

**REACHING OUT WITH HOPE**  
**A HISTORY OF OUTPOST'S MINISTRY TO HOMOSEXUALS**

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### A HISTORY OF OUTPOST'S MINISTRY TO HOMOSEXUALS

Robbi Kenney was a young, hurting woman. She thought that she had the world on a string. Robbi was working in a Christian bookstore in the Twin Cities. Things were going well. She was in love with a man who she dreamed of as her husband. Robbi was strong and determined. She overlooked one aspect of her "future husband" that would have turned many women away. Robbi did not care that her developing relationship was with a gay man. The homosexuality of her friend didn't really matter to Robbi, because she blocked it out and would not deal with his homosexuality realistically. After all she was a Christian. So was her friend. God would work things out for the two of them. Wouldn't he?

One day Robbi was faced with a dose of cold, hard reality. All of her dreams suddenly vanished, as if she had just awoken from a long sleep. Her friend decided that their relationship would not work. He could not have a relationship with her because of his homosexuality. Robbi was devastated, angry, and hurt. She had put energy and time into this relationship in hopes that it would end in a Christ-center marriage. Now it was nothing. Robbi was hurting. She was an emotional wreck as she tried to sort through her feelings of rejection and self-pity. She needed help to bring her life together again.

Robbi looked for information on homosexuality, not really to understand this sexual orientation but more honestly to see if anyone was going through the same hurt as she. She could find little information on homosexuality written from a Christian perspective. Only a couple of books, but this

was the start for her. Robbi contacted the authors whom she had run across in the bookstore where she worked.

Corresponding with these two individuals brought stability and comfort back into her Christian life. Robbi decided to go to on an evangelism effort over seas. She truly felt that God wanted her to reach out to others with the comfort of the Gospel. Robbi made reservations for a flight to Ireland. Just a few days before she would leave, one of the authors contacted her. It was a phone call that changed her life.

Robbi was asked to go to a conference where people were forming an alliance to start a network of ministries to homosexuals. Robbi was not excited about the offer at all. She was sick of homosexuality. It was a part of her past that was still healing and she did not want to gather with a group of former homosexual men. She politely said that she would think on the offer, but she hung up the phone and didn't really give the idea much thought.

Robbi packed and got ready to go overseas. However to her own surprise instead of getting on a plane to Ireland, she found herself canceling her reservation and purchasing a ticket for Detroit. Robbi was on her way to a meeting with a group of former homosexual men starting a ministry of healing for other homosexuals. She met people and listened to lectures and left. Not really comprehending all of the conference and its influence on her life. Robbi returned to the Twin Cities to prepare once again to go overseas to evangelize Ireland.

When Robbi returned to the Twin Cities though her plans were changed. One of her friends asked Robbi to meet Dan Morstadt who was operating a crisis phone counseling center called Love Lines. Dan was interested in hiring Robbi to phone counsel with homosexuals who called in for help. Robbi was not excited, but agreed to a meeting. She was fired from her job

at the bookstore the same day she met with Dan. Feeling inadequate as a counselor but knowing she had more information concerning the problem than most people, she accepted the offer in the spring of 1977 to begin counseling with homosexuals looking for help and healing. Robbi's ministry to homosexual freedom had begun.

It was a slow start at first. On telephone. A message of encouragement based on 1 Corinthians 6:11. A person who would listen and not scream and run out of the room. It was simple to say the least but the phone calls became more frequent. Another phone was added to deal with the influx of calls. This phone was manned by Ed Hurst, who became Robbi's assistant and cofounder of their ministry. Ed joined Robbi in the spring of 1978 after months of contact. Robbi was gathering testimonies of people who had found freedom from homosexuality. Ed had written his testimony for Robbi to use to reach out with hope to people struggling with homosexuality.

The two of them were given an "office" in the back room of the Love Lines building. Money began coming in for the help that was offered by Robbi and Ed. It was encouraging for them and also for Dan Morstadt. Dan encouraged Robbi and Ed to begin writing tracts and materials to give people wanting answers. The money coming in paid for the printing of the materials and helped get the word out that there was a group in the Twin Cities offering hope and healing for the person struggling with homosexuality.

In the fall of 1978 Robbi and Ed met a young man named Jeff Ford. Jeff had moved to the Twin Cities to attend Bethel College but also to find some help for his problem. His problem was that he was plagued with homosexual temptations and desires. When he arrived in the Twin Cities he began school and also shock therapy to "cure" him. It was at this time that

he came into contact with Robbi and Ed. Jeff was looking for help and also for a place to do his internship for his psychology major. It was agreed that Jeff would intern with Robbi and Ed.

Jeff brought fresh ideas to the small group. He knew that they needed an identity for themselves and their own office building if they were to establish an effective ministry which was credible. He was instrumental in getting Robbi to decide to move out of the Love Lines off building into a separate office just for them. They spent long hours deciding on a name. After many failures they decided on Outpost. The move was completed despite many warnings and a weak financial base.

Robbi's main concern as director of Outpost was to establish a "name and a face" with their work. She worked hard and long at making the newsletters look professional and filling them with Biblical teachings on freedom and healing. Robbi had a drive for their ministry to not only be a local ministry but one that had an impact nationally and internationally. She accomplished a national status with getting the first group of former homosexuals on the Phil Donahue Show. International status came by chance. A friend of hers was traveling to Norway and Robbi had a brainstorm. She had some of their teachings on healing translated in Norwegian for her friend to take to Norway and distribute them there. She was not sure if the plan was worth while but she gave it a shot. When a few letters began coming in with return addresses from Norway, she realized that her efforts were reaching far more people than she could have imagined. Outpost began a correspondence counseling program along with their in-office-counseling.

These first years of the ministry were rough financially and emotionally. There was the obstacle of setting up a foundation for the theology of their ministry. The staff agonized over words and phrases and the impact

that each word would have on people. There were those in support of the ministry but they were mainly people who had been involved in their counseling. There were also many who opposed their ministry with strong and vocal rebukes. Many of the church leaders claimed that there was not freedom from homosexuality. Robbi and Ed were battling people on every side. There were Christians being told by other Christians that their ministry was not needed or even a hoax. They were former homosexuals being shunned and abused by the homosexual sub-culture as loveless puritans.

Even though the first years were rough, Robbi pulled the small group of staff and volunteers together. They had a message of hope to deliver and they needed to support each other in this endeavor. And they did.

In 1981 Robbi resigned as director of Outpost and Jeff Ford, having finished his degree in counseling at Bethel College, became the acting director. He was instrumental in keeping the quality work of Robbi going on. But he brought many new ideas and help to the ministry. It was Jeff who brought a true national awareness to Outpost. He did this in three major areas.

Jeff brought his psychology background to the ministry and stressed that idea that psychology is needed in helping people overcome their homosexuality. Homosexuality is an emotional disorder based in roots that are much deeper than the obvious sin of homosexuality. Homosexuality is the manifestation of deeply imbedded psychological hurts. He initiated this and other psychological ideas into a program called HA, Homosexuals Anonymous. Based closely on the AA program. Jeff cofounded this with program with Colin Cook of Pennsylvania. Jeff established a group in the Twin Cities the second in the country and which is still in operation.

The second area which Jeff excelled in was introducing the ideas of Dr.

Elizabeth Moberly to the United States. Dr. Moberly was working in Europe with the same problem as Jeff and Outpost. She had many insights into the healing process and the roots from which homosexuality can spring. Jeff and Outpost sponsored Dr. Moberly to come to the United States and give a conference on her work in the area of freedom from homosexuality. Her ideas of focusing on the process of healing were added to the teachings of Outpost. This "fleshed out" their position, Outpost was no longer relying only on promises of God for healing, but was also focusing their attention on the aspect of on-going struggle in the healing process.

Finally Jeff brought with him an understanding of the grace of God that was missing in Outpost's ministry. Much of their ministry was founded on a law motivation of "do this or God will hate you forever and never let you be a Christian again." Jeff brought an understanding though of the free forgiveness of God and the love of God for sinners found in the cross. Jeff did many conferences and lecture across the country on the subject of God's grace, especially to the homosexual. Through these conferences he reached many people who had previously felt that God's grace was not meant for people struggling with homosexuality. The awareness of the Outpost ministry was growing also because of local television exposure and national radio programs. The ministry was truly advancing on the myth that homosexuality cannot be healed.

After a leave of absence from the ministry Ed Hurst returned to work in the office. Not only counseling but also writing many article on teaching and hope. Ed had now written two books which have become essential in anyone counseling people struggling with homosexuality. Reckoning with the Roots deals with the problem of identify and rectifying the causes of a person's homosexual behavior. Factors in Freedom is a continuation of the

healing process with emphasis on overcoming the remaining struggles and temptations.

In 1985, Jeff decided that his time as director was over. He felt a strong desire to set up his own counseling practice where he could help not only struggling homosexuals but also many other people. He set up practice in the Twin Cities area. This left a vacancy to be filled. It was a strange choice but Jeff's wife Cathy was chosen to be the next director of the ministry.

Cathy's work with the ministry began in 1983 when she counseled specifically with spouses and parents of people struggling with homosexuality. Since her appointment as director Cathy has encouraged spouses and parents with monthly columns in the newsletter. She has stressed that the knowledge that Outpost has can be applied to many areas related to homosexuality. Cathy has stressed an outreach to people struggling with a life-dominating sin or a compulsive behavior.

The main work of the ministry aside from their counseling is offering written materials for people interested not only in dealing with a personal problem but also in counseling people who are struggling with homosexuality. Outpost is now printing many tracts and specialized packets of information dealing with specific areas of healing and ministry.

On the ten anniversary of their ministry Outpost realized that they had come along way from the days of one phone among other phone counselors. Outpost is now an internationally known ministry. Their newsletters are currently being mailed to all of the fifty states, the total number being 1407. They are currently helping 210 spouses or parents deal with the hurt and healing of having a loved one trapped in homosexuality. They are also reaching out to 22 foreign countries by mailing 99 overseas newsletters each



month.

Their rough years have paid off. They are reaching out to people who need to hear of the gospel of Christ and healing from homosexuality. Outpost dared to do what many Christians were afraid or refused to do. They reached out with hope to a segment of our present society that is crying for help, to which many Christians have turned their back. Outpost should serve as a model and encouragement to all Christians to begin and continue reaching out with hope to fellow sinners who do not know the redemption and freedom of Christ Jesus.

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