

"Sexual Sin & Bondage: What Does It Look Like To Be Healed?"

by David Kyle Foster

Defining the Terms Properly

In any debate, the person who defines the words that are used in the discussion has the greatest influence on the thinking of those observing. Being the definer of words implies knowledge, expertise and authority. It's a very subtle trick to try to redefine the terms used in an argument - a kind of intellectual "stacking of the deck" used by cults and other heretics throughout history.

The gatekeepers of our modern culture know of this power and have for decades been redefining the terms and ideas that fashion and direct our social beliefs and actions. Two lesbians are now a "family." Killing unborn children is now a "right." Lying with a man as with a woman is now "good," "natural" and "the creative will of God." And as if that weren't absurd enough, our nation's top leader has redefined "sexual relations" and would even have us question what the definition of "is" is.

We live in a culture that has jettisoned God's definitions of right and wrong (establish for millennia in His Word) - where every man defines "right" and "wrong" for him or herself according to inner feelings and impulses or according to the intellectual whim and fancy sparked by the latest philosophy or debate.

When the long-standing definition of words has been surreptitiously redefined, the intellectually naive will be led to believe that by going along, they are actually holding fast to the truth that has been passed down to them, when in fact they are departing from it altogether. The less naive know they are leaving the "faith once given" but happily accept the redefinition of terms in order to justify and excuse a shift away from what they know deep down inside to be true. It is, in fact, a very sophisticated version of the child's game, "Let's Pretend."

We are engaged in a culture war where the relativizing philosophies of postmodernism are reinterpreting the definition of terms once defined very differently by the Judeo-Christian worldview. And there can be no more evident arena for this deception than in the defining of what it looks like to be set free, healed or transformed from sexual sin and brokenness.

Let's take the issue of homosexuality as our primary example.

Early on, leaders of the gay community recognized the importance of being the ones who defined the terms of the debate. They successfully persuaded the public to believe that in order to be "healed" of homosexuality, one would have to be rendered free from same-sex, erotic temptation. (A similar coup was won in assuming that "homosexual" is an inherent identity rather than emotional brokenness). In their public lectures and debates, they simply assumed that the definition of "healing" that they created was the accepted one, the correct one and not at all a matter of debate. Biblical Christians did not think to call them on the deception, perhaps because we incorrectly believed that there were more important matters to discuss than definitions. Others, however, unconsciously assumed that the definition was correct because it was so matter-of-factly presented and because it went unchallenged. We allowed them to redefine the term and accrue to themselves the implied expertise that being a definer of terms carries.

In truth, being "healed" of homosexual confusion is not a matter of being permanently set free from homosexual temptation any more than being healed from an addiction to cigarettes means being permanently set free from the temptation to smoke. If I have not smoked a cigarette in 20 years but am today tempted to smoke one, by the standard assumed by the gay community for "being healed" I would today have to call myself a smoker, even though I haven't smoked in 20 years. It's a false criteria not imposed on any other kind of healing. It is a straw man, designed to fail so as to provide ammunition to the argument that homosexuality is inherent and cannot be healed.

Other Wrong Assumptions That May Prevent True Healing

• ***The assumption that I can learn and perform some formula for transformation without entering into a loving and dependent relationship with God through Jesus Christ.***

Knowing God is what brings permanent healing and transformation. Many believe that they do not need a savior - that they have divinity within them that only needs to be mined and tapped in order to bring about results. Some believe that a "god or higher power" of their own choosing is sufficient for the task. They have missed the point of being made whole, of being made right in God's eyes. They have a self-focus in the matter of being made holy, as though they were the focus of the command. The truth is that intimacy with God through His Son Jesus Christ is the true focus and the goal of every divine command. Achieving right behavior is not an end unto itself but rather a fruit of what truly is the goal of life - a personal, deep and loving relationship between God and man. Holiness is birthed from such intimacy with God. It is a fruit of right relationship, not the achiever of right relationship. Hence, the healing of any condition that is unholy can never be made permanent if someone attempts to achieve it outside of that relationship. For the person who refuses to enter into intimacy with God, who refuses to give their life to Jesus Christ, healing will always be temporary and incomplete. It will never be established in the foundation of their souls. It will always be an effort, a burden, and an ongoing cause of fear and insecurity. It will forever remain a maintenance program rather than a transformation program.

• ***The assumption that I have to achieve healing through my own will, power and effort.***

Even those who are in the process of coming to know God can be tripped up by the incorrect assumption that God expects them to achieve the transformation. It's the old, "God gave you a mind. He expects you to use it," "Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps" ethos that many of us were taught. We adopt this self-effort, religious perversion of the truth not only because it is the way Americans think, but also because it sounds so righteous. After, all, if we have sinned, then certainly God expects us to make up for it. Otherwise, justice is not being served. Ironically, the assumption is based on a proper view of justice, but one that has failed to take into account the abject inability of man to correct the damage that he has caused and the redeeming grace of Christ that has been provided to correct the damage.

We also resist because to accept grace means we are beholding to the giver of that grace. It means that we have lost control and become dependent. It's too humbling and excruciatingly uncomfortable to the spirit of independence that has driven our fallen nature since the Garden of Eden. And what is worse, it is thoroughly un-American!!!

The reality of God's provision for healing is this - we are completely dependent on Him for the power, for the knowledge, the wisdom and direction for our healing. And what is more, we will remain completely dependent on Him to be kept from falling until that day when Christ returns and we are then fixed in our chosen state of obedience or rebellion. This means we must not only go to God for healing, but that we must remain in Him, committed to Him, dead to self and a bondsman of Christ. Nothing grates more against our natural man than that!

• ***The assuming of a time-frame and a particular order for seeing results.***

When we try to heal ourselves, or utilize the services of a psychotherapist or some other human "expert" in place of entering into relationship with God, the Bible says that we are made foolish through the very "wisdom" of man that we have chosen in place of God. A good trained professional (particularly a Christian one) may be able to outline the necessary issues that need to be faced and addressed in any given healing process, but they cannot by looking into your heart and soul provide them all. Nor can they accurately predict the timing and the order of how those issues must be addressed without specific revelation from the Holy Spirit. And while many will give lip-service to God when starting a counseling session, many aren't truly reliant on His leading during the session. Their reliance is more often on their expertise, their training and a prideful sense that they can accurately read you and your problem. It is a propensity that afflicts all of us who counsel others.

Everyone is unique. How they became broken and enmeshed in sinful lifestyles is unique to them. A human counselor can at best guess at what is wrong and how to fix it. God the Holy Spirit knows exactly what to do and when to do it. Many people abort their healing process simply because they never have done it properly. They charge ahead, (with all good intentions), but in their own wisdom (or the wisdom of some therapist), and fail to wait upon the Lord for that "still small voice" that tells them what to do and when to do it. They often do the right thing, but in the wrong timing and when it fails, assume it was the wrong thing to have done. Or they may do the right thing, but fail to do it in concert with other things that must be done simultaneously in order for the desired results to be achieved. Again, because it fails, they conclude that they did the wrong thing, or worse, that they

have done the right thing and can now move on to other things in order to realize the complete result. Can you imagine making a cake that way - throwing whatever ingredients together in whatever order and timing suits your inclination of the moment?

"Faith" is a good example of a necessary ingredient that must accompany other more obvious actions. I can do and say all the right spiritual things, but if I do not believe God's promises in connection with them, none of those actions or words are going to achieve anything.

One day I was in worship when the Lord asked me if I believed 2 Cor 3:18, which says, "As we gaze upon the Lord's glory, we are being transformed into His likeness." I replied, "Yes, Lord, I believe all of the Bible!" He said to me, "No you don't. As you worship me, consciously and deliberately set your mind on assuming that what 2 Cor 3:18 promises is actually happening. For example, assume that as you are worshiping Me for my purity, that My purity is being transformed into you - literally!"

It was like night and day after that. When I assumed that the things I worshiped about God were literally being transformed into me, they actually began to be. I could see measurable changes every few months. The difference was startling.

Most of us believe that if we intellectually agree with something in Scripture that we are believing it. That is a western concept of "faith". To believe something in the Biblical sense means to assume it is happening! It means that your life changes to become consistent with that belief. So you can see how this extra ingredient of Biblical faith is critical to the effective working of other actions in our life with God. Without it, right actions may not work right, and we may erroneously conclude that those actions were not the right ones for us.

When well intentioned Christians fail to rely on the leading of the Holy Spirit, who is The Counselor, and rely instead on another human's expertise or education to lead them on a healing journey, all manner of confusion and misunderstanding can be created. Strewn along the path are all sorts of right actions done at the wrong time or not in concert with other necessary things, now ignored as having been accomplished, when in fact they still need to be done at the right time and with other right things.

This is why the fallen Christian is much harder to help than the fallen nonbeliever. The Christian who has fallen into a bondage to sin easily convinces himself that he has done most of the "spiritual" things and embarks on a desperate search for some new psychological clue, some new angle that's going to be the key for setting him free. The odds are, he has never truly done the first things under the direction of the Holy Spirit, but has done them as self-led, religious acts that have no power in that context.

The Evidence of Relationship with God

If Spirit-led healing is occurring, over time you will see primary shifts in behavior, identity, fantasy and attraction.

The Holy Spirit is God. If you have given Him permission to be the Lord of your life, He will do exactly that. That means, when you pursue sin, He will bring conviction and correction. The idea that a true believer can blithely continue in a sinful lifestyle for the rest of their life is contrary to the witness of Scripture. The book of 1st John is a treatise on how you can know if you truly love Jesus and have eternal life (1 Jn 5:13): we are truly repentant when we sin (1:10); we do not love the world anymore (2:15); willful, knowing, and habitual sin is progressively being eradicated from our life (1:5-7; 2:4; 3:6,9-10; 5:18); we have a growing love of the brethren (2:9-11; 4:7-8,12,20-21); we believe that Jesus is the Messiah (5:1), the Son of God (5:5), and our Savior (5:6-12); and we love God and are progressively more and more obedient to His commands (2:17,29; 3:24; 4:13; 5:1-3).

The Book of James also makes the point that faith without the expected fruit of good works is not true faith at all. In other words, slow start or fast, there will be a changed heart and life after one truly gives their life to Jesus Christ.

If we truly give our life to Him and subsequently resist this process of sanctification, God may allow calamity to come upon us (1 Cor 5:1-5), even unto death if necessary (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Jn 5:16), but all for the purpose of preventing the dominance of evil in our lives and to bring us back into relationship with Him. In other words, whatever discipline is required, it is no longer focused on punishment (since Christ has taken our punishment

upon Himself) but rather reconciliation and our ultimate good.

The Bible is very clear that many who have named the name of Christ, even some having done miracles in His name, have never known Him (Mt 7:21-23; 22:11-14). Their profession of faith never came from the heart, was never born from true repentance. The Bible also indicates that although no one has the power to take a believer out of the Father's hand (Jn 10:27-29), there will be some who taste of the knowledge of God through the Spirit of God who will willfully walk away from Him (Mt 26:21-25; Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-29; 2 Pet 2:20-22) and be lost. I suspect such cases as that are extremely rare.

The Process Described

Why does the picture of the healing process vary so widely? Multiple elements account for the variety.

- People begin their healing process at different places of mental and spiritual knowledge and health. Some don't know a blessed thing about God. Others were raised in the Church. Some are so psychologically and emotionally messed up at salvation that it takes a while for them to get to the place where they can see and think clearly enough to respond appropriately to the new impulses of the Holy Spirit within them. Others have been so damaged in their ability to trust, so taken advantage of by authority figures in their past, that it takes a while for them to learn to trust the proddings of the Holy Spirit within. The battle within is not a matter of hating the holy impulses, but more one of learning to trust them and learning how to let them take charge.

We sometimes make the mistake of looking only at the outside - at the visible achievements and progress being made. We want to see tangible fruit and sometimes demand to see it before it is ready to emerge. God looks on the heart. He is interested in new desire and new intent. His interest is in the direction that the heart is set on, not the perfect accomplishment of that intent.

- And so, the length, the extent, the details, and the outward success of the process varies.

- Some people fail to understand that God's goal for them is a progressive walk toward greater and greater levels of holiness. They see salvation as a ticket to heaven without much else required. And so, they settle for less than God offers and stunt their own growth through the ingratitude of compromise and continued identification with the world. Having removed "the big sin" from their life, they feel they have pleased God enough and done all that any one can be expected to do (except of course for special saints who they see as having a higher calling).

- Other people grow weary in the battle and give up. (In a sense, these folks have a stopwatch on God and when He doesn't make everything better or easy within their time-frame, they give up on the call that He has placed on their lives). They have never changed their focus from their own comfort to living for the glory of God. So when the pain of healing or the fray of the battle approaches, they shrink back in order to avoid the pain and/or the conflict.

- Some never come to see a partial healing as a danger because they have taken their cues from the lukewarm, Christian culture around them. If others are getting by without much effort, (especially leaders), they assume that that's an acceptable way of doing things. They fail to lift their eyes to the higher call in Christ Jesus.

There are many factors that play a part in how extensive the transformation will be for any given individual in this life. If God were to just zap you and instantly heal everything, you would not grow. You would remain an immature person and thus extremely vulnerable to reverting to your previous behavior. Only in the slow process of healing each contributing issue can you be set free and grown up into a mature, Christ-like human being.

God certainly has the power to achieve complete healing in everyone. However, He allows us free will to decide how committed we're going to be to the process and we reap a result consistent with that commitment.

- So the commitment of a person to do whatever it takes to be healed is very important. In many ways, this is similar to the commitment required of alcoholics and drug addicts. Most failure to realize complete transformation can be found in a reluctance to go the distance, no matter how long it takes, and no matter how difficult it becomes.

- Like the alcoholic, the person must recognize that they cannot heal themselves and that they must pursue an

intimate and dependent relationship with God for the power and direction necessary for healing.

- Many people find that they do not have this level of commitment when it comes to working through the more difficult issues. Why?

- Many people are motivated out of a performance-orientation rather than genuine love for Jesus Christ. - Many people find it difficult to rely on God, to believe what He says and to commit fully to His Kingdom and they refuse to give up their anger and mistrust in order to obtain this ability.

- They get sidetracked by the voices of:

- their own internal self-hatred or self-doubt, • self-effort birthed in misguided family creeds or certain psychological theories, • their gay friends, • or even of a doubting church.

- Some put a timetable on God's promises. If He doesn't heal them in such and such a period of time, they're going back to the lifestyle. God won't bow to their manipulation. To do so, would be for Him to sin. Others don't approach God's promises with faith, but with an attitude that says "I'll try this and see if I want to commit to it" or "I'll try this but I won't believe it until I see it." This is not faith! The Kingdom of God is not a supermarket from which we pick what we would like and what we don't like. Some simply love the idolatry and the pleasure of homosexual lust and refuse to completely forsake it. They try to hold on to a piece of it as an option. In essence, they are trying to remain the god of their life instead of submitting to the One who is God.

- Am I saying then that everyone who gets with the program will become completely heterosexually oriented without any homosexual inclinations?

- That's what the gay community would like you to think is the criteria for being healed. It's a false criteria, one not used for any other form of sickness, desire or orientation. - If I haven't smoked in 20 years, but today am tempted to, according to that criteria, I would have to still call myself a smoker, even though I haven't smoked in 20 years! - Even with cancer, you are declared healed after 5 years. - There will always remain memories of past pleasures, and in moments of weakness and distraction from who you truly are, a desire to be someone you aren't. - Temptation isn't the criteria, but rather a consistent history of how you see yourself, how you operate, what primarily drives you and with what you identify yourself. In a healed person, their identity is firmly rooted in who they really are - a new creation, united with Christ, and nothing can, for long, distract them from that destiny and identity.

. There are a number of observable factors that can make one person's transformation longer and more arduous than another's. In my 20 years experience of observing the process, the turnaround occurs more quickly in cases where the person has:

- refused to adopt the identity of homosexual (having considered themselves a broken heterosexual rather than inherently gay);
- refused to enter into the darker and more perverse activities found in the gay subculture;
- had some positive experience with heterosexual sex prior to changing over to homosexual partners;
- started the healing process rather early on in their life.

And so, an older man who has been deeply identified as a homosexual for 30 or 40 years and who has engaged in the darker aspects of homosexual life with countless partners and who has had experiences in life that gave him a revulsion for the female body may not live long enough to see the complete transformation (although I don't want to say that is a hard and fast rule, considering the power of God). There may simply be more to overcome that that person has years of life left to work through. It should be said however, that those years of working through will reap great rewards for him in heaven. Despite the fact that he may retain a significant level of homosexual orientation for the short remainder of his life, his commitment to abstinence, to celibacy, to turning from homosexual fantasy and to pursuing a holy life will bring great joy to the heart of God.

For others, especially those who begin the turnaround in their teens and twenties, and for some, even thirties, there exists a hope that their healing can be significant enough for them to marry, have kids and realize many of the blessings that God has designed for those who love Him and who live according to His Word.

The length of the healing process can also be affected by the number of factors that need to be overcome. Some have a homosexual orientation simply from having failed to bond with their same-sex parent on an emotional level. Others have the orientation simply as the result of the trauma of childhood sexual abuse. Others, however, may have multiple factors, including emotional incest with the opposite-sex parent, a history of humiliating attempts at relating to the opposite sex, intense parental or peer misconduct, narcissistic personality disorder, etc. Such cases may take more time because there are more issues that need to be healed.

In short, the transformation process for the homosexual (as for any bondage) is affected by several broad categories:

. knowledge . commitment . the time frame . the number of elements to overcome.

So, What Does it Look Like to Be Healed?

For someone who has been in the healing process a while, there comes a day when they ask themselves, "Am I healed yet?" or "How will I know when I'm healed?" In that moment, it is helpful to understand some of the earmarks of what being healed looks like so that one can take comfort in seeing the progress that God has wrought in them.

These criteria are not meant to imply that there is a state at which the capacity to be tempted by a sin no longer dwells in us. (That state will only be brought about when God fixes believers in a state of perfection after the second coming of Christ). Although there is testimony from a few rare saints that they have achieved such victory over particular sins, the more common picture is one where impulses to sin remain (to one degree or another), but are kept in check by the means God has designed.

Although I have tailored the following evidence of being healed to the issue of homosexual confusion, for the most part these criteria can serve as guidelines for anyone's path in overcoming sin.

I. You effectively keep perfectionistic tendencies in check.

Many people refuse to try something that they cannot perfectly perform. Since the path toward holiness is riddled with periodic failure, they refuse to give it an honest shot. They have performing tied up in their minds with being loved and accepted by God.

A healed person has learned that God's love and acceptance is based on Christ's work on their behalf, not their flawless performance. They have learned that God's love and acceptance can never be earned and can never be repaid - it can only be humbly received as a free, unmerited gift.

God's call to be holy as He is holy is not based on some unreasonable expectation in Him that if we try hard enough, we will somehow perfectly achieve holiness. He doesn't expect instant flawless perfection from fallen human beings anymore than He expects a child whom he has called to become a tennis pro to be instantly and flawlessly perfect at tennis. He understands the learning process. In Christ He also learned obedience from what He suffered (Heb 5:8) and grew in wisdom, stature and favor with God and men (Lk 2:52).

God's pleasure is not focused on our achieving the goal. His pleasure is focused on our love-inspired desire to cooperate with Him in moving toward the goal. He gains His joy in the relationship of the moment, not in some prospect of the future. A healed person has come to understand this and is committed to putting perfectionistic tendencies to death when they attempt to re-assert themselves.

II. When temptations come - you consistently and quickly put them away.

Notice I didn't say "if". I said "when". You will always have memories of past pleasures and old mental videotapes of events that have brought great excitement and thrills in the past, no matter what the sin once was. The

difference in a "healed" person is that they have had such a change of heart and have acquired such a level of discipline, that such temptations are consistently rejected upon arrival. They don't give them any time. They don't give them any consideration. In their mind and heart, that sin is no longer an option.

III. When temptations come - you effectively and efficiently turn the battle over to God on a consistent basis.

A healed person has learned how to let God fight their battles for them. Long past are the self-righteous attempts to prove oneself holy and above sin. Dead and buried is the idea that we become self-contained, self-made entities of holiness. This person has learned that the only power over sin that is available comes from the throne of God and must be sought immediately and relied upon completely when being tempted. They understand that without Christ, they can do nothing. They have come to terms with being dependent on God to keep them from falling and are committed to allowing Him to do so.

IV. The tyranny of thoughts and feelings has been conquered with only minor skirmishes remaining.

A "healed" person has learned that thoughts and feelings lie to us on a continual basis - that they are usually unreliable sources of truth - and with only minor and infrequent exceptions, (that happen to everyone during times of stress and defeat), do not allow them to dictate reality anymore.

For example, one day as I spoke before a group of people, a lady abruptly stood up and marched out of the room. I thought to myself, "What did I say to offend that poor lady?" And since I was speaking on child sexual abuse, it occurred to me that I may have said something insensitive, causing her to remember her own abuse and want to run from the room. In fact, I thought, it is possible that what I said has sent her into a panic attack or self-loathing or something desperate and she has now gone to commit suicide. Not being able to recall what I said that was so insensitive, I remember thinking to myself, "David, you are so insensitive, you don't even know what you said and now she's going to kill herself. What are you doing presuming to teach people? You need to face reality and get out of the ministry and get a job that you are qualified to do where you won't be a danger to people!" I really let myself have it - all within 30 seconds of the lady's departure. Five minutes later, she returned to her seat. She had been to the bathroom.

What had happened? My thoughts and my feelings lied to me and I did not even think to challenge what they were saying. I unthinkingly assumed that what I was thinking and feeling was accurate and within 30 seconds had talked myself out of God's call on my life.

A healed person has come to grips with the autonomic tyranny of thoughts, feelings and emotions. They have learned how to assess and discern the true ones from the false. They have settled on God's Word as their only infallible source of truth and refused to allow thoughts and feelings to be their god anymore. When lying thoughts and emotions from the old life try to take control again, the healed person meets them head-on with the Word of God.

V. You wisely and habitually guard your heart and mind against whatever has power to resuscitate the old nature.

Immature and unhealed people play games with God. They try to keep one foot in the world and one foot in the kingdom. They engage in very cleverly devised games of self-deception, whereby they convince themselves that they must give in to one sin or another, or that considering their lot in life or their past brokenness, they deserve to be able to give in every once in a while. They convince themselves that a life of obedience and holiness is only for priests, nuns and saints, but not for the average guy. They convince themselves that considering how far they have come and how much they have given up, God understands and approves of their dalliances with sin. They "supermarket shop" for holiness -i.e., they retain the lordship of their life by telling God where He can make them holy and where He must leave them alone. As though they were shopping in a grocery store, they pick and choose what seems most attractive to them in the kingdom and reject what seems unattractive, thus keeping certain areas of their life "off-limits" to the Spirit of God.

Healed people have forsaken all such games, to the extent that God has brought them to their awareness.

The rest of life is an ongoing discovery of the darker and more cleverly hidden parts of our fallen nature. The healed person is set on facing those moments of truth and allows God to tell them what to do and what not to do. In the process of identifying those elements of the sinful life that are fuel to further sin, they take very seriously the need to eradicate such things from their life. Anything that may bring to life the desire for a sin is ruthlessly removed from their environment to the extent that it is up to them.

VI. Your love for Jesus, born out of an abiding intimacy with Him, is now your strongest inner resource for deciding to turn to God to be set free.

Love must become the single motivating factor for obedience. Any other motive is religion, is death. The person who is healed has developed a deep and abiding love relationship with Him - one that compels him to holy pursuits. When temptation comes, the central reason for turning away is that the thought of hurting the Lord they love is too grievous to consider. During moments of intimacy with them, God has succeeded in writing His Law on their heart. In other words, the desire to be obedient, to be holy has become their natural desire, replacing the previously natural desire to rebel.

Grace is what produces this fruit in our lives. Titus 2:11-14 tells us clearly that it is the grace of God that teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and to live upright and godly lives in this present age. In other words, it is in being forgiven again and again and again that we finally acquire the desire to be faithful to such a Lord as that. Therein lies the value in seeing how dark is our heart, how fallen is our nature. When God's grace continues in the face of that reality, our rebellious heart is conquered by such love and we become persuaded that He has nothing but good in mind for us. We go from obeying Him because we're suppose to, (not yet trusting Him fully), to obeying Him because we want to (trusting Him completely). And it is all the difference in the world to Him.

VII. The mind, heart and perspective of Christ consistently guides you.

Behavior associated with arrested emotional development has decreased considerably -e.g., magical thinking or fantasy thinking. Romance and reality have struck their happy balance. An understanding and appreciation of the complexity of life has blossomed. The self-centered, impulsive, impatient ego is regularly submitted to the Lordship of Christ.

An intimate connection with God has grown to such an extent that you think His thoughts after Him, know what He's going to say before He says it, experience His heart for others, see things through His eyes and with an eternal perspective rather than a temporal one.

VIII. Your experience in knowing satan's schemes enables you to resist him from an offensive posture rather than a defensive one.

God has taught you how satan operates as well as strategies to overturn his attacks. Your will has been engaged to such an extent that you now fight from an offensive posture rather than a defensive one. Knowing ahead of time what he is likely to do, you have already prepared battle plans for each contingency. There are few surprises and even those are met with an aggressive relish for the opportunity to take ground for the kingdom of God rather than defending besieged territory. You know well the weapons of warfare and value each opportunity to strike another blow against the enemy of not only your soul, but the souls of all those who are perishing. You see temptation as the opportunity to grow in righteousness that it is for a child of God and take advantage of such opportunities to grow deeper in your love and commitment to Christ.

IX. Your heterosexual identity is now the predominant one and the one you have irrevocably embraced. You use the occasional reappearance of the waning homosexual persona as a lever to send you back into greater dependence and refuge in God.

In the ongoing struggle between the old man and the new creation in Christ, you recognize old thoughts and temptations as a defeated foe trying to come back to life, while also recognizing that the only thing that's going to give him life are your own poor choices. You understand the lie behind the old persona. You understand the destruction that it wrought not only in your life and the lives of those around you, but also in the suffering of Christ, and you are dead set against ever allowing him to resurrect himself ever again.

You have taken great delight in the emergence of the once-dormant heterosexual identity, now blossoming from within. It is now the identity that you have recognized and embraced as your true self.. You marvel and praise God for each new facet that comes into view. You are irrevocably committed to feeding the new man and starving the old man to death. The alternative is never even considered anymore.

X. When you fall into temporarily embracing the fantasies of the old nature, your return is quick and with deep and true repentance.

In moments of discouragement, weakness or carelessness, if you realize that an old fantasy has been dwelling in your mind without being cast out, you use the opportunity of your imperfection to remember once again what Christ has done for you and return to Him with deep and true repentance. You use the opportunity of your failure to rejoice in the grace of God, to rejoice in your weakness and release anew God's mighty power to keep you pure. You keep short accounts -i.e., each failure, no matter how large or small, is quickly countered with true repentance. It is not allowed to continue and condemnation over the failing is not allowed to take hold. Instead, you run back into God's arms as quickly as possible with full assurance that He is waiting with open arms.

XI. Your focus continues to shift from self to serving others.

One major indication of growth and maturity is a shift from thinking of yourself first to thinking of others first; a shift from getting what's yours to giving what's yours; a change from selfishness to servanthood. In fact, one of the best things you can do during your healing process (and after) is to deliberately enter into selfless acts of service; to give things away to the point where you actually suffer from the loss; and to do so without public notice being taken when possible. Tithing is a helpful tool to get you started. Then add offerings to it. Give away most of the clothes in your closet, especially the items you really like. Sell your car and go out on a mission trip. Truly store up for yourself treasures in heaven, as the Bible suggests. Remember, though, that such acts must be Spirit-led to be of value. To do them only to receive the praise of men will not cause you to grow at all.

XII. There is a growing larder of "eternal fruit" in your life.

Following on from the previous point, a healed person has learned the difference between acts that produce eternal fruit and those that do not. They have learned to wait on the leading of the Holy Spirit. They have also learned that they must do so from a predetermined decision to do whatever God may say to them. They await His leading, His opening of doors and His empowering before moving ahead. On the other hand, they have also learned to catch themselves when selfishness or laziness has caused them to begin playing the old "I'll pretend I'm not hearing God when it's something I don't want to do" game.

In short, to a significant extent, what they do for God is done for His glory alone, not for theirs - at least, that is the sincere desire of their heart. They no longer serve Him in an attempt to earn His love or acceptance, or as a way to pay Him back for saving them. Their love for Him is such that they can't help themselves from serving His every wish. The focus of their life, both physical and spiritual, is no longer on them, but on Him, and as a result, eternal fruit is produced. Eternal fruit is produced when we operate from God's direction, with God's empowerment, in God's timing, and giving all the glory to Him.

XIII. Remnant behavior no longer misleads you into thinking something is wrong with you.

The healing process in some ways is really a reversal of the process that created the dysfunctional thoughts,

feelings and behavior. In the early stages of the development of homosexual neurosis, it is purely an emotional problem. There is a search for completion or damage control vis a vis one's gender identity. Unless the child's life has been prematurely sexualized through sexual abuse or exposure to pornography, the early stages are typified by feelings of needing to be near or accepted by certain same-gender people who symbolize or possess the completion that is lacking in the seeker. There is nothing sexual about it. Consequently, early behavior is more a turning of the head, a catching of the eye, a staring at certain people, a feeling of exhilaration when they brush by you or acknowledge you. Sometimes it's as weird as a need to be near something touched or used by the one being idolized - a piece of clothing, even sitting where they have just sat. Such moments bring a feeling of satisfaction as though in touching what they have touched, a part of their sufficiency has been transferred into you. This kind of behavior is often the first to appear and therefore is often the last to go. Many people are panicked at its reappearance after years of healing and fear it is a sign they haven't gotten anywhere. Actually, it is a sign they've traveled a great distance and as they move on, this too will pass, at least as a controlling force.

Another example of remnant behavior often seen in homosexual neurosis is the "flashback" - which can occur when an old "trigger" appears during a moment of weakness. Those who have struggled with narcissistic personality disorder, for example, can have a momentary "flashback" to that state of being fixed on self. I recently witnessed an "ex-gay" lecturing who was getting such applause and laughter from his lecture, that he lost the focus of his message and began droning on and on about himself, rather than keeping the focus of his talk on Christ. The applause had triggered a brief flashback to this prior component of his former homosexual neurosis, from which he has actually recovered. It was a brief flashback. He is now again focused on his true self in Christ.

**XIV. A healed person has learned one thing so thoroughly that they operate in it without thinking:
"Knowing why helps, but knowing Him heals."**

There is a certain fixed knowledge, and appropriate consistent practice in maintaining an intimate relationship with God. They know and practice His presence (intermittent wilderness periods and "dark nights of the soul" notwithstanding) and are completely dependent and reliant on Him for life and for godliness. (2 Pet 1:3-4) These then are the signposts, the earmarks to take note of as one moves toward that healing point known as "Christ formed in us".

from "Mastering Life" Newsletter # 29, Copyright © 2000 Used with permission from David Kyle Foster