

Testimony of Charlene Cothran

Former lesbian and editor of Venus Magazine



“It was right here in Chicago ... back in 2003 at a ‘gay pride’ event – out in Bryant Park, on a sunlit afternoon where I should have been the proudest lesbian out there....At any other pride event, I was always very proud to be there. ... **But on this day a shame fell on me**, and something spoke in my spirit and said: ‘This is that road that’s leading to destruction, and you are on it.’ And it was such a loud voice that **I could no longer ignore that what I was doing and how I was living was wrong.**

“And that afternoon, as young people came up to me – [saying], ‘Oh, Miss Cothran, I want to be just like you!’ – [I thought:] How am I going to get from where I am back to God? How is that going to happen? And it was a very difficult three years. And it took three years before I finally came to Christ. It was a real battle in the mind.

“How do I tell my partner of ten years that I no longer want to be a lesbian or want this life anymore? How do I tell the people who volunteered for my publication – who helped me build it to the point where I could now live [off] it? **“How do I tell them that I am no longer your proud, black lesbian?”**

“How do I leave 30 years’ worth of friendships behind – people who ... we buried each others’ parents, we buried each others’ neighbors, you know? – friends! ... how do I leave that behind?”

“So it took from 2003 to 2006 before the Lord sent a pastor my way: on a Tuesday afternoon. I wasn’t at church. I was in my car at a mall: **God will meet you where you are!** ... And a pastor whom I had never met before – I was in New Jersey; we were publishing another small community newspaper; she was calling about that. And we talked about our business, and then she asked me at the end of that conversation: she said, ‘Charlene, where are you in the Lord?’

“And of course two voices went off in my head: one of them was like, ‘Yes, pastor, share with me, talk with me! I want to be free from this! Help me!’ But of course the other voice was saying: ‘You tell her you’re a proud lesbian and all the accomplishments you’ve made. As a matter of fact, I’ve got a card in my wallet that proves I’m a lesbian [audience laughter] ... And of course, you know which voice won out.

“And she let me go and pontificate for a while ... and after I finished she said, ‘You know something? ... **I can tell that you want to come back to God, but you feel unworthy. You feel as though God can’t use you because you’ve been so public about your sins.** ... You feel like you’re damaged goods if you got saved now and came back to church. And she

was so right: I really didn't realize it like that.... The way she spoke it, it really unlocked something in me that she was right, and I couldn't speak for several minutes. And it seemed like the Holy Spirit just shut me up, to allow this minister, this woman of God to just get some more words in me.

"And even as she was speaking, the Spirit of God began to deal with me and said, '**You know what, you are going to choose today who you are going to serve?**' [\[Joshua 24:14-16\]](#)

"And of course the enemy's right in the other ear [saying:] 'Oh, no, you're not! You're not going to get saved today! ... You've got an appointment at New York City Gay Pride and they're expecting you in two weeks: what are you going ... to say?'

"But then my mother's voice also spoke to me. Because my mother, before she passed away, she looked at me and she said, '**You know something? I don't think I'm ever going to see you again. She was a woman of faith.** And I knew she meant in glory [heaven]. And she died two months later. And that always stuck with me: 'I've got to see my mother again, that mean you've get out of this [lifestyle]!'

"And so **I gave my heart in my car, in the parking lot of the mall, to Jesus Christ, and He set me free** [audience applause]... from 29 years of lesbianism. And so I stand today as an epistle of change. **I am proof that change is possible in the homosexual [community].**

"And so tonight I hope you're in the mood for the *whole* truth... Because I got a question for you. ... My mother used to sing a little song. it went something like this [sings Gospel song:]

Is there anybody here who loves who loves my Jesus? Is there anybody here who loves my Lord? Is there anybody here who loves my Jesus?

I want to know, Americans For Truth, if you love the Lord.

"Because if you really love God, then there's compassion somewhere in your heart, and you realize that we've all sinned and come short of the glory of God, haven't we? That's right. And so that we know that gays and lesbians deserve *compassion*, and that's what's going to draw them. A simple Gospel song reminds me of that.

"There are certain names that we gay activists just used to hate and my [homosexual] friends still do.

"Jerry Falwell. Pat Robertson. And the loathsome Peter LaBarbera....[laughter]

"And it seemed as if anyone who is bold enough to stand up and say that homosexuality is sin got added to the gay activist hate list. **And so now my name has been added to the gay activist hate list....**

"A month ago or so I received a letter from a particular gay activist [[Wayne Besen of the curiously named Truth Wins Out](#)]. ... I call him the **Prince of Darkness**. Here is a man who at one time supported my work and he even wrote a front-page article in my ... Venus magazine. And in his letter among the many attempts to insult me, he says, 'Ms. Cothran, you have been brainwashed.'

"We'll, I want this prince to know that he is absolutely right. I have been brainwashed, I have been heart-washed, I've been soul-washed in the blood of the lamb!

"I don't expect him to understand what that means. You can't explain the things of the Spirit to people who don't want to hear it, or don't want to understand it.

"And so now that my name has been added to this hate list, I'm actually kind of proud of it, for two reasons. One, it tells me that I'm doing something right. **Gay activists don't waste their time and energy. They go after people whose ministries are effective, Peter: your ministry is effective, and that's why they're coming after you.**

"And also, if they believe that I've been brainwashed, then essentially they are acknowledging that there has indeed been a *change* in me. Because remember, these are the people who knew me. All of you are just taking my word for it. They *knew* me. And they knew that I was a *diehard lesbian*. And yet they see and know that I've changed. And they can't attribute it to reparative therapy, and **they can't attribute it to anything except Jesus Christ.**

“And it unnerves them! Because I am living proof that homosexuals can change through a committed relationship with Jesus Christ. [audience applause]

“After I gave my heart to Christ, I began to take a closer look at the ministries that we had been trained to hate, and why. Americans For Truth, I want you to know that I am not naive about the nature of the work that you do. I believe that this organization has had to position itself to fight a very ugly and very active and powerful segment of the gay community.

“And I want you to know that this ugly segment of the gay community ... does not represent most members of the gay community... Most gays and lesbians are hard-working ... good-willed people who would never parade themselves in the nude in front of children down San Francisco [streets] It’s just not true. Most gays are not like that.

“Another very active and powerful segment of the gay community claims that **being gay is innate ... that all gays are born this way. And I believe that this is the most vicious lie that has been released against God’s people.** It is a lie! ... This is a lie that was hatched in some boardroom, basically so that we could gain civil rights for gays and lesbians. They needed [something] to level the playing field, and this was the one that went out.

“And I remember back in 1994 when a reporter for a gay newspaper came to interview me about [Venus] magazine. I remember [observing] in that interview just how desperate they were to get this lie out. I never believed it.

“And the young man did the interview and he turned his microphone off. And he then said, ‘Well Ms. Cothran, I want you to say when I turn the microphone back on ... that all gays and lesbians are born this way because we need you to influence the African American gay [and lesbian community].’

“And I said, ‘Well hold on now! I don’t believe that. I’m not going to say something I don’t believe. Absolutely not!’

“And I felt satisfied that the interview was over and that would be the end of it.

“Well, two weeks later when the article came out, they printed the quote *anyway* as if I had said it!

“**And I learned then just how *desperate* they were to get this lie out at any cost.** They refused to print a retraction. And, again, I learned a lot, right then and there....

“**There is no such thing as a gay gene, and *they know this.*** Gay activists know this. They know that their house has been built on a lie. And so now they’re scrambling to come up with something else — anything to prove their case, like a study of homosexuality in animals.

“Well, you know, **I could care less about how many male sheep are homosexual [audience laughter], because God did not leave specific instructions on how to live to sheep.[applause] But He gave men and women very specific instructions on how to live through the Word of God.**

“And the Word of God is clear on the subject of homosexuality. The truth is that it is not what God intended. ...

“Now I know it doesn’t look like it but I want you to be encouraged. Because things are beginning to change. I want you to know that many gays and lesbians are tired of this life and they want *out*. I’m hearing from them every single day through our [\[Venus Magazine\] website](#). And many are walking out. [applause] And they’re not doing it on their own strength because they can’t do it on their own strength. No one can stop what they’re doing on their own strength. It takes a committed relationship with the Jesus Christ.

“**And they need the genuine open arms of the Church to be there to help them at the point of their need. They need loving and compassionate believers who will embrace them just as they are, and who will continue to walk out with them and not judge them as they grow in grace.”**

Ms Cothran shared these words at a banquet for *Americans for Truth About Homosexuality*, October 11, 2007.