



Fish On The Other Side

Jesus Christ

That's our Vision! FOTOS is a calling to "love like Jesus" so that many might come to receive Eternal Life through Christ. Our four (4) Vision principles are to Share, Care, Heal and Protect.

SPECIAL NOTE: If you are GLBT, please see our GLBT page where we explain our intentions behind each of these Vision Principles.

VISION PRINCIPLE 1 - Share the Gospel within reach of homosexual communities.

Jesus' method was to touch the heart of the individual so that he or she responded to Him out of love for Him, rather than from compulsion or control. (Page 159, "Jesus Among Other Gods", Ravi Zacharias, 2000)

A difficult and yet the most urgent call for the Local Church is to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ into homosexual communities. The difficulty is not only in what to say; but also in how to overcome the fierce hostility that many homosexuals feel toward evangelicals.

Let's face it, we the Church have rejected homosexuals; we have limited our ministry to fighting their activists; we have preached from the pulpit about compassion towards homosexuals but the media has often publicized the more hateful voices attributed to Christianity. To put it lightly, we have a credibility problem...

FOTOS Founder Bill Henson says, *When we share, they expect to hear hate. And so we need to first publicly apologize for the way the Church has often treated homosexuals. Then, we should share the Gospel in a personal and authentic way that does not drive people away from Jesus, but rather attracts them toward the Savior who loves them as much as He loves us. We reveal our own imperfections and errors first so that it is clear we are not judging them. Above all, we should listen to their stories and seek to first understand homosexuals and their needs. In short, we should encounter them with the value that Christ feels for them...the same value He feels for you and I.*

Homosexuals won't come to our churches. If we want to reach homosexuals, we have to "fish on the other side" and GO to them. And of course that is Christ's call to the Church - "Therefore GO..."

VISION PRINCIPLE 2 - Care for families in our churches who have homosexual loved ones.

Many Christian parents of homosexuals suffer in silence and isolation. The Church - at least in the past - has either overtly or seemingly conveyed that homosexuality is experienced only by those outside Christianity. Historically, some parents in the Church have sadly been told to "cut off" or "limit" relations with their homosexual children. Even today, many

Christian parents feel that as a "good" Christian they must limit interaction with their homosexual children so as to not convey affirmation of their "lifestyle". But for those of us that have come out of homosexuality, we know that the last thing that ANY child needs is further rejection! And the last thing that ANY parent needs is aloneness and the isolating sense that no one understands.

We, the Church, need to create an accessible yet confidential meeting place where such parents can come together to encourage one another and discuss ways to maintain strong relationships with their homosexual children. A generation ago, the Church could ignore this need because it was supposedly "outside" the Church. But today, we all recognize that it's no longer just "their" children who are gay...it's "our" children too!

We must let parents know that the Church and the Bible stand behind them in continuing to love, accept and actively connect with their children. Bill adds, *If it were not for a strong relationship with my parents, I might not have been able to hear the Lord's still, small voice.* Bill is clear to say, *We make NO promises that a child will ever surrender their homosexual identity to Christ - but whether they live out their identity in a same-sex relationship or surrender it to Jesus, we parents are called to love our children as the Father loved his Prodigal Son. After all, we are all Prodigals and yet He loves us. He loves our children too.*

Parents in our churches need encouragement and support. It's time we "fish on the other side" and give families a safe place to meet with other parents in similar circumstances. And of course that is Christ's command to the Church - "Love one another..." Our FAMILY CARE WORKSHOP provides this safe place – contact FOTOS to ask about hosting FAMILY CARE at your church.

VISION PRINCIPLE 3 - Offer Healing to those in our churches seeking such help.

Many of our largest Churches lack healing ministries to the sexually and relationally broken. Yet today there are numerous programs (see Resources) that provide prayer, fellowship, worship, teaching and small group interaction to those seeking such help.

While as little as a decade ago such programs ministered exclusively to gay men, a quiet revolution has been underway and today such healing ministries positively touch the lives of men and women, homosexual and heterosexual, of all kinds of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Bill Henson says, *We the Church have an epidemic of sexual immorality. And it's not homosexuality. It's online pornography...a functional addiction that allows men to act out in the privacy of their own home. What's sad is that it's not like these men want to be in this place - they want out but are trapped. They simply can't find freedom because they desperately fear rejection if other Christians knew about their struggle. They are hiding in the shadows when what they really need is the bright and loving Light of Christ. Healing ministries provide the opportunity for Christ's Light to set free those in the shadows.*

We the Church need to rise up to protect our fellow brothers and sisters! Only in the Light of Christ can these powerful addictions be broken - it is the responsibility of the Local Church to provide a safe place for those who have a heart to repent and surrender to Christ. They

will need all the love and acceptance that the Body of Christ can possibly give to find the freedom that Christ promises!

Many men and women in our churches - homosexual and heterosexual - need the Light of Christ to shine into the shadows of their hearts as they seek to surrender and receive healing for various forms of sexual and relational brokenness. It's time we "fish on the other side" and minister Christ's healing touch to those who are seeking such help. As Jesus promises, "So if the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed."

If Exodus is too homosexual-ish. If Every Man's Battle is too heterosexual-ish. If Benny Hinn is not your cup of tea. If Living Waters is too charismatic. If you've not heard of Redeemed Lives Ministries. If True Desire has not come your way yet. If you have not encountered the countless healing and recovery ministries that are available - or if you struggle to trust that they are Biblical. Then, I've got the perfect solution for your church.

Rick Warren! Mr. 30-Million Copies of Purpose Driven Life Sold happens to have a guy in his congregation named John Baker who founded Celebrate Recovery. Seventeen years later, Celebrate Recovery is the most widely received and fastest growing recovery and healing ministry in the world. Boom, Rick Warren's stamp of approval. You're all set!

No matter what program you go with: go with a program; just do it.

PRINCIPLE 4 - Protect all who are touched by homosexuality.

We as the Body of Christ are called to care for those who are weak; for the fatherless; for the needy; for the young; and for those who are ostracized by society. This call is not based upon the "goodness" of people or else Christ surely would not protect us. No, this call is not based upon "goodness" - it is simply a call to love, care and protect all who are weak.

Our last FOTOS principle is to do just that - to protect the value and dignity - the very lives - of all who are touched by homosexuality. Every person has a God-given right to live life free from intentional harm and intimidation. We must work to reduce gay teen suicides and eliminate violence against GLBT persons.

But let's start at the beginning: there are MANY groups of people touched by homosexuality. Let's take a look at each and see how the FOTOS Vision applies to each.

The **first group** of people affected by homosexuality are those who fully embrace their homosexual identity and live in same-sex relationships. We must sufficiently convey a deep love and respect for them and never lose sight that Christ's invitation to salvation is freely and inclusively offered to them - indeed, we are to offer this salvation to them as ambassadors of Christ.

Jesus asks us to "remove the log from our own eye so that we might help our brother who has a speck in his eye." Jesus further says, "Do not judge or you too will be judged." Romans 2 further humbles us before we speak about the eternal status of others. Read Romans 2:1-4 as a powerful and humbling reminder of where we stand compared to others.

And so we want to offer GLBT persons the kindness of God and dialogue civilly about our respective differences in belief and interpretation of the Bible. It is only by God's patience, tolerance and kindness that any of us are able to come to Him in full surrender of our deeply held frailties and failures - our lusts; our gossips; our greeds; our loves of money, materialism and consumerism; our oversights of poverty, the fatherless and other social justice issues.

Yes, Romans 2 is right when it says that we do "the same things" as those we are most prone to judge. This cuts both ways of course. Thus, let evangelicals and GLBT persons actively engage each other in the pursuit of Biblical truth...yet let us always do so with love for one another as Christ commands.

The **second group** of people affected by homosexuality are Christians who do not consider themselves to be homosexual by "identity" but nonetheless struggle with unwanted same-sex attractions. As much as those who live out their gay identity deserve respect, dignity and a life free of harm and intimidation, so do these Christians who are at times caught in a no-man's land between evangelicals and the GLBT community.

Such individuals should be ministered to with great care in our churches and offered the assistance they seek with regard to healing. Likewise, GLBT persons should take care to treat them with equal respect - as it would simply violate their conscience and cause them spiritual harm to embrace a same-sex relationship.

The provision of healing resources for such persons should not be interpreted as forcing "healing" upon those not interested in such healing...nor should it be viewed as an effort to destroy gay culture. The provision of healing programs is simply an offering within the church for people who have a voluntary spiritual conviction that they are called to surrender this area of their life to Christ.

The **third group** of people affected by homosexuality are children. We have within the last decade entered into a new era where adults debating tough issues like homosexuality are taking such debates into the classrooms of children as young as five (5) years old. All of us who identify ourselves as Christ-followers are clearly aware of the warnings Christ gives to those who prematurely interrupt the innocence of these little ones. We should jointly work to remove this adult debate from elementary classrooms and curricula to ensure that children too young to understand sexual issues are not victimized by lost innocence. No matter what each of us believes the Bible says about homosexuality, we jointly stand before Christ with a serious obligation to protect the young. My view is not about some Culture War to fight against same-sex relationships; it is simply to say that we have taken an adult discussion into the realm of innocent children who cannot understand such things.

The **fourth and final group** of people affected by homosexuality are young adolescents and teens in vulnerable stages of sexual development. We need to promote "safe" families where Moms and Dads are physically and emotionally present in our children's lives to promote strong, confident, and healthy gender and sexual identity in our children. A "safe" family is one where the messiness and confusion of sexual development can be openly discussed and where children are cared for passionately and loved unconditionally.

FOTOS Ministries, Inc.
<http://fishontheotherside.org>
bjhenson@gmail.com
(877) 683-6867

Lead Them Home
<http://fotos.podbean.com>
<http://billhenson.blogspot.com>
(508) 971-7585

We should also promote "safe" churches where our pastors and parents can give our youth permission to be vulnerable with their doubts, confusions and struggles in regard to sexual development. It is only in this "safe" place that our youth can be cared for so that they securely know they are loved and accepted for who they are by their church family.

We want our children to know that whether they face heterosexual or homosexual sexual purity struggles, we as their pastors and parents are "here" to walk with them through such struggles caring for them with great compassion and loving them without condition. We want them to know that our churches are their home no matter what they face.

Whether our children grow up heterosexual or homosexual, safe families and safe churches can eliminate years of deeply painful repression - a significant contributing factor behind teen suicide. We want our teens to know they are WANTED: ALIVE and FULL OF LIFE! Knowing they are deeply loved...and that God has a plan and purpose for their life!

In closing, a call to my evangelical community...

FOTOS Ministries is charting a new course for Christian ministry to homosexuals and their families. The Church ignored homosexuals when they were powerless. The Church ignored their families too. Now that they have power, our Para-Church movements engage them principally in what we refer to as the "Culture War."

Although many evangelical pastors preach compassion and love towards homosexuals in our churches, the voices broadcast by media as ambassadors of Evangelical Christianity often do not convey this love and compassion. Still other minority and extreme voices convey outright hatred toward homosexuals as they purport to represent Evangelical Christianity.

In short, we have a significant credibility problem...

Beyond Culture Wars and Church Walls, Christ is Calling...

It's time we GO outside our Churches to clarify the message of the Gospel and share the love of Christ within reach of homosexual communities; it's time we care for their families in our churches; it's time we welcome healing ministries into our Churches for homosexuals and heterosexuals seeking help with sexual and relational brokenness; and it's time that we value and protect the dignity of all who are touched by homosexuality.

It's time we...

"Fish On The Other Side."

Will your Church or Para-Church Ministry join us? We equip churches and para-church ministries to implement one or more of the four FOTOS Vision Principles - to Share, Care, Heal and Protect. Locally. Contact us today for more details. We invite you to review our ministry References. Thank you for considering our FOTOS Vision.