

# **ARM Prison Outreach International**

**"Ministers' Minute" Volume 8 Number 2**

## **SERIES: "WHAT THE NEW GENERATION THINKS ABOUT THE CHURCH -- WHY IT MATTERS AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO ABOUT IT" -- PART 4**

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Editor's Note: This "MM" is the second email message of 2009 in a series that ARM is sending as an encouragement to preachers, chaplains, and Christian workers around the world. This issue is the 86th "MM" sent. All are archived -- just [click here](#) to see links to all messages sent since January of 2002.

This month's message is the fourth of seven being sent. Larry Farthing, my older brother, deals with some crucial issues for the church and its reputation in each community. How are Christians perceived by the non-believers in our culture? How are congregations seen by non-members in their communities? It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and those you teach, lead, and encourage.

May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Development Director

**PS: An added feature this month: Richard Sprague's Poem: "I AM A CONVICT" -- see below.**

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### **The Mailbag**

Hi Bro. Rod, Thank you so much for the updates and ministers minutes you sent every month, I also forwarded these updates to some of our brethren here in the Philippines. God Bless, M - Philippines

Thanks Rod. I read the whole thing. Good points in there. Thanks for sharing. B - CA

Rod, Thanks- very interesting—Larry did a good job—very important issue. M - IL

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## **SERIES: "WHAT THE NEW GENERATION THINKS ABOUT THE CHURCH WHY IT MATTERS AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO ABOUT IT"**

### **#4: "You're Homosexual Haters!"**

#### **INTRO:**

In his book, *Unchristian* (Baker Books, 2007, pp. 92-93), David Kinnaman wrote:

**"In our research, the perception that Christians are 'against' gays and lesbians – not only objecting to their lifestyles but also harboring irrational fear and unmerited scorn toward them – has reached critical mass. The gay issue has become the 'big one,' the negative image most likely to be intertwined with Christianity's reputation. It is also the dimension that most clearly demonstrates the unChristian faith to young people today, surfacing a spate of negative perceptions: judgmental, bigoted, sheltered, right-wingers,**

hypocritical, insincere, and uncaring. Outsiders say our hostility toward gays – not just opposition to homosexual politics and behaviors but disdain for gay individuals – has become virtually synonymous with the Christian faith.

“The severity of the perception surprised me, but it began showing up right from the start of our research. During our initial exploratory interviews, the issue of Christians’ treatment of homosexuals kept coming up. The first interviews were qualitative in nature, that is, primarily a series of anecdotes that do not provide ‘hard data.’ At first, I assumed the frequency of the comments was just a blip on the radar.

“Then we did our quantitative interviews, providing representative data about outsiders’ perceptions, and we found that the early interviews were not an aberration.

“Out of twenty attributes that we assessed, both positive and negative, as they related to Christianity, the perception of being antihomosexual was at the top of the list. More than nine out of ten Mosaic and Buster outsiders (91 percent) said, ‘antihomosexual’ accurately describes present-day Christianity. And two-thirds of outsiders have very strong opinions about Christians in this regard, easily generating the largest group of vocal critics. When you introduce yourself as a Christian to a friend, neighbor, or business associate who is an outsider, you might as well have it tattooed on your arm: antihomosexual, gay-hater, homophobic. I doubt you think of yourself in these terms, but that’s what outsiders think of you.”

What about it? Are the perceptions and charges of the younger generations of outsiders justified? Are we gay-haters?

The younger generations claim that today’s church has singled out homosexuality as being worse than any other sin. Surveys seem to support this:

- Born-again believers are more likely to disapprove of homosexuality than divorce or heterosexual immorality. Only three out of five believe divorce to be a sin.
- While hardly any evangelical believers would knowingly vote for a homosexual running for public office, they don’t even think twice about voting for a divorced person or someone who is guilty of heterosexual immorality.
- While millions of Americans, including two out of every five churchgoers, feel that homosexuals should not be allowed to be teachers in the public schools, they do not express the same feelings about immoral heterosexuals.
- Two-fifths of those who claim to be born-again believers admit to having more sympathy for people who have cancer than for people with HIV/AIDS, because they believe that HIV/AIDS is God’s punishment for homosexual sin.

One from the younger generations summed it up this way: “I cannot imagine Jesus actually treating gays and lesbians like Christians do today.”

**First of all, in response, let me say this:**

***THERE IS NO DOUBT AS TO GOD’S WILL REGARDING HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR.***

The only way we have of knowing God’s will is through His written word, understood

through the help of the Holy Spirit, which lives within us.

Here's what the Bible says:

**Genesis 19:4, 5** – *“Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom – both young and old – surrounded the house. They called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.”*

This is the origin of the words “sodomy” and “sodomize.”

**Leviticus 18:22** – *“Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.”*

**Leviticus 20:13** – *“If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.”*

**Romans 1:26, 27** – *“Because of this (idolatry), God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.”*

**1 Corinthians 6:9, 10** – *“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”*

**1 Timothy 1:9, 10** – *“We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers – and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine...”*

The Greek word translated “perverts” (ARSENOKOITAI) refers to homosexual behavior in general.

How can anyone deny that homosexual behavior is immoral behavior?

**Second, I want to point out that**

***HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR IS NOT THE ONLY IMMORAL BEHAVIOR.***

Contrary to popular opinion among Christians, there is no special judgment for homosexuals. Immorality is immorality, no matter what form it takes.

While it is true that sexual sin is particularly destructive in people's lives, sexual sin is sexual sin, whether it is committed homosexually or hetero-sexually.

Billy Graham once commented: “I'm going to quote the Bible now, not myself, that it (homosexuality) is wrong, it's a sin. But there are other sins. Why do we jump on that sin as though it's the greatest sin? The greatest sin in the Bible is idolatry, worshipping other things besides the true and living God. Jealousy is a sin. Pride is a sin. All of these things are sins. But homosexuality is also a sin and needs to be dealt with and needs to

be forgiven, and that's why Christ came and died on the cross" (9/24/97, Bay Area Crusade Press Conference).

Some will say, "But it's *perversion*." Yes, it is. But so is every other form of immorality! Immorality is *perversion* of God's will for mankind!

However, when Paul says in Romans 5:8, "*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us,*" he was saying that Christ died for both heterosexual sinners and homo-sexual sinners. We're all the same in God's eyes.

**Third,**

### ***WE NEED TO WORK ON LOVING PEOPLE AS GOD DOES.***

Jesus said in John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world (every sinful person) that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*"

You have heard the saying, I'm sure: "Hate the sin but love the sinner." Isn't that something Jesus said? No, it's not. In fact, it's not even from the Bible. Apparently, it's something that originated with Augustine, a third century church leader, and restated by Gandhi in his 1929 autobiography.

While we have done a pretty good job of "hating the sin" when it comes to homosexuality, we haven't been very good at "loving the sinner." Homosexuals don't think we love them, and the younger generations are convinced that we hate them.

Warren Smith, editor of *The Charlotte World*, writes:

"I vividly remember attending a fund-raising luncheon for an ex-gay ministry nearly ten years ago. What I saw that day moved me deeply, and convicted me of my shallow, sound-bite theology. What I saw that day was man after man who had struggled for years with homosexuality, but who – in the power of Christ – had left the lifestyle and been set free of the bondage of homosexuality. What I heard in their testimonies were not simple answers but deep humility and profound brokenness.

"What I also heard in the testimonies of these ex-gay men was a deep love for those still in the lifestyle, a love that I knew I did not have. I began to be deeply embarrassed for my 'love the sinner, hate the sin' cliché-ridden approach to the issue of homosexuality. I began to pray, 'God, give me the courage, humility, and the love that I see in these people.'

"And at the risk of substituting pity for judgment, I came to see the homosexual as someone in deep pain. Even radical activists, or those – like Rosie O'Donnell – who try to put a veneer of success and enlightened activism on their homosexuality, are broken-hearted. That's the truth that the ex-gay men and women I know brought to me. . . Gay men and women are not our enemies. Rather, they are in bondage to our common enemy. We are standing against the Evil One, the one who has the homosexual as his captive."

**CONCLUSION:**

Back in the early 1970s I was a young preacher leading in establishing a new church in Austin, Texas. A young man began attending the church, and after a few months stopped by the office one day to talk with me. He confessed that he had been involved in a homosexual relationship. He said he knew it was wrong, but he gave in to the temptation.

You see, the temptation to participate in gay sex was just as strong for him as the temptation toward straight sex was for me. I don't understand it, but that's the way it is.

I urged him to repent and turn away from such immoral relationships. I prayed with him, and he professed his belief in Jesus, and I baptized him into Christ.

A few months later he told me he was moving to the south side of Austin and would be attending the Southwest Christian Church. I called one of the ministers there and gave him a heads up about this fellow and his particular needs. I never saw the young man again. I later heard that he was struggling to stay straight. He needed love and encouragement and someone to hold him accountable. I don't know if he got what he needed or not. I still think about him from time to time.

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## **I AM A CONVICT**

Written by Richard A. Sprague -- Kempton, IN, May, 2007

(See footnote numbers to right of text, and footnote references at conclusion.)

### **I am a convict 'cause I've been convicted**

By the Holy Spirit working in my mind...  
I am convicted but I am not condemned -  
for God's grace and mercy have been very kind. (1)

Jesus said convicting is the Spirit's work,  
convicting of sin, righteousness and judgment. (2)  
Be quick to listen to what the Spirit says.  
It's for this reason the Spirit has been sent.

### **I am a convict 'cause I've been convicted**

by the Holy Spirit working on my will...  
I am convicted but I am not condemned.  
God's grace and mercy are forgiving me still. (3)

So when the preacher shares from God's Holy Word  
and you start to feel a guilty little twinge, (4)  
that's the Holy Spirit seeking to be heard,  
trying to turn you back from your sinful binge.

### **I am a convict 'cause I've been convicted**

by the Holy Spirit working in my life.  
I am convicted but I am not condemned.  
The Spirit came to guide me from sinful strife. (5)

I'm not ashamed that I have been convicted  
by the Spirit's sword piercing into my soul. (6)  
That's the first step that started my conversion  
for my being convicted helped make me whole.

**I am a convict 'cause I've been convicted**

When God's Spirit reached out to this sinner. (7)  
Though I was convicted I am not condemned (8)  
for God has promised to make me a winner. (9)

God has kept his promise made on Pentecost (10)  
that all convicts who repent and are baptized (11)  
no longer need to fear that they will be lost. (12)  
Forgiveness and His Spirit become their prize. (13)

**Now I'm a convict who has been forgiven. (14)**

The blood of Jesus has swept my conscience clean. (15)  
I was buried with Jesus and risen, too. (16)  
I'm no longer the old man I once had been. (17)

Now if I'm faithful until the day I die (18)  
Jesus will say, "Well done, enter my rest.  
You may now join the heavenly fellowship  
with the faithful who have given of their best." (19)

Footnotes:

1-Eph. 2:8; 2- John 16:8; 3-Titus 3:5;  
4- Acts 2:37; 5- John 16:2; 6- Eph. 6:17  
7- Rom. 3:23; 8- I Cor. 11:32; 9- I Cor. 15:57  
10- Acts 2:39; 11- Luke 24:47; 12- Acts 2:38  
13- I John 4:13; 14- I John 2:12; 15- I Peter 3:21  
16 Rom. 6:3-4; 17- Eph. 4:24; 18- Rev.2:10  
19 Matt. 25:21

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**Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B**

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In 2008, ARM donated almost 40,000 FREE Bible courses to prisoners!