

WATCH: Dr. Michael Brown Reaches Out to 'Gay Christian' Vicky Beeching

Christians around the world were shocked and saddened about worship leader Vicky Beeching's announcement that she is a lesbian. In an article on Charisma News earlier this week, Michael Brown asked "how should we respond?" His article offered five points to consider.

Now, Brown, author of *Can You Be Gay and Christian?*, is showing us how to respond in living color. Brown was a guest on television and responds to British journalist Peter Ormerod.

Watch the video for yourself:

Was Robin Williams a Casualty of Hollywood's Fading Star System?

Was Robin Williams a casualty of Hollywood's fading star system?

Robin Williams had roles in four movies yet to be released. Last year he had a television show. Yet he was still being financially crushed. He went through two divorces when his paychecks were much larger. He joked about alimony really being "all the money."

Not many years ago, being an A-list star meant you could command \$20 million or more for a movie role. Williams was an A-list star.

It's been reported that he dreaded having to do *Mrs. Doubtfire 2*, but that he signed on to the project because he needed the money.

Williams once starred in movies like *Good Morning Vietnam*, *Hook*, *Mrs. Doubtfire* and *Flubber*, where he was the star above the title. His more recent roles, like *Teddy Roosevelt*, in the *Night at the Museum* movies, though wonderful, were small.

Williams is not the only Hollywood star to lose financial luster.

Will Smith and Johnny Depp recently have suffered flops where their name above the title didn't help. Robert Downey Jr. does spectacularly well, but only when he's Iron Man or Sherlock Holmes. Jim Carrey, a comic talent similar to Robin Williams, is not drawing at the box office as he used to do. Meanwhile, Mel Gibson has virtually been blacklisted.

Where are the movies like *Forrest Gump*, where an incredible actor gets an incredible role in something other than a CGI extravaganza?

The A-list stars of the 1990s are still tremendous actors, but you don't see them in many A-list movies. Today's A-list movies are about the franchise more than the star. You can substitute one Spider-Man or Batman for another and keep going.

Robin Williams had much more going on in his life than Hollywood's transformation, but that transformation did seem to have an impact on him.

This article originally appeared on . Want to know what God's doing in Hollywood?

'Pittsburgh Is Destined for Revival'

What does hope look like?

Describing it is not always the easiest thing. And Jeremy Puckett, a 33-year-old Pittsburgh police officer, can't always spot it, but he sure knows when it's missing.

All it takes is one look at a person's face. Hopelessness, in Puckett's experience, is nearly impossible to mask.

"You can see it in their eyes," he said.

Puckett was one of hundreds of counselors at this weekend's Three Rivers Festival of Hope in Pittsburgh, the city he grew up in. He entered the festival eagerly wondering how God might work in his hometown.

But he finished the weekend realizing God was working on his heart.

For three nights straight, he talked with three different men—ages 51, 47 and 18. All three had known Jesus personally at one time in their lives but had walked away. All three recommitted their lives to Christ at the event.

Phil, Aaron and Alan were three of more than 1,500 people who made decisions last weekend to follow Christ at the CONSOL Energy Center in downtown Pittsburgh.

"To see somebody else's life touched, it's just an incredible feeling," Puckett said. "It gives you a hunger to do more."

And that starts with the people in his everyday life. Those

people whose faces lack life, eyes drooping at the corners. Like the guy he works with on the force.

“You can see he’s looking for something,” Puckett said. “His wife left him. He’s miserable. He tries to cover it up.”

But Puckett knows. And now he’s more inspired and courageous to do something about it. To talk to him about the hope that can be found only in Christ.

“I hope this (festival) gives us the courage to talk to people about Jesus,” Puckett said. “I hope this lights a fire in Pittsburgh.”

And that fire might not be contained to the Steel City. As more than 25,000 experienced the Festival of Hope in Pittsburgh, over 29,000 watched live online at .

On Sunday alone, viewers in more than 90 countries tuned in, including Kuwait, Madagascar, Sri Lanka, Iceland, Slovakia and Papua New Guinea. Those watching on their computers or mobile devices heard the same timeless Gospel message from Franklin Graham that resonated in the CONSOL Energy Center, and hundreds indicated making online decisions for Christ.

“Don’t hesitate—you may not have another chance to do this in your life,” Franklin Graham said. “By coming tonight you’re saying, ‘I believe Jesus is the Son of God, and He took my sins to the cross.’”

Lacey Sturm gave a similar message in song with her performance of “Mercy Tree,” featured on last fall’s *My Hope with Billy Graham* short film, *The Cross*.

“The first time I heard that song, I couldn’t stop crying,” she said.

Sturm was on the verge of tears all weekend. This was more than just a festival—she’s played many Franklin Graham events dating back to her Flyleaf days.

This Three Rivers Festival was personal. Pittsburgh is home for Sturm, her husband, Josh, and two sons since moving to the Steel City four years ago. They even prayed over it at the top of Mount Washington when the couple first moved to town. And her church, Covenant Church of Pittsburgh, has been praying for this festival—and a Pittsburgh revival—every weekday morning at 5 a.m. for over a year.

All those prayers—certainly thousands among thousands when you consider 498 Pittsburgh-area churches were involved in the Festival—came to fruition last weekend.

As Pittsburghers streamed down the aisles each night, Sturm, standing off to the side in the shadows of the stage, couldn't help but fight off the tears.

"It's pretty much the best thing you can see on Earth," she said.

The way she sees it, this is far more than just a three-day event, where things will go back to normal on Monday morning. This is the start of something bigger than anyone could imagine.

"I do believe that Pittsburgh is destined for revival," Sturm added. "God is bearing fruit to so many people who have been praying for this.

"I think the big movement of God in this world is going to happen in Pittsburgh."

The Festival of Hope heads to Toronto on Sept. 12-14. Watch live on .

This article originally appeared on .

The 1 Simple Word That Triggered ISIS Mass Killing Spree

When Islamic State militants stormed into a northern Iraqi village and ordered everyone to convert to Islam or die, only one person refused. But that did not satisfy the Sunni insurgents who are even more hardline than al-Qaida.

The militants, who have seized much of northern Iraq since arriving from Syria in June, wasted no time after the village's leader, or sheikh, stood up for his ancient Yazidi faith.

Khalof Khodede, an unemployed father of three who escaped with his life, recalled how 80 men in the village of Kocho were killed and all the women and girls were kidnapped.

His account, one of the first eyewitness reports of last Friday's killings, could not be independently verified but other Yazidis and Iraqi officials have given details of Islamic State's attack on the village.

"First they wanted us all to convert to Islam, and we said yes just to save our lives. We were all very afraid," said Khodede from a hospital bed in the town of Dohuk in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq.

Dohuk is now home to thousands of refugees from Iraq's minority Yazidi community, which has paid the heaviest price for Islamic State's ambition to redraw the map of the Middle East.

"Then our sheikh said, 'I won't convert to Islam.' And then they gathered us inside the village school," he said.

The men were taken to the first floor and the women to the

second after the villagers' money and gold jewelry were seized, probably to fund the group made up of Iraqis and other Arabs as well as foreign fighters.

Then the Yazidis were loaded onto minibuses in groups of 10 to 20 and transported outside the village after being told they would be taken to Sinjar, the ancient homeland of the sect.

The vehicles stopped abruptly and the militants opened fire without warning. "They started shooting at us randomly. They had heavy guns like machine guns. I was hit in my leg and on my pelvis," said Khodede, showing where he had been wounded.

The Yazidis, followers of an ancient religion derived from Zoroastrianism who are part of Iraq's Kurdish community, are not strangers to oppression.

Oppression on a New Level

Many of their villages were destroyed when Saddam Hussein's troops tried to crush the Kurds. Some were taken away by the executed former dictator's intelligence agents.

But nothing could have prepared them for the wrath of the Islamic State, which has declared a caliphate in parts of Iraq and Syria it controls.

To survive, Khodede had to hide under the dead bodies of friends and neighbors, people who had practiced the mysterious Yazidi faith with for a lifetime—beliefs that Islamic State fighters condemn as "devil worship."

After trying to stay motionless for about an hour, Khodede saw Kurdish fighters in the distance, peering through gaps in the bodies.

They were not Iraqi Kurdish fighters who had held towns and villages in the north for years after the fall of Saddam in 2003.

The Kurdish fighters had come from Syria after hearing that fellow Kurds were being routed in neighboring Iraq by Islamic State militants who seized several towns, a fifth oilfield, as well as the country's dam for some time in recent weeks.

Like many Yazidis, Khodede felt abandoned by the Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga fighters who acquired a reputation for being fierce warriors mainly because they challenged Saddam's troops.

The Syrian Kurdish fighters cleaned up his wounds, took him to a hospital in Syria and then brought him back to Iraq.

Others were not so lucky.

"Islamic State kidnapped about 400 to 600 people in our village and the majority of those people are women and children. They killed most of the men," said Khodede, in the emergency room of a teaching hospital where he arrived on Monday night.

His uncle and sister are by his side as blood drips into a bag hanging from his bed.

In the chaos and panic after the latest Islamic State offensive, rumors swirled about the fate of kidnapped Yazidi women, usually referred to as "slaves" for Islamic State.

Some Yazidis believe Islamic State holds hundreds of people at a detention center near the town of Tal Afar.

Khodede wonders if his family is there. His three children, wife and mother were taken away along with hundreds of others just because the village sheikh was defiant.

Writing by Michael Georgy; editing by Giles Elgood

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Pentecostals Put Themselves in Middle of Ferguson, Missouri, Violence

The streets of Ferguson, Missouri, have fluctuated between violence, calm and renewed violence following the shooting death of Michael Brown, a black 18-year-old, by Darren Wilson, a white Ferguson police officer, in a confrontation on Saturday, Aug. 9.

After two failed attempts to restore order by police, as violence and looting erupted again over the weekend, Missouri Governor Jay Nixon has set a curfew and called in the National Guard.

Destruction, violence, hatred, division, death.

“The only one sitting back and laughing at this all is Satan,” says Jack Hembree, pastor of Bethel Fellowship (AG) in Florissant, Missouri—located just a few minutes from where rioting has broken out. Hembree, who expressed his grief in a note to his congregation over the violence, urged his congregation not to “take sides” but instead bring Christ into the situation.

“The differences that divide us were not created by God but designed by the enemy. It is time to battle not with a gun, bottle, or badge, but with prayer and the Word of God,” Hembree wrote. “Lay down our economics, our political persuasion, our differences, or whatever is hindering the power of the words of God from working in us and pick up the cross of Jesus Christ that brings forgiveness, confession, repentance, acceptance, love, freedom and life.”

And his church has joined other churches as members of the Metro North Church Alliance to do just that.

“What you don’t see on the national media is the church,” Hembree says. “The churches got together and marched down that same street the rioters marched on, passing out bags of supplies, food and toiletries to people. Church members stood in front of buildings through the night to make sure they were not looted. Church members parked in people’s driveways to make sure they were safe all through the night. Church members went up and down the streets, cleaning up the mess. The national media doesn’t show any of that.

“The people of Ferguson are very good people,” Hembree says. “Yes, there needs to be some changes. We know that and it’s nothing new, but it’s a good community with good people.”

Brian Schmidgall, executive presbyter and pastor of MiddleTree Church, located on the dividing line between North and South St. Louis and about three miles from the rioting, agrees with Hembree’s evaluation of Christ being the answer.

“There will be people of profile flying in and getting their face in the spotlight because it’s trendy and in vogue ... there will be social-justice programs and systemic structure changes, but there will be the same problems 10 years down the road,” Schmidgall says. “The one thing the church addresses is the heart. If you don’t address the heart, then healing and recovery don’t happen.”

Schmidgall also observed a phenomenon of the digital age that he felt actually intensified and fueled the rioting.

“Social media is instigating a lot of this [violence],” he says. “As the mainstream media [originally] couldn’t get access to the scene, social media was really getting charged and drawing a line in the sand for people—and everyone knows that if it’s on the ‘Internet’ [or a text/tweet], it must be true...”

As Schmidgall works to bring a sense of stability in the midst of chaos, he believes this tragedy can be redeemed by God. The focus of MiddleTree Church, he says, is to bridge the divide between North and South St. Louis (the haves and have-nots), and he believes the incident in Ferguson will open doors for the churches in his area to unite and be used by God to make a change in the community.

“The Lord’s hand is priming this for good things,” he says, adding that he’ll be meeting with local ministers this week to plan united action. “What the enemy meant for harm, I think the Lord is going to use this.”

Pastor Aubery Kishna and his wife, Vimla, have been pastoring Jubilee Worship Center (AG) for the past 19 years. Theirs is the AG church located closest to the demonstrations and rioting, occurring just down the road from the church. One member lives in the apartment complex directly behind a looted and burned gas station that has appeared on national news.

Kishna, a bivocational minister, says his church canceled services last Wednesday but held them on Sunday, encouraging members to pray for their community, while leading them in prayer for the families, school districts and political leaders involved. They currently plan to hold midweek services this week.

The church, which sees 40 to 50 people in attendance on Sundays, also took food from its pantry and partnered with another church that was distributing food to those in need in the area of the demonstrations.

The Kishnas both agreed that the community seems to be fairly peaceful during the daylight hours, but at night, things “get out of control.” But Vimla, who is a teacher, says her school district, along with two others, were closed on Monday, due to the demonstrations.

AG Missionary Jay Covert, who oversees Urban Outreach Church

Plants in East St Louis and Washington Park, where he is no stranger to danger, hasn't seen a strong reaction in his community or neighborhoods to the riots.

Having just been caught in gang crossfire several months ago while he and a visiting pastor drove around the neighborhood, Covert is concerned that the riot in Ferguson might not be an isolated event. That unless there's a God-driven transformation in the hearts of people, riots and violence may happen and intensify as a trend throughout the country before things get any better.

"Where we're at, murder is not uncommon," Covert explains simply. "Murders rarely get solved because no one talks, they're fearful—'snitches get stitches' is the saying."

Kishna says that no matter what the outcome of the investigation, he feels deeply for the parents of Michael Brown. "We had a 26-year-old girl that we buried just a couple months ago," Kishna says. "She was at the wrong place at the wrong time and was caught in a gang shooting. ... My heart breaks for Michael Brown's family. But not just for them, but for all the 'Michael Browns' who have been shot and killed on the streets by gangs. There's no one crying foul for them."

Hembree says that the weekend's renewed violence is making things difficult and unsafe for churches, where prayer is even more of a focus.

"Some of the [ministry] efforts have been suspended for a few days," Hembree says, expressing concern about "outsiders" being the cause of the problems. "As of now, we are still proceeding with attempting to meet the needs of families in the area... [but] if it gets too dangerous, they will have to stop for the short term. Those decisions will be made daily."

Schmidgall says that it is vital for the church to be actively involved in the lives of people in the community. "If you have relationship, you have a voice," Schmidgall says. "Because if

we don't have those relationships, what is going to happen if the outcome of the investigation isn't what people want to hear?"

Reunion of US Missionary With Ebola With Husband Will Warm Your Heart

The husband of an American missionary stricken with Ebola has finished a health-monitoring period without showing signs of the disease and was able to visit his wife at the Atlanta hospital where she is being treated, a missionary group said on Monday.

David Writebol was temporarily quarantined in North Carolina as a precaution after returning last week from Liberia, where he and his wife, Nancy, served as missionaries for SIM USA before she was infected with the deadly virus.

In a statement released by the Christian missionary group, David Writebol said the couple prayed together over an intercom during an emotional reunion on Sunday after he was cleared to travel to Emory University Hospital.

"I have had the great joy to be able to look through the isolation room glass and see my beautiful wife again," he said. "We both placed our hands on opposite sides of the glass, moved with tears to look at each other again."

Nancy Writebol is one of two U.S. aid workers with Ebola who are said to be improving after being flown to Atlanta earlier this month for treatment. Dr. Kent Brantly of Texas said in a

statement on Friday that he hoped to be released from the hospital in the near future.

The worst Ebola outbreak on record has killed at least 1,145 people in four West African countries, prompting the World Health Organization to declare an international health emergency.

Meanwhile, citing what they said was “an abundance of caution,” New Mexico health officials are carrying out tests on a female teacher who returned from Sierra Leone this month.

The state’s Department of Health said the 30-year-old woman developed a sore throat, headache, muscle aches and fever, but that she was not considered a probable Ebola case.

She had no known exposure to the virus and was in stable condition after being admitted on Saturday to the University of New Mexico Hospital (UNM) in Albuquerque, officials said.

“UNM Hospital has isolated the patient and is following the appropriate protocols to ensure other patients and health care workers are safe,” the head of the department, Retta Ward, said in a statement.

Reporting by Colleen Jenkins; additional reporting by Joseph Kolb in Albuquerque; editing by Eric Beech and Susan Heavey

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A Christian Leader Whose Husband Has ALS Sounds Off on the Ice Bucket Challenge

Well, we are on week two of the very-viral very-everywhere ALS ice bucket challenge. I know, I know, I can hear the groans; it started out cute and now it's out-of-control. Played. Clogging up social-media sites everywhere.

I even read this charming article in which the author called the challenge (that has raised an unprecedented amount of money for one of the most outrageously underfunded diseases) a waste of fresh water. Another headline whined, "Is the Ice Bucket Challenge Going to Cure ALS?" Um, no (and, by the way, that's a stupid bar to set for any fund raiser.)

Critics complain that the challenge is really about feeding our American narcissism and does nothing for ALS awareness or funding. They assert that people should just quietly donate their money and move on with their lives.

I get that they're cranky, but I think maybe they don't realize what it's like to face this insidious disease and then realize that it's nearly invisible to the rest of the world. As I watch my husband become entombed inside his own body, I feel desperate for people to understand that this sort of inhumane condition exists. But for some reason, while everyone acknowledges it's one of the worst fates imaginable, funding for research and patient care is nearly nil.

I recently mentioned to a doctor that my husband has ALS, and she first looked confused and then said, "Oh, that's Lou Gehrig's Disease, right?" *Right*. Why does she—a doctor of medicine—still only know it by Lou Gehrig's Disease? Because we humans need to associate things with people. It's easier that way. That's why the celebrity faces and personal

challenges happening in the ice-bucket challenge are so effective at bringing in money. And if someone gets to look good while plunking their \$50 into the ALS tip jar, *I have zero problem with that.*

Because here's the deal: We are in for the fight of our lives with this monster, and the very LAST thing I want is for people to give quietly, anonymously, and then slink away. Raise the roof! Raise a ruckus! Call all sorts of attention to yourself! I will be happy for you and every Facebook Like you receive, as you nudge ALS an inch or two closer to the collective public consciousness.

So, fear not, dear reader, this too shall pass, and your Facebook news feed will go back to cat videos and kids singing "Let It Go." Until that happens, here's a little reminder about what it's like to live with ALS and why this level of awareness is like gold to families such as mine.

A Mile in ALS Shoes

People ask me often what it's like to live with ALS. It's a brave question because the answers are not very pleasant. But it's also such a worthy question because understanding how this disease impacts those who suffer from it creates empathy, which is so valuable; it carries us into another person's world and allows us to understand what they're feeling and how they're hurting. As I watch my strong husband struggle with things that used to be easy and automatic, I sometimes wish that everyone could see life from his perspective.

If you would like to experience just a tiny corner of an ALS life, I have a list of Empathetic Experiences for you. These are things you can do to walk for just a mile in ALS shoes. If you try one, take a little time at the end to consider that people actually living with the disease have a million miles more to go.

1. Pick up a 10-pound weight. Now imagine it's your fork and move it from your plate to your mouth repeatedly without shaking.
2. Sit in a chair for just 15 minutes moving nothing but your eyes. Nothing. No speaking, no scratching your nose, no shifting your weight, no changing the channel on the television, no computer work. Only your eyes. As you sit, imagine: This is your life. Your only life.
3. Borrow a wheelchair or power scooter and try to maneuver quickly through the aisles at Walmart, without speaking. Note the way people react to you.
4. Strap 25 pounds to your forearm. Now, adjust your car's rear-view mirror.
5. Using none of your own muscles, have your spouse or child or friend get you dressed and brush your teeth. Write down some of the feelings you have being cared for in this way.
6. Before you eat your next meal, take a good, long look at the food. Inhale deeply and appreciate the aroma. Now, imagine never being able to taste that—or any other food—for the rest of your life.
7. Put two large marshmallows in your mouth and have a conversation with your friends. How many times must you repeat yourself? How does this make you feel?
8. Go to bed and stay in one position for as long as you possibly can, moving nothing.
9. Strap weights to your ankles and climb a flight of stairs, taking two at a time. That's the kind of strength it takes for someone with ALS to tackle the stairs on a good day.
10. Install a text-to-speech app on your phone or iPad and use it exclusively to communicate for one day.

And to my friends living with ALS: Please give us more ideas

and help us move into your world for a bit. We want to help make your lives rich and full, and I'm not sure we can do that without at least a basic understanding of what you are facing. I think I speak for many when I say: You are superheroes, and we are in awe.

With unending hope for a million-mile cure.

Bo Stern is a blogger and author of Beautiful Battlegrounds (NavPress). She knows the most beautiful things can come out of the hardest times. Her Goliath came in the form of her husband's terminal illness, a battle they are still fighting with the help of their four children, a veritable army of friends and our extraordinary God. Bo is a teaching pastor at Westside Church in Bend, Oregon.

Ebola Outbreak Delays Mercy Ship's Africa Mission

Collateral hardship from the Ebola epidemic now includes a delay for Mercy Ships, which operates the world's largest civilian hospital ship in ports on the West Coast of Africa.

Already with one canceled deployment to Guinea, where Ebola first broke out last December, the Mercy Ship now waits in the water with crew and staff, pending an end-of-August decision on field service in Benin.

The Mercy Ship was due to sail for the port of Cotonou, Benin, for its 10-month field service last week but has delayed that sail pending further assessment due to the virulence of the outbreak in neighboring Nigeria. Earlier, in April, Mercy Ships made the difficult decision to cancel the hospital

ship's planned deployment to Guinea, where the Ebola outbreak began last December.

Currently docked in the Canary Islands, following the vessel's annual maintenance phase, the 16,500-ton Mercy Ship is designed to deploy specialized surgical expertise and educational support. It is unequipped to treat viral epidemics, according to the charity's president and founder, Don Stephens.

"Multi-bed wards and limited isolation facilities, close proximity to crew accommodation and dining for families and children are but a few restraints," Stephens said. "We also hire 200 day crew in each port as part of our training and capacity building for Africa."

Stephens said the organization is closely monitoring the situation on the whole of the African continent.

"Africa is and remains our priority, but crew safety drives every decision," he emphasized. "We request prayer as we consider all options to manage the risk, including deployment to other unaffected nations." This ship's crew of 400 represents 40 nations, with up to 60 children onboard at any time.

Following the U.S. Center for Disease Control recommendations, Mercy Ships has banned crew travel to Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria. Likewise, crew guests and day crew may not board the Mercy Ship for at least 21 days after they have visited one of the four affected countries.

"Mercy Ships has many, many friends in West Africa," Stephens said. "In the meantime, our prayers go out to all those affected by this terrible epidemic, especially those in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Nigeria."

Docking in an African port, the ship brings high-tech equipment, state-of-the-art facilities, highly skilled

doctors, free specialized surgeries, health-care training including instrument sterilization and disease prevention, agricultural training and more.

Mercy Ships provides many types of surgeries: maxillofacial, plastic reconstructive, orthopedic and general. The organization also offers dental care and eye care, and it works alongside local government and health-care providers to improve local health-care delivery systems.

Hillsong: From Humble Beginnings to Hollywood Feature Film

“Why would anyone want to see a movie about us!?!?” That’s how Hillsong’s leader Brian Houston starts out a recent blog post.

In fact, he says that was his response when some Hollywood producers approached him late last year with a proposal for a Hillsong movie. It’s the story about the band Hillsong United, and the beginnings of what was once a small church in Australia.

“From then until now; much time, thought, preparation and prayer has gone into the journey—and as of today I can tell you that Warner Bros. and Alcon Entertainment have joined with these producers in expressing their desire and excitement to put a feature film into theatres next April that tells the story of God’s faithfulness on this 30 year journey,” Houston wrote in a blog post.

Houston describes the goal of the movie this way: to give

people the world over the opportunity to experience the praise and worship that has been birthed at Hillsong.

“We aren’t naive enough to believe that it’s all going to be a ‘walk in the park,’ but we have faith to believe that opening up our lives and portraying the journey with authenticity may just point people to the One we live for and long to glorify—Jesus,” Houston says.

“Already we’ve seen God do what only He can by stirring the hearts of influential people in the film industry to ‘spiritual curiosity’ and opening doors of opportunity that we have never sought and could never have imagined.”

Houston hopes the movie will paint a picture of the power of the local church and the unfathomable grace of an almighty God.

Vicky Beeching and the Reason So Many ‘Christians’ Are Coming out as Gay

I love homosexuals.

Gays or lesbians who have read my writings for the *AFA Journal* for 18 years probably don’t believe that statement. I can’t say I blame them. When it comes to homosexual activism in this country, I have firmly resisted it for almost two decades. Why? Because I believe the homosexual movement is a part of the sexual revolution that, by and large, has been extremely destructive to individuals and society.

I was disappointed to read about yet another Christian artist

who has “come out” as a homosexual and claimed that God had a hand in the process. In other words, she stated that God (1) made her a lesbian and (2) led her to declare it unashamedly to all who would listen.

Her name is Vicky Beeching. I had never heard of her, but that’s not unusual. Let’s just say I’m slightly behind the curve and leave it at that. Being a Brit, she may have been better known “across the pond” than in America, but folks I spoke with here at American Family Radio had heard of her.

She joins other well-known Christian artists such as Ray Boltz, Jennifer Knapp and Clay Aiken who came out of the closet.

I think most men would think that Vicky is a pretty lady, and those sorts of appraisals are usually made without thinking. This makes the subject of sexual orientation rather difficult to understand at times.

Since I was 5 years old, I’ve noticed girls. I had my first crush on a neighborhood girl and actually had a dream that I married her! I can remember my second crush in the first grade when I was 6: Jill Drowns. Brown eyes, blond hair in braided pigtails. As for my wife of 33 years, well, she was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen—and still is.

I don’t know what it’s like to feel that way toward a man. I don’t know what it must have been like to feel that way toward another *boy* in first grade.

So I feel compassion toward homosexuals. I don’t believe most of them woke up one day and decided they’d be attracted to same-sex people. Neither do I believe they’re born that way. I think the answer lies somewhere in between.

What causes homosexuality? I think there’s probably a web of causes—some apply to this group, some to that, etc. I believe that some homosexuals have endured sexual abuse or other

trauma; others suffer from a deficit of some sort that turned them toward the same-sex side of the aisle in an attempt to heal.

At this point I realize I have offended most of the homosexuals reading this. So let me even the score and offend some Christians: I believe some percentage of homosexuals (I have no idea how large or small) simply grew up just like me—only different. Instead of having a crush on an opposite-sex person, they experienced a crush on a same-sex person. *To them it appeared just that natural.*

But if there's a God who designed us—and I believe there is—then we obviously aren't *designed* to be attracted to the same sex. With my apologies to the Vicky Beechings of the world, the human race is clearly designed as male and female, with sexually complementary equipment. We are obviously intended to grow through childhood and enter puberty attracted to the opposite sex—because that's the only thing that makes sense of the biological design inherent in humankind.

So for Vicky and Ray and Jennifer and Clay—how do we explain the fact that their attraction developed in complete disregard for design? Here's the short answer: They're broken. Why is that so hard to say? Sexual and romantic attraction was supposed to develop one way, and it developed another. Maybe it was because of something that was done to them or around them; maybe it wasn't. But it is different.

Are we not all broken in small and large ways? As a fallen race, isn't there a web of characteristics about us all that doesn't reflect the way God designed us? If a child is born blind, does that mean God approves? Isn't it a sign that something is not as intended?

Eyes were created to see. To *not* see is not the same as being *able* to see. The blind are still human, but their brokenness *is still brokenness*. But isn't that what we're

doing with homosexuality? Aren't we denying the obvious--that there's a disconnect between design and operation in the homosexual? Aren't many in our society applauding as courageous those who declare their brokenness to be wholeness?

The preaching of the cross can dissipate the mist covering our eyes. To turn the old saying around, we discover that you're *not* OK; I'm *not* OK. This is the problem Paul addresses in 1 Cor. 1:18-25. For some the cross is an offense, because they don't believe they are sinful and in need of rescuing. For others it is foolishness, because it addresses a spiritual world that they don't consider important to the life they lead. This is by no means a problem limited to homosexuals. Paul was talking about humanity in general. We are all broken in one way or another.

Only God can make a broken person whole. Sometimes it is done as a miracle, as when Jesus healed a blind or lame or paralyzed person. Sometimes we must wait for our entrance into the kingdom of heaven, when all brokenness is finally healed.

I believe God can make homosexuals whole in this life. Despite the ridicule that follows such a statement, I believe that does happen. 1 Cor. 6:9-11 says so. However, for many--or even most--homosexuals, in order to be Christians they will have to accept that their "orientation" is a manifestation of brokenness, not wholeness. Like the rest of us who are broken in some other way, they will have to reject that lameness and give it to God. They will hobble through life learning to love Him more and more--and yes, learning to obey Him.

In that way, homosexuals are just like me. No better and no worse, but broken nonetheless.

Ed Vitagliano *is the director of research and news editor for the AFA Journal.*