

# exodus international

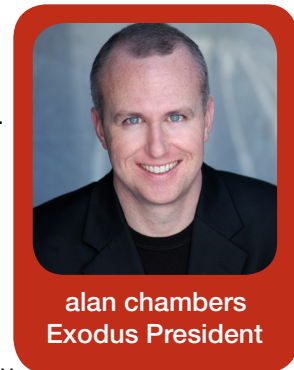
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 PO Box 540119 | Orlando, FL 32854 | 888.264.0877



## MOBILIZING THE BODY OF CHRIST TO MINISTER GRACE AND TRUTH TO A WORLD IMPACTED BY HOMOSEXUALITY

Dear Friends,

In the last few years Exodus has seen many Christians and churches soften their truth-only response to the issue of homosexuality and instead have embraced Christ's example of communicating with absolute truth AND grace. What God is He is fully. He isn't 50/50 on anything. He was, is and forever will be complete in everything that He is. Completely good. Completely just. Completely truth. Completely grace. For a large segment of Christ's Bride to become more like Him is a wonderful thing.



Unfortunately we are now seeing a pendulum shift in which some Christians have moved beyond the truth-only stance to embrace a grace-only view. This shift is affecting how homosexuality is being viewed and is just as damaging as a truth-only response.

First, there are many Christians who now believe that chastity is the only answer for those with same-sex attractions. They believe that people are either gay or straight and that their identities, in that regard, are fixed. If someone is gay then the only option, according to these Christians, is celibacy. Everything else that comes with gay life, however, is acceptable. So, as long as someone remains sex-free they are able to hang out in gay bars and identify fully as gay.

Here is the problem with that line of thinking. We are so behavior-driven as Christians that we believe as long as we keep our pants zipped and legs crossed that we are doing well. **Sexual sin is not the beginning of a problem; it is the result of one.** While some do fall into sexual sin because of a momentary temptation, the majority of individuals stay in sexual sin because it seems to satisfy a deep core, God-given need for intimacy and relationship. However, **sex was never meant to be a substitute for relational intimacy with God, others, or even our spouse.** Sex is a beautiful, natural and godly expression that flows out of healthy intimacy, within the confines of heterosexual marriage. As our creator, God defines the parameters for sexual expression and intimacy.

Celibacy is the godly option for all single men and women. In fact, the Bible mentions that those who are unmarried are able to be more focused and single-minded in their love and devotion to God. Personally, I have heard some of the most amazing stories of God's faithfulness from single friends who have chosen to surrender their sexuality to Him.

Today many Christians with SSA are choosing celibacy, but they are also choosing to keep the gay identity/label. This falls short of God's best because **identity matters.** How we view and refer to ourselves is very important. Twenty years ago when I began my journey to holiness I could have simply chosen to work on my sexual urges and opted out of working on my identity struggles and the deeper issues that fueled my desire for sex. I could have chosen to call myself a celibate gay man and just left it at that. Where would that have taken me? Not very far. **When it comes to the extreme changes that have occurred in my heart, mind and life it was the identity changes that fueled the transformation.** I chose, in those early days, to focus most on figuring out who I was in Christ and that ultimately led to a change in how I behaved. **Simply discontinuing or curbing how I expressed my same-sex attractions wasn't enough or most important.**

A second outcome of the grace-only approach is that it gives license to sin. This is taking over many churches and denominations. Allowing clergy to be ordained while living in sin, heterosexually or homosexually, makes the Church irrelevant. **The basis of a Christian life is that it is set apart.** It is different from the world. Redeemed. Living in sin is the opposite of living redeemed. Anyone can be redeemed, but the result of redemption is a turning from what we once were through the power of repentance. In order to accommodate sin one has to ignore biblical truth or revise it to fit their life choices. Church is no longer church then, just a club for people to gather based on their common interests. **In my opinion the problem with being a gay Christian is that gay comes first and takes center stage. God won't share His throne with anyone or anything.**

A final concern of a grace-only approach is when one believes the truth of scripture but decides to say nothing for fear of losing people or being labeled homophobic. Entire churches and groups are "distancing" themselves from Exodus and any concrete position on sexual sin for fear that they will be targeted. I understand; it hurts to be misunderstood, judged and threatened. It's tough to stand for something when our culture is all about standing for nothing. But, **when you are a part of the Church you are called to stand for Christ and that usually means not everyone will like you.**

We are living in trying times. Our understanding of who God is and who He created us to be, especially in light of the fallenness of humanity, is vital. Search the scriptures and you will find that God has a plan for us that was born out of the fullness of who He is and who He intends for us to be for eternity. I love that.

All for the Kingdom,

*Alan Chambers*

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ExodusInternational.org | ExodusStudents.org | ExodusBooks.org | ExodusFreedom.org

## event highlights

**Exodus Equipping Event**  
 Wednesday, March 23, 2011  
 Hope Church | Mason, OH (Cincinnati)  
 Contact Info: 888-264-0877  
 conference@exodusinternational.org

**Cross Power Ministries Marriages & Mentors Conference**  
 Thursday, March 31, 2011  
 Stonegate Fellowship | Midland, TX  
 Contact Info: 432-694-5100  
 www.crosspowerministries.com

**Love Won Out**  
 Saturday, April 30, 2011  
 Hope Church | Mason, OH (Cincinnati)  
 Contact Info: 888-264-0877  
 lovewonout@exodusinternational.org

**36th Annual International Freedom Conference**  
 Wednesday, June 8 - 11, 2011  
 Ridgecrest Conference Center  
 Asheville, NC  
 Contact Info: 888-264-0877  
 conference@exodusinternational.org

Exodus is a member in good standing with the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), a Christian financial monitoring organization.



**Register Now!**  
 Early-Bird Registration ends March 31

**YES!** I want to help Exodus continue offering hope and healing to those seeking freedom from homosexuality.

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# real stories by drew berryessa

Like many who struggle with same-sex attraction, the early years of my life were filled with pain and confusion. When I was 8 years old my parents divorced. This single event was the turning point. For the next twelve years my life would be marked by rejection, estrangement, isolation, abuse, insecurity, and fear. Although I had accepted Christ as a child and had been raised in the Church, I was unprepared for the questions and accusations against the character of God that flooded my mind after the fracturing of my family. I believed in God, but he seemed to ignore my prayers. At age 12, when my struggle with same-sex attraction began to emerge, God felt like my earthly dad who had left me and seemingly never looked back. For the next 8 years I lived in the tension of wanting to please God and remain obedient to Him, yet also wanting to indulge my attractions. I used anything that I could get my hands on to appease my desires, including fantasy, pornography, and eventually a gay relationship.



Proverbs 27:7 says, "A person who is full refuses honey, but even bitter food tastes sweet to the hungry." **What I did not realize for the first half of my life was that my struggle with same-sex attraction was born out of legitimate hunger for love, affirmation, identity, and security.** When I first began addressing my same-sex attractions honestly and intentionally, I could not have identified what my true hunger was. I remember my first few weeks in the discipleship program at Portland Fellowship, the Exodus member ministry where God transformed my life. I walked in thinking my only problem was my attractions, and within weeks God began to reveal all the areas of my life that were wounded and starving. When I look back at my life now, I can see the ways that God was trying to give me good things to satisfy my hunger, but because of the accusations that I had in my heart against Him, I could not receive them.

It was during a teaching at Portland Fellowship titled, "The Marred Image of the Father" that God confronted a belief I held that He had ignored me and abandoned me when I was a child, and therefore, I could not trust Him. I felt the Holy Spirit gently showing me that if I wanted the Lord to lead me into healing and transformation, I had to learn to trust Him. I was reminded of Mark 8:34-36 where Christ states that if anyone wants to be His follower, he must pick up his cross daily and follow Him...and that those who try to hold onto their lives would lose, but whoever would lose their lives for Christ's sake would truly live. Accepting this call to trust God with my life and to lose my life for His sake became one of the most significant turning points in my journey. From that moment on I purposed to trust God unreservedly, believing that even though I would lose my life, the life I would gain would be well worth the struggle and risk.

I can truly say that the life the Lord has given me in exchange for my trust and surrender has been worth it. Twelve years ago I could not have imagined the life that God had in exchange for the life I was holding on to. This year marks two anniversaries for me - 7 years of marriage, and 7 years of full-time ministry. God has not only given me a wonderful wife, and two amazing daughters, but has also allowed me to spend my life giving back the same hope that I have received - directing Portland Fellowship's live-in program **The Upper Room**. I am so grateful that the Lord invited me to trust Him.

For more information about **The Upper Room**, visit the Portland Fellowship website at [www.portlandfellowship.com/upper\\_room](http://www.portlandfellowship.com/upper_room)

## giving opportunity - conference scholarships

the reality of  
grace

We are less than 3 months away from our 36th Annual International Freedom Conference held this year at the Ridgecrest Conference Center, just outside of Asheville, NC. This is always a highlight for our staff and Exodus leaders as God gives us an extended period of time to minister, equip and encourage individuals and families impacted by homosexuality.

Our staff is very busy planning a quality conference, while stretching every dime to get the most out of the resources we spend to keep costs manageable for our attendees. In addition to those efforts, every year we award partial scholarships to people who would be unable to attend without some financial assistance - many of them 1st time attendees. We are so grateful to report that last year we raised \$18,000 for the scholarship fund and divided it among 180 people!

Would you consider giving to our scholarship fund this year? Individuals are already submitting applications for financial assistance and we certainly want to help as many individuals as possible. To give, either return the attached giving card and write the word, "**scholarship**" beside your gift amount or give online at [exodusinternational.org](http://exodusinternational.org). Under the Give Now section, you can select **conference scholarships** from the options in the designation field.

Thanks for your generous partnership. You are helping us to extend the redemptive message of God's grace and truth to those who desperately need to hear it. We really do appreciate your gifts and your prayers!

# real answers by angela buchanan

## Does an ongoing presence of temptation indicate a lack of maturity?

(Question asked at recent Love Won Out event in Phoenix, AZ)

This question was obviously written in relation to those struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions, but the answer can be applied to any form of temptation.

The presence of temptation does not mean you are immature. Temptation is a part of every believer's life. Jesus himself faced temptation in the wilderness and in the Garden of Gethsemane. In fact Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus was tempted in all ways like us, but was without sin. So clearly, temptation is NOT sin. How we choose to respond to temptation is the key.

However, maturity does bring wisdom in knowing how to handle temptation more effectively, when it does come. The essence of all temptation is seeking an alternative way to have our needs met, outside of God's will and purposes. Obviously, we are tempted when something or someone promises to meet a present need of ours. That is why it is tempting or enticing. Temptation typically begins to lose its grasp when the core need driving the desire is met in a healthy and legitimate way, thus making the sinful behavior less appealing.

As we continue on our journey, it is important to:

- Know what the core need is that is making the situation tempting. (example: connection, approval, comfort etc...) and determine how you might meet that need in a biblical way.
- Know when you are most vulnerable (lonely, tired, stressed etc...)

- Know what your game plan is when fighting temptation
- Be watchful and vigilant in "guarding your heart." (Matthew 26:41, Proverbs 4:23)
- Recognize the "way of escape" when God provides it and respond quickly. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

No matter how mature you get in this life, you will deal with some level or form of temptation. In fact, those who get over-confident can set themselves up for failure. (1 Corinthians 10:12) However, God does not want us to "white-knuckle" it through life. He desires to meet us at the point of our need and satisfy our hearts with what is pure, beautiful and good. When we rely on Him and His grace, we can overcome temptation.

## featured resource



Love Won Out is a dynamic one-day conference provided by Exodus International. Internationally known Christian experts address everything from why some people struggle with same-sex attractions to the significant role the Gospel and the Church can have in responding to a world impacted by homosexuality. General Sessions, Breakout sessions (including a Q & A session) and inspiring testimonies are included. A great option for those who cannot attend our four-day International Freedom Conference. Remaining 2011 LWO conferences will be held in Cincinnati and Houston. For more information, visit [lovetwonout.com](http://lovetwonout.com)

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Dear Exodus, Please pray for:

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