

Why Exodus Didn't Work

Last week Exodus International announced that after more than three decades of standing at the front lines of outreach to the homosexual community, it would be closing its doors, seeking an “exodus” of its own.

The organization said it reached the decision “after a year of dialogue and prayer about [its] place in a changing culture.”

The announcement came alongside a public apology to the LGBT community by Exodus President Alan Chambers, who said he was “sorry [they] promoted sexual orientation change efforts and reparative theories about sexual orientation that stigmatized parents.” Chambers noted that though these programs helped many people, several were adversely affected, leaving them emotionally scarred and some even suicidal.

Chambers contended that Exodus was broken and had done a great deal of harm for all its good. He then announced they would be launching a new organization called Reduce Fear, aimed at building bridges between the LGBT community and the church.

The apology and announcement have left many questions as to the future of the organization and how they now view sin and salvation.

It's alarming to see such drastic changes made in an attempt to adapt to a rapidly changing culture—especially when the changes appear to soften the message in an effort to make the truth more palatable.

As Chambers admitted where Exodus had failed in the past, I couldn't help but be reminded of the advice we have shared with so many as they enter into such programs to find help: It's not the program that works for you. It's Christ—and Christ alone—who works in you!

Over the years, we have referred many hurting people seeking help to various programs like Exodus, Pure Life, Celebrate Recovery and Teen Challenge. Many of them found these programs to be of great benefit. However, there are a few that did not.

One man we helped get into Teen Challenge went into the program with a “just do the time” attitude. He left just as he came. He wore the program’s failure to change him as a badge of honor. However, it didn’t take long before he found a new low and hit rock bottom again. He re-entered the program—but this time found a different outcome.

The difference wasn’t that the program changed; he did. He stopped fighting what God was doing in him and finally surrendered to it.

If a program isn’t working, there is a reason. The fix will not be found in retooling methods and rebranding the organization. The answer can only be found in reconnecting with Christ.

The road ahead for Reduce Fear may be murky. For me, three things are very clear.

1. There is no *replacement* for *presence*. A program can help create a healthy environment. It can provide encouragement and support along the way to recovery. It should offer wisdom that leads individuals toward the truth. Yet for all that a program can do, it cannot become a substitute for an encounter with the presence of God.

The very best program out there is at best a simple sign along the side of the road pointing toward the way, but the program itself is not the way. When we place our attention on the sign or mistake it as the path, we inevitably run off the road.

No doubt people began looking at Exodus—as they do many other programs—as the answer for their sins. That’s the problem! As beneficial as a program can be, it can never replace presence.

2. There is no *rehabilitation* for man. It is impossible to rehabilitate a man; he can only be reborn. When we place faith in a program to change an individual, we've taken our faith out of Christ.

Exodus has backed away from the idea that a homosexual can ever experience complete freedom from their attractions, admitting its own limitations rehabilitating the man.

I believe in the transforming power of God to regenerate an individual. I believe in a new birth that produces a new life. I take God at His word: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone and the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17).

I have a problem when I hear people make excuses for hanging on to addictions or attractions from a former life as if it is their thorn in the flesh to tolerate. Jesus didn't come to help me cope; He came to bring me hope!

Sin is the problem; Christ is the cure. All the therapy and counseling in the world is of no good unless it brings an individual to the foot of the cross. There they lay their life down, never to pick it back up again.

At the cross, a man can be reborn, not rehabilitated.

3. There is no hope but *revival*. As I watch the alarming speed at which our culture is changing, I can't help but recall the vision Steve Hill had concerning the spiritual avalanche. While researching avalanches, we learned it only takes an avalanche six seconds to accelerate to speeds over 80 miles per hour. Once it begins, there's no stopping it.

Our nation is experiencing a rapid acceleration of transformative change. Politicians and even pastors are beginning to accept what they believe to be inevitable in terms of homosexuality in our culture. Exodus is the latest example.

When the natural forces are unstoppable, the only hope is something supernatural. Just as a program doesn't work for changing an individual, our man-made, contrived ideas have no hope of changing our culture either. There must be divine intervention.

Revival is the only answer left. That's always been the case, but now, as all other man-inspired options seem to be coming off the table, perhaps more will lift their faces toward heaven, turn from their own wicked ways and contend for revival.

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