

How Holy Spirit Can Help You Minister to Someone With Same-Sex Attraction

When molested as a child by an older boy he trusted, Bob Fife had no idea how drastically the event would alter his life trajectory. Something happened in his heart that night, launching Fife on a quest for acceptance, security and masculinity. *Out: One Christian's Experience of Leaving the Gay Community* (Kregel Publications) is the vivid story of Fife's descent into homosexual practices—and his courageous fight to climb out again.

Fife found help, hope and support when he reconnected with the church. Through his involvement in a local congregation and a program run by a ministry reaching out to those in the gay community, Fife began to learn how to allow the Holy Spirit to make lasting changes in the way he thought, spoke and acted.

"I offer this book not as a blueprint for everyone whose life shares some of the same challenges, temptations or weaknesses as mine," says Fife, "but as a bold declaration that when God is welcomed in, anything can happen. I have seen God work in totally unexpected ways in the lives of those who surrender the broken pieces to him."

Q: What was the catalyst for you leaving the gay community?

The catalyst was two-fold. For starters, my son challenged me and told me it was possible in God to be free. I hadn't thought seriously about God and the life I had left behind for years. Seeing Sean again awoke a longing in me for things I used to think I didn't want. But more than that, I wasn't being fulfilled. I was always seeking more. By that point in my life, I can honestly say there was no sexual experience I desired that I hadn't had. I couldn't imagine ever being satisfied by either an endless round of partners or the confines of some gay version of domestic life. What I didn't

realize was the longing I had was more spiritual than either social or sexual. I'd tried the latter two without restraint but ignored any kind of connection with God. So when Sean brought God back into the picture, suddenly I began looking for all the things I needed in the right direction.

Q: How was your "exit" after your son's visit to Toronto different than your attempts to do so previously?

I had not seriously attempted to leave previously. When I first confessed my same-sex attraction to my wife, Audrey, I rode an emotional high that gave me the strength to be faithful to her for a few weeks, but my drive to be with men did not lessen. I soon concluded what she hoped for me was not possible. I couldn't leave my homosexuality behind, and I had no particular motivation to do so.

My son's visit gave me both motivation and hope. Riding our bicycles past the church I had visited years earlier gave me a point of contact, and after Sean left, I went back there and established contact. Somehow being in that old, familiar place triggered spiritual desires I had long ignored. I was up-front about my life choices and goals with the leadership, and they received me warmly. Within a short time, I knew this was where God would do His work in me.

Q: How did your relationship with God enable you to make such a drastic change?

After I shared my story with the elders at my church, I was amazed by their acceptance and willingness to support me. It was more than I had dreamed could be possible. Church became a spiritual hospital for me. I began to appreciate God's love for me in a new way, and I fell in love with my Savior anew. The spiritual intimacy I developed with the Lord and His people filled up the emotional spaces in me that I had tried to fill with sex-based relationships.

Q: What was the difference between making lifestyle changes under your own power versus through the power of the Holy Spirit?

I have quite a bit of will power. I could set goals and reach them, yet when it came to my same-sex attraction, I knew I could do nothing on my own. As long as I had no inclination to leave the gay community, I had no problem. Once the desire to change had been born in me, the struggle began. Like Paul in Rom. 7, I was wretched, and only Christ could give me the victory. I had to learn "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." While there certainly was a miraculous aspect to the realignment of my life, God also used Scripture reading, prayer with others and by myself and healthy, non-sexualized friendships with both men and women to fill my life with everything I had been craving all along.

Q: Other than the Lord, what was the biggest factor in your successful life change?

One of the reasons I failed in marriage was I had never acknowledged and dealt with the violence of my childhood and that first sexual relationship with an older boy. I went to a support ministry called New Direction that helped me identify things in my early life that contributed to my same-sex attraction. Throughout the months I was in the program (and then later as I led a group for them), I had time to process things, both one-on-one with a counselor and in group sessions. I began to understand things I didn't even want to know earlier. Processing the past was a big factor.

However, I'm not sure that alone would have been enough. You can't just empty yourself. You need to be emotionally fulfilled in the present. That's where new friendships rose to prominence in my life. I had people I could spend time with, talk to, pray with or spend a day at the beach with. So much of my previous life had always been driven by the expectation of a sexual encounter that I had to shift my focus and learn to enjoy other people for reasons other than the realization of those sexual expectations. I learned to have fun with people and appreciate them for their personal and spiritual qualities. That said, I doubt having new friendships without processing my early life would have been enough either. It certainly wasn't when I attempted marriage.

If you can somehow roll those two factors into one, you have my answer to your question.

Q: According to your accounts, much of the homosexual mindset is wrapped around the idea of identity. How has your concept or definition of “identity” changed through this process?

Everyone needs identity. In fact, we all have one, whether we’re consciously aware of it or not. Where you get it often depends on environment. I did not have healthy masculine identity as a child. I didn’t like or respect the men in my childhood. Many of them were violent, and for one reason or another directed that violence at me. The experience with my sister’s boyfriend was what I saw as the first positive experience with another male. It was socially intimate. It was physically pleasant. It was psychologically fulfilling. It shaped how I wanted to see myself—who I wanted to be.

This all happened when I was an adolescent. I had no idea what was happening. My identity was being shaped in a values vacuum when it came to sexuality. No one was talking about it at home, school or church. I think many of us in that generation had the same experience, whether we identified as hetero- or homosexual. I knew girls everyone thought were “good girls” who became pregnant at least in part because no one had explained the practical aspects of sexuality. I can’t believe that didn’t shape their identity.

I think it is possible for healthy families and churches to have a very positive role in shaping young identities. Someone needs to be conscious as this is happening, and it isn’t likely to be the hormone-driven adolescent.

Q: How can the church reach out to those in the homosexual community?

As I suggested earlier, we should learn to see the local church as a hospital, not as a hotel. Whether or not you are in a position of leadership, you can demonstrate the love of Christ to everyone around you. Some won’t need your help because they don’t want it and will resent you for suggesting they need it. Some won’t need your help because, well, they may be spiritually more advanced than you are. But some will need your help. These are the ones who are struggling. Take them under your wing. Walk alongside them. Understand they

will probably fall. Don't write them off when this happens. Pick them up, dust them off and help them get going again. Don't demand that people achieve perfection before they are acceptable to you. Love them with the love of Jesus. He loved His own even when they denied and abandoned Him. Don't give up. {eoa}

Learn more about Out and Bob Fife at [or](#) .