



Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Romans 5:5

June 2007

Shifting Perspectives

by Brad Creager, Board Chairman

Brad Creager has served on the Board of Mid-Valley Fellowship as Chairman since October of 2006. This month, we asked Brad to share his background, as well as his exposure to homosexuality and ministries like Mid-Valley Fellowship.



Background

I was born in Ontario, Oregon and lived there until age four. My biological father was very degrading and emotionally abusive to my mother and I, so we relocated to get out of that environment. The absence of a healthy father figure fostered a lot of anger and hatred toward men, especially men in authority. I was pretty independent and had a hard time trusting anyone. My mother eventually remarried to a man who adopted me. He was a good man, but I focused my anger and hatred on him and wasn't willing to let him be my father. I had been hurt and didn't want to be hurt again.

In school I became good friends with a guy named Erik. He and his family attended church and would invite me to youth group and over to their house. As I spent time with Erik and his family, I started noticing his dad was different than other men I had known. He didn't seem to fit the stereotype I had of men and fathers in particular. As I saw healthy fatherhood modeled, I became open to hearing about a perfect Heavenly Father who wanted to be in relationship with me. As a junior in high school, I gave my life to the Lord and began the most significant relationship of my life.

After high school, I headed off to college at Oregon State University (Go Beavs!) to study engineering. I became part of a community of guys at Varsity House, a Christian co-op on campus. As I watched these men model Godly masculinity, my perspectives about men continued to change.

A month before my twenty-first birthday, I received a card from my biological father. It was the first time there was any contact between us since I was four. He wanted to meet and talk to me. All the anger and hurt from the past that I thought was gone, came rushing to the surface. I shared all this with the guys in my community and sought prayer and direction.

God had been breaking down a lie in my life for a few years. I felt as if I had done something to deserve the abuse that had occurred. The reality was, no one deserves abuse of any kind. With the arrival of the birthday card, a new realization was occurring: I needed to forgive my biological father. That forgiveness was not primarily for him but for me. By forgiving, I was releasing all that anger and hurt that was preventing me from being the man God designed me to be. It would set me free.

I went to visit my biological father, even though I had a lot of fear and trepidation. The conversation was difficult for both of us, but in the end, this incredible sense of peace and freedom came over me. I could finally move on. My father had told me he was terminally ill, which resulted in his death about a year later. I'm glad I had the opportunity to talk with and forgive him before his death.

I graduated from college and began a new season of life, both vocationally and relationally. I met a woman named Erin when I was in college. After knowing her for four years, I proposed, and we were married the following June.

As I entered marriage and then fatherhood, the experiences of the past, good and bad, served to shape the man I have become. I deeply love and value my wife and three children and never want that reality to be in question in their minds. Seeing fatherhood and masculinity modeled by Erik's father and forgiving my own father enabled me to be open to a restored relationship with my step-father. It has taken time, but I am grateful for the journey God has had me on.

Exposure to Homosexuality

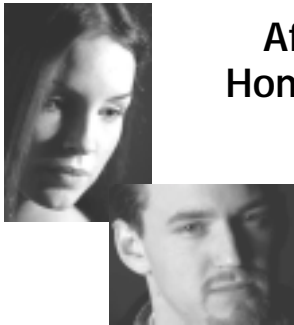
Just as my life has been a challenging journey, so also has been my experience with homosexuality. The first time I was exposed to homosexuality was when I met with my biological father. I discovered he had embraced the homosexual lifestyle sometime after my mother and I left. To be honest, the whole idea grossed me out. I didn't want to have anything to do with it and wanted to reject anyone in the lifestyle. I felt we all had to make choices in life and that people in the lifestyle weren't making good choices, like I was. I saw myself as better and fell into "hating the sin" and "hating the sinner."

Later in college, I became casual friends with a guy at work. We connected, and I valued him as a person. Then I found out he was gay. "I can't be friends with him if he's gay," I told myself. A conflict was created. I had started to see him as an individual, aside from his sexual identity. I had started to care about him. I shared about this with some guys in my accountability group and my pastor. They challenged me to stretch my perception – to not focus exclusively on his sin, but see who he was as a human being. That was a difficult but important growth step.

Years later, I learned that my uncle was in the lifestyle and had been for many years. We had a good relationship, so this new revelation devastated me. It built on that previous internal conflict and tension. He was someone I loved and had an ongoing relationship with. Where I may have easily rejected my co-worker, this was a more invested relationship. How do I love and care for someone, even though their lifestyle choice makes me uncomfortable? I had to continue stretching my perspective and start seeing people as God sees them. Every person has intrinsic value simply because they are created by God, no matter what their issue.

A few years ago, my family and I began attending a new church. We met a guy named Duan who was a part of that church community. He and I started getting to know each other a bit and shared lunch a few times. One day over lunch, Duan began sharing more of his life with me. He had been receiving support from a ministry assisting those struggling with homosexuality. His disclosure was unexpected, but what really surprised me was my reaction. It was the first time I had talked to someone struggling with homosexuality that I hadn't immediately felt a sense of revulsion. God had been slowly doing a work in my heart over the years. Now, rather than being motivated to reject, I am motivated to pray.

Duan asked me recently why I had said "yes" to serving on the Board of Mid-Valley Fellowship. The only answer I could really give was, "Because you asked, and I wanted to be supportive." As I thought and prayed about the decision, that was what God wanted me to do. As I learn more about the ministry and see the work God is doing, it is exciting. Mid-Valley Fellowship exists to help people address issues and point them toward Christ. In my life, I have been blessed to have people walk alongside me in similar ways, even though my issues have been a bit different. I challenge you to consider partnering with us in this work, in whatever ways you can, so that others can be supported as well.




Affected by Homosexuality?

Struggling with unwanted desires?

Have a loved one struggling?

Seeking more information?

Open Group
Wednesday, June 20, 2007 @ 7:00pm
LifeSpring FourSquare Church
1495 NW 20th Street, Corvallis



Taking Back Ground Starts in October

This two-year discipleship program is designed for men and women seeking to heal from sexual and relational brokenness. The series focus on Understanding Homosexuality, Knowing God in the Struggle, and Walking Out the Process. Applications are now being accepted. Please call or e-mail for more information.



Pray With Us

Lord, there is no way for us to live out the kind of love You ask of us without Your help. You've drawn us to You with Your perfect love, and we so imperfectly give it back. Help us today to love You and love others better, especially those we feel don't deserve it.

Upcoming Events

June 3 - Lebanon Free Methodist Church
Duan will be speaking at the morning service, 10:15am, 580 "F" Street, Lebanon

June 10, 17, 24 - Oakville Presbyterian
Duan & Kendra will be presenting the 3-part series, Homosexuality 101, 8:45am, 29970 Church Drive, Shedd

June 20 - Open Group
A time for family, friends, strugglers, and others to find out more about MVF.

Please See Our Website for More Details



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