

A Formal Public Apology by John Paulk

For the better part of ten years, I was an advocate and spokesman for what's known as the "ex-gay movement," where we declared that sexual orientation could be changed through a close-knit relationship with God, intensive therapy and strong determination. At the time, I truly believed that it would happen. And while many things in my life did change as a Christian, my sexual orientation did not.

So in 2003, I left the public ministry and gave up my role as a spokesman for the "ex-gay movement." I began a new journey. In the decade since, my beliefs have changed. Today, I do not consider myself "ex-gay" and I no longer support or promote the movement. Please allow me to be clear: I do not believe that reparative therapy changes sexual orientation; in fact, it does great harm to many people.

I know that countless people were harmed by things I said and did in the past,

Parents, families, and their loved ones were negatively impacted by the notion of reparative therapy and the message of change. I am truly, truly sorry for the pain I have caused.

From the bottom of my heart I wish I could take back my words and actions that caused anger, depression, guilt and hopelessness. In their place I want to extend love, hope, tenderness, joy and the truth that gay people are loved by God.

Today, I see LGBT people for who they are — beloved, cherished children of God. I offer my most sincere and heartfelt apology to men, women, and especially children and teens who felt unlovable, unworthy, shamed or thrown away by God or the church.

I want to offer my sincere thanks to everyone who encouraged me to take this initial step of transparency. Even while promoting "ex-gay" programs, there were those who called me on my own words and actions. I'm sure I didn't appreciate it at the time, but they have helped me to realize this truth about who I am.

This is a life transition that has been and will continue to be, challenging. Sadly, my marriage of 20 years is in the process of ending. I want to take the time to make sure my next actions come

from a place of truth and authenticity. Therefore, I'm drastically limiting my public engagement until my own personal life can be settled. After that I eagerly anticipate giving back to the community.

Finally, I know there are still accounts of my "ex-gay" testimony out there being publicized by various groups, including two books that I wrote about my journey. I don't get any royalties from these publications and haven't since I left the ministry nearly ten years ago. I discourage anyone from purchasing and selling these books or promoting my "ex-gay" story because they do not reflect who I am now or what I believe today.

John Paulk