



LANDER, WYOMING *church of Christ*

UNDERSTANDING GAY: “The Roads I’ve Travelled”

***Note: We know that no one is born gay because it would not be very just of God to create someone gay and then condemn them (Leviticus 20:13). Furthermore, people can choose to leave homosexuality (1 Corinthians 6:11). This article is to help Christians understand homosexuals better, and to love and encourage them to Jesus.**

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We all have a story – a rich tapestry of experience that influences who we are. This is my story. It is not finished by any means, but as I look back through the years I see how God has carefully woven grace, unconditional love, and blessing into my life and I find hope. It is my prayer that my story will also give hope to others and remind their hearts of their deep desire to be held in love by the Heavenly Father.

As a small child growing up I lacked a sense of identity and security. For many reasons my cup was empty and I longed for it to be filled. Even though my parents did the best they could, I felt unloved. Both had come from broken families and brought this into their parenting. My mother came from a home that was unsafe and at times abusive. My father came from a home that modeled a very false view of gender – men did not talk about their feelings or show emotion, and women were lesser creatures. Many years of generational sin were passed down to me.

Since I did not have a true masculine role model to teach me what it meant to be a man, I felt very insecure in my masculine identity. After all, little boys learn how to become men from other men. My way of medicating the pain I felt was to isolate myself and turn inward. I created a fantasy world where everything was good. I was safe, secure and happy. Or so I thought. What I did not know was that my dissociation from reality would become a breeding ground for the lies of the Enemy. Disconnected from the Truth, my already wounded identity became more and more marred.

When I was in third grade my parents decided to get a divorce. I was the oldest of three children and felt that I needed to grow up fast. I would not give myself the luxury of feeling my feelings because I had to be strong

for my siblings. Thus, I isolated myself more. On the outside I looked fine, but on the inside I was crying out for someone to save me from the world. But no one heard my silent cries for help. How could they? I was wearing a mask that said, “I’m O.K.”

I became desperate. I knew that God loved me and that I had given my life to Him, but I often wondered if He cared. Finally, I thought that if I tried to kill myself, someone might hear me. I did not want to die; I wanted to be heard.

My suicide attempt was not successful in waking up the people around me. I decided that if I was ever going to make it in life, I would have to do it on my own. So I locked the door to my heart. I made an inner vow to never be vulnerable again. I would never cry, never hurt, never get too close, because when I did, people hurt me. My fantasy world was all I had.

When puberty came along my fantasy world became eroticized. I had been exposed to a lot of pornography as a child so it was very easy for me to conclude that sex must equal love. All I had ever wanted was to be loved, especially by the men in my life. I wanted someone to shield, protect and tell me it was going to be OK. So I resolved that sex must be what you have to give in order to get love: sex must be what you have to give a man in order to get love. Thus began my mental and emotional struggle with homosexuality.

I did not know where to go with these feelings of homosexuality, depression, and loneliness. No one talked about homosexuality in small town North Dakota, especially not at church, except to say that gays were all going to hell. Once again I decided to stay silent.

After five years of custody battling, I moved to live with my mother in Minnesota. The promise of a fresh start was appealing; however, my pain was more than any human could soothe. My expectations of the men in my life were great and I perceived their shortcomings as further abandonment.

I found some solace in church, but my view of God as Father was askew. I thought that I had to be perfect in order for Him to love me. I would hear a wonderful, inspiring sermon on Sunday and leave church thinking I was finally going to get it right that week, but by Wednesday I would fall flat on my face. How was I ever going to serve God if I could not get my life in order? On the inside I wanted to share the deepest parts of me. I wanted to be real. I wanted to hear grace. But the smile on my face said, "I'm fine. Leave me alone."

Throughout high school I had done pretty well at leading a double life. The community thought that I was a good, well-adjusted young man, but in secret I was depressed and addicted to pornography, masturbation and fantasy.

When it was time to leave for college I was afraid. I was leaving a small town for the big city. No one would know me and I would have complete independence. I decided to go to a Christian college because everyone knows that no one there struggles with homosexuality. (Ha!) God was gracious. He put someone in my life right away with whom I could share my struggle. She told me about Outpost, a ministry that helped people struggling with relational brokenness. I gave them a call and my recovery began.

I joined a support group called Joshua Fellowship. The first year I learned a lot about my struggle: I had a huge void in my life and God was the only one who could fill it. I began to trace the roots of my struggle back throughout my childhood. I got a clearer picture of what I was struggling with. Very little of my struggle actually had to do with homosexuality.

During the second year, I participated in a more intense program called Living Waters. It was one thing to learn concepts about my struggle, but now I had to open the door to my heart that had long been locked. I had to feel my pain. It had not gone away just because I had stuffed it deep within my soul. I had to face it. What I found there was amazing – Jesus. I did not have to journey into my pain alone. No, there was one greater than I who would make the voyage with me. I had finally found someone who would shield me and protect me from the world.

One by one Jesus began to redeem the broken pieces of my heart. There were many people that I needed to forgive. It was not easy to accept the fact that the ones who love you can also wound you. I also had to be forgiven. The things that had happened to me throughout my life made my struggles understandable, but were not a license to sin. I had betrayed others out of my pain. I sinned against God, others and myself. There is something very healing about moving into the sorrow of your sin.

I was also blessed to have wonderful mentors come alongside me throughout my journey. These "Fathers in the Kingdom" taught me what it meant to be a man. They called forth my masculinity and required me to walk in it.

The most awesome part of this story is that as the Lord began to heal the core issues of my heart I began to realize that I was changing. My desires for the opposite sex were changing. I started to notice these amazing "other" creatures. The beauty of the feminine was unveiled and I was overwhelmed with awe. Yes, God CAN change the core of who we are; that is the truth of the gospel!

I learned that as the Lord brings freedom, we must walk out our healing. My desires for women had changed but now I needed to actually do something about those desires. There were many fears that could have held me back, but I did not want to get stuck on the ex-gay plateau. It was time to start dating women!

Over the years I pursued several women and learned a lot in the process. Now the Lord has brought into my life the woman of my dreams and I am madly in love. It is absolutely wonderful! Certainly my goal was first and foremost to become more like Christ, but I am discovering the blessings that come when we pursue holiness.

I have to wonder where I would be today had I not said 'yes' to God. I would have been robbed of so much. Sure, life has not always been easy, but I shudder to think of the alternative. No matter how tough life gets, with the Lord we can persevere.

My recovery began almost six years ago. It has been the hardest thing I have ever had to do, but it was definitely worth it. I know life more abundantly now. I have not arrived, but I know that I never will here on earth. I draw strength from Psalm 84:5-7:

"And how blessed are those in whom you live, whose lives become roads you travel; they wind through lonesome valleys, come upon brooks, discover cool springs and pools brimming with rain! God-traveled, these roads curve up the mountain, and at the last turn – Zion! God in full view!" (The Message)

Blessings come in making the journey.

source: www.exodusinternational.org, a homosexual resource ministry.