures describe. This is about being careful to keep your spirit clean and fresh. Prayer, along with reading and hearing the Word AND seeking ways to apply it to your daily life, is the way to STAY saved and delivered from any sinful habit.

Isn't it interesting that we sometimes give our garments of clothing more care than we give our very souls? When we put on an outfit we're so careful not to lean against anything that might soil it. We protect it while we're eating so as not to get a spot on it. We sit in such a way to prevent it from wrinkling. Treat your soul's salvation with at least this much care. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

9. Have fellowship with believers. We know that the church has largely failed gays and lesbians by not being a welcoming place for those who have sought spiritual change. The invitation to "come as you are" seems to be extended to everyone but us. However, God has people everywhere who are open, real and willing to walk out with you. Ask the Lord to lead you to a loving, caring, Bible-believing fellowship where you can be nurtured, be blessed, grow AND be a blessing. (Hebrews 10:25)

10. Stay in touch. We'd love to hear from you! If this article has helped you, please let us know. Also, if you'd like to share YOUR testimony with VENUS readers, email us at:

editor@venusmagazine.org – or write us at:

The Evidence Ministry, P.O. Box 353378 Palm Coast, FL 32135

Phone: (386) 585-4208

Include your day and evening phone number.

NOTE:

Go to www.TheEvidenceMinistry.org for helpful resources