

Spring 2007

Transformed Into His Likeness

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Join the OneByOne Network of Churches

If your church already supports OBO financially, thank you! However, we still want supporting churches to join our network so that we may be able to help you in ministry. The following churches are OBO Network Churches:

First Presbyterian Church
Milford, PA
First Presbyterian church,
Orlando, FL
Hispanic Church
Farmingdale, NY
Presbyterian Church
Shippensburg, PA
Suffern Presbyterian Church
Suffern, NY
Trinity Chapel, Sarasota, FL

Information and application forms available on-line at
www.oneby1.org!



When I was little, I loved the springtime. I loved the grass between my toes and the fragrance after the spring rain. And I loved caterpillars. One spring, my sister and brother and I put a caterpillar in a jar. We named him and fed him leaves. We discovered that our cute little caterpillar was a voracious eater with an insatiable appetite. What we didn't know, however, was that these little caterpillars don't just eat leaves; they eat poisonous leaves - continually. Did you know that they actually absorb poisonous toxins into their bodies and then pass these toxins onto their predators? I never knew that as a kid.

After a while, our little pet would begin to change. We knew something was about to happen when he would hang upside down with its head bowed. We would watch him gradually cover himself with a chrysalis. It was as if he had died and wrapped himself up like a mummy. It was kind of sad to see our cute poison-eating friend disappear. We really liked him.

For the next few weeks, it seemed like nothing was happening. But, that is not really true! According to biologists, the caterpillar's entire body is being reorganized in its little cocoon. Gradually, we began to see through the dry skin of the chrysalis, which would become more and more transparent as it transformed. Day by day we would begin to see the color of a monarch's wings.

If we were lucky, we would see him emerge from the cocoon slowly but steadily...into free-

dom. We would be impatient as we watched him struggling, but eventually he came out. We expected the butterfly to immediately fly off into the air, but the butterfly stayed still, wet and weak and limp. The new butterfly actually has to pump liquid into its wing veins to inflate them. They soon dry, but during this process, the butterfly is extremely vulnerable to predators.

When the wings are dry, you can finally see its beautiful colors, and the Monarch butterfly flies free. Interestingly, its diet no longer consists of eating poison, but of sipping nectar from flowers. Amazing, isn't it?

My mother told me that the process of transformation for a butterfly is like having new life in Christ. As a child I thought that was interesting, but as an adult who has gone through her own metamorphosis, I can personally relate to this amazing process in creation.

I am not just talking about my same-sex struggle and finding freedom from that, though I have found freedom in that area of my life. What I'm talking about when I talk about New Life in Christ is a total transformation of my mind, my spirit, and my body (including my sexuality) as to who I am created to be.

Paul, one of the greatest Christian disciples, went through his own metamorphosis. Paul, who was born Saul of Tarsus, was a devout Jewish Pharisee who went from



hunting down Christians in the Early Church and putting them to death to becoming one of the greatest spokesmen for Jesus Christ. What a mind-boggling transformation.

Interesting, no one won an argument with Saul, no one convinced him to stop persecuting Christians, no one changed his very astute and learned mind...except Jesus. Saul, renamed Paul, therefore, knew what he was talking about when he wrote: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor. 5:17)

Some of you may not feel like new creations. In fact, you may feel more like a worm eating poison, or a lifeless pupa, or a butterfly wet and limp and exposed to many predators.

But you will fly if you believe that you can. I'm not talking about "Tinkerbell" or The Little Train That Could. The Christian faith is more than clapping our hands together and believing in ourselves; it is putting our hand in the Hand of the one who made us, the one who loves us, and the one who died for us. No other love can make us fly like his love.

Jesus said to us: "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to

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there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Mt. 17:20)

Do I believe this? Yes, I really believe this. I believe this because it is true – not just for me but for countless others. I spent many years of my life in darkness, depression, hopelessness, desperation – seeking love in the arms of men and women who had nothing to offer me but their own poison. All I gave them was my own toxin as well. What I thought was love may have been a form of love, but it was a love that was grasping and needy and envious; it was not a love that was based on sacrifice and a life-long commitment founded on a sacred covenant. I remember that the love was exciting, but always tenuous. It was intoxicating, but never satisfying. It brought happiness, but never lasting contentment.

Our contemporary secular notion of love (homosexual love or heterosexual love) is really nothing but idolatry. When we put all our hopes for our security and identity and love in another person we have made that person an idol. It is no wonder then that we freak out when the person we worship fails us. Our idols always turn out to be frauds, or rather, they turn out to be mere humans with fears and insecurities and embarrassing quirks just like our own. Only God through Jesus Christ can be our sole source of security and love and identity. Only he is worthy of our worship. When we have found true love in a relationship with him, all other human relationships begin to work. I have experienced this in my own life.

One of our greatest legitimate needs is to be embraced in another's arms, to be loved for who we are, to be accepted and to be comforted. God knows this. "Jesus said, 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light'" (Matthew 11:28).

A yoke is something that is put on

an animal, not to weigh it down but to help the animal pull a heavy load. Without the yoke, it would be impossible to pull the weight.

There may be some of you reading this who for the first time are finding love and acceptance and identity in the gay life – maybe at school or in a relationship with someone of the same sex. You may be thinking, I am not giving up what I have finally found! I will be loved. I will be, so help me, and you are not going to stop me with your caterpillar and butterfly analogies!"

Let me assure you of this: when you give your life to Christ and obey his word, this verse from Scripture will come true for you: "For since the world began, no ear has heard, and no eye has seen a God like you, who works for those who wait for him!" (Isaiah 64:4)

I stand here as a witness. I am utterly and completely loved by God who is forgiving and compassionate and fair and just. I know exactly who I am. I am a daughter of the living God: "Yaweh", "Jehovah", "The Great I AM". As I trust him, he provides. Unlike us, God is true to his word.

Even though I know that God loves me, life can still be very difficult and unpredictable, and I still remain very human. I still make mistakes. I am still impatient. I embarrass myself. I say the wrong thing. I can be rude, selfish, and tempted to sin. But when I notice myself doing these things and reacting this way, I catch myself and ask God for forgiveness and a new start. He always gives it.

As for my former same-sex struggle, it is just that - former. I do not struggle with same-sex attraction to women as I used to. And I am learning to respond to men in healthy ways and to be attracted to men who are good for me and who love the Lord and want to serve him. This has not been a three-week process to say the least.

Anyone who commits to being transformed into the likeness of Christ is in for a life-long journey. It is not an easy road. It can be a scary road. People (other Christians, in fact) can

mess with our heads and hearts, but God is good. His road is good. His road is an adventure.

Paul spent years in the desert after his sudden conversion on the road to Damascus before he went on his missionary journeys. Have you read the book of Acts? What a life this man led! He was beaten and shipwrecked and hungry and facing death, and yet he was filled for love for his fellow-believers. He loved Christ with all his being, and Christ loved him. I would have loved to have been with Paul on his journeys!

And Paul continued to struggle with sin and his own humanity, too. Read Romans. His words are amazing. Paul was tempted to sin as I am – as we all are. Could I fall into sexual temptation again? Of course! Everyone is capable of this. We are sexual beings and we live in a very sexualized world. However, our feelings do not have to rule us or determine our identity as human beings. As we control our desires, God is then free to transform them so that we may have an abundant life. In John 10:10 Jesus says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

I think of the wings of that weak butterfly. How the butterfly will take liquids from its body and slowly send this liquid down through the veins of the wings so it can fly. Likewise, the Holy Spirit has to inflate us so we can fly. We have to ask him to fill us – to inflate our wings.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 states: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, **are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory**, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." However, there is a catch.

Jesus said, "If you love me, obey my commandments" (John 14:15 - 18). If we love Christ, then we will obey him. We will trust him. We either believe that he has the best for us or we don't. We must decide to follow Christ and his commandments and believe that he

can transform our life (and the life of our loved one) or we decide that he will not or cannot. Either way, the choice is ours.

The verses I am about to share were selected by a woman who has been involved in lesbianism for 30 years. For the first time in her life she has repented and sought help to overcome her same-sex attraction and other life-debilitating issues. She wrote me a sweet letter with pictures of colorful hot-air balloons floating in the sky, and she included this verse:

“Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses [and they are cheering us on!] let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily

entangles us. Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes upon Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:1).

Amen!

Kristin Johnson from her opening address at the OneByOne Conference, February 2007.

We need YOUR help!

Most of our contributions come from caring individuals. In addition, we rely on churches to come alongside OBO and support us financially.

Please ask your session, mission or evangelism committee to support OBO in 2007!

One By One Conference 2007

Listen to what attendees had to say ...

“I was so impacted by how God used Christians to show love. I was amazed to hear over and over that it wasn’t a crusade to change everyone to become heterosexuals, but rather to let them see the love of Christ.”

“My wife and I have come away with so much from this weekend.... we were able to discuss the subject matter [with our daughter] more openly than before. It is good to know that there are people and resources to turn to when needed.”



“We were really moved by the conference last weekend. It was an uplifting and eye opening experience. I have felt God’s love overflowing ever since and want to share it with others. Thank you for all the work you put into this great weekend.”

“From the start of worship through Melissa sharing, all I could do was cry. I think I really felt Jesus’ love for the first time... I have never felt like I was accepted (in church), but rather more like endured...this conference was much different. And I know it wasn’t a human, it really was Him pouring it on me. And I think I started to receive it. How amazing.” – from a woman who has struggled with same-sex attraction.



Speaking at College Campuses

Recently, I shared my testimony at Philadelphia Biblical University in their chapel service to over 400 college students. It was a gift from God to be able to educate young men and women on the issue of homosexuality and to give hope to those who are struggling with same-sex attraction. (If you are aware of Christian colleges in your area that would benefit from having someone from OBO speak, please contact Kristin Johnson at kjohnson@fpc.org or Jeff Winter (chairman of OBO) at jwinter777@aol.com)

On the Road and In the Air Travel with the Executive Director

ON-LINE RESOURCES

www.oneby1.org

*Please share your stories
of how God is using you
and your church to
minister God's truth and
grace.*

*You may email them to
kjohnson@fpc.org or
mail them to Post Office
Box 648, Pittsford, New
York 14534*

I travel monthly, and I am blessed to see God move in many ways. Mostly, I see God move in local churches in the lives of pastors and church members who hear the message of transformation. However, I also meet others on my way to and from these churches. Here are a couple of human interest stories for the month of March.

“Are You a Teacher or Something?”

While flying recently, I was preparing for my upcoming presentation. The girl next to me was looking at my power-point presentation and finally asked me: “Are you a teacher or something?” I told her about the ministry of OBO. She was surprised, offended, and curiously interested. The next week I got a call. The girl on the phone said, “You don’t know me, but my friend met you on a plane... can I meet with you sometime?” She came to church and we had a wonderful conversation and prayer time!

“Jesus Loves You”

On the way back from speaking at a church, I could not find my wallet at the airline check-in. Consequently, I had to stand in a special line at the airport in order to get on the plane. I stood right in front of a man who looked very sad. I asked him, “Are you okay?” He said that he was on his way to Orlando to meet his “ex”. (I knew his “ex” was a man.) He was sad because he failed his flight attendant test and was not going to be a flight attendant. He was devastated. When we arrived in Orlando, he walked with me (hand in hand) to the baggage claim where he sat down and cried in my arms. As he cried, I prayed for him. Each time I said, “Jesus loves you” he sobbed. I gave this man my card, met his “ex”, and hugged them both goodbye. I continue to pray for them. *(By the way, my wallet was recovered!)*

*- Kristin Johnson
Executive Director*