

6 Lessons From the Collapse of Exodus International

While the secular media is celebrating the demise of Exodus International and gay activists are hoping this will be the nail in the coffin of ex-gay ministries, Jesus continues to save, transform and liberate homosexual men and women all around the world.

Still, there are some important lessons we can learn from the closing of Exodus:

1. When a ministry or church or organization departs from its calling and purpose, it will no longer be backed by God. In the words of Jesus, "If the salt loses its saltiness ... it is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot" (Matt. 5:13, NIV).

Right now, the world is mocking the idea that homosexuals can change, either by the gospel or by professional counseling or both, while many in the church are even questioning whether change is possible.

But Exodus is not closing because God no longer transforms homosexual men and women. It is closing because it has lost sight of its original mission and vision.

Alan Chambers, the current leader of Exodus, has stated publicly that he does not believe change in sexual orientation is possible, also claiming that practicing, unrepentant homosexuals who profess faith in Jesus are heaven-bound and saved. This means that Exodus stopped offering hope to struggling homosexuals and even stopped effectively calling them to holiness.

In that light, while the announcement of the closing of Exodus is bad news because of the reproach it brings to the gospel

and the discouragement it brings to gay strugglers, it is good news because Exodus was no longer serving its God-ordained purposes. (For better news still, see No. 6 below.)

2. There is always a danger when one person becomes the face of a movement or denomination. When Alan Chambers offered an apology to the LGBT community for alleged harm done to them through Exodus International, he was not speaking for thousands of ex-gays or for hundreds of churches and ministries that are involved in ministering to homosexual men and women. He was speaking for himself (and perhaps for members of his board, some staff and some Exodus-affiliated ministries).

Of course, the secular and gay media are presenting this as far more than the apology of one man—first, because it helps discredit the entire ex-gay movement, and second, because in recent years, Alan has increasingly become the face of Exodus and, by extension, of a vast and diverse movement.

This is a real shame, and we need to guard against the “one man (or one woman) speaks for us all” mindset.

3. There is intense pressure on those offering hope and transformation to the homosexual community. We need to pray for Alan and his wife and family, along with those who have served with him in recent years, since there is a massive spiritual attack on those who stand on the front lines of ministry to homosexual men and women.

On the one hand, if you are an ex-gay leader, both the church and the world are watching your every move, the former wanting to be sure you are preserving your testimony, the latter wanting to discredit you. On the other hand, many in the church mistake compassion for compromise while the world mistakes conviction for bigotry. The pressure from both sides (and all the more from the spiritual realm) can be intense.

4. There is no way to appease gay activists without departing

from the truth of the Word. When I am asked by church leaders what we can do to minister more effectively to the LGBT community, I state that we must first repent of our own sins—including rampant no-fault divorce, pornography and immorality in the church—and then we must ask God to break our hearts with His love for homosexual men and women.

At the same time, I fully realize that unless we celebrate homosexuality, embracing it as morally and socially equivalent to heterosexuality, and unless we tell “gay Christians” that they can follow Jesus and practice homosexuality at the same time, we have not gone far enough in their eyes.

The written apology issued by Alan Chambers leans in the dangerous direction of complete moral capitulation and should serve as a strong warning for the rest of us who want to stand for compassion without compromise.

5. The collapse of Exodus is closely connected to hypergrace theology. It is no secret that Alan Chambers is a member of a church that actively promotes hypergrace theology, with the pastor of that church serving as the chairman of the board of Exodus. This is reflected in Alan’s apology, where he stated, “My beliefs center around grace, the finished work of Christ on the cross and His offer of eternal relationship to any and all that believe,” by which he actually means there is nothing you can do to sever your relationship with God, nor is change in your lifestyle required in order to have a relationship with God.

He also stated, “Our beliefs do not center on ‘sin’ because ‘sin’ isn’t at the center of our faith,” but in effect this means he will not clearly and strongly preach against sin, another byproduct of hypergrace theology.

6. People and organizations may fail, but nothing can stop the goodness and compassion of the Lord. Over the last two years, as Exodus began to depart from its mission and change its

theology, some of the key Exodus ministries withdrew from the organization when their concerns were not heard. They have now formed the Restored Hope Network, and I am privileged to serve on their board of advisers as they unashamedly “proclaim that Jesus Christ has life-changing power for all who submit to Christ as Lord” and as they “also seek to equip His church to impart that transformation.”

God’s hope goes marching on!

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