

One Man's Struggle

Anonymous

This story is reprinted from Anchor: A Message of Hope for Non-Gay Homosexuals. (Publication available by writing Anchor, P.O. Box 153, Okemos, MI 48805-0153.) This account poignantly describes the religious client's conflict between his values, and those unmet childhood emotional needs which have led to his homosexuality.

What is it like being a homosexual in a Christian church? Is it even possible? These two concepts seem to be so diametrically opposed to each other. Yet it is true. God has called individuals who are struggling with homosexual feelings, and at the same time are strongly convicted towards His truth and way of life. Please allow me to tell you my story.

Ever since I can remember I can recall feeling and acting differently than those boys around me. I felt so self-conscious about myself and my body. I can't tell you why I felt this way. I just did. It didn't seem that any of the other boys felt like I did. I felt like I was on the inside looking out, both figuratively and literally. I would frequently sit inside our house and look out at the park or open fields, and watch as other boys my age were playing baseball or running. I just didn't seem to fit in, and consequently I was never invited, and never initiated any friendships.

I remember my childhood as a very lonely time. I did everything by myself. I rode my bike alone; I played in the snow alone; I went down to the river alone; I did everything alone. I've never played basketball, and I can count the hours I've played football and baseball combined on one hand.

I don't know why this happened, but I always felt like I didn't belong. I couldn't participate and whenever I had to, because of a school P.E. program, I was so inadequate at any kind of sport that my isolation was heightened.

I felt my loneliness would have been OK had I just been left alone. But that was not to be. I was, of course, the object of constant, bitter and biting ridicule and attack. "He doesn't want to play with us; he's just a sissy." "Go home and play with your dolls!" "Look at the little mama's boy!" It hurt so profoundly, so completely. I wanted nothing but to be invisible, to be just like the other boys. But the criticism only made me withdraw more. I became an avid reader and from fifth grade on, spent most of my time with books. But always alone and distant.

I wonder, as you might, about my father. Didn't he notice? Why didn't he intervene? I suppose he did notice, but I suspect he didn't know what to do. I have always felt my father to be a good man, but a very passive and distant figure in my life. I have never known how to relate to him and have never felt accepted or a part of his life.

He never took any interest in my activities, my interests,

my school, my projects or my friends. Nothing. I can't ever remember building a model car with my dad; I never played catch, or wrestled, or even held hands with him. He never put his arms around me. He never asked me about any book I was reading, never asked about my school - nothing. Everything I've learned, I learned on my own. I taught myself to play chess; I learned to drive - everything on my own.

My mother was the classic over-involved, possessive, protective mother. She acted the perfect role of a mother trying to fill in the gaps. However, it was a male I needed in my life, and that is what I sorely missed. It's been said that a boy needs any or all of three male influences in his life: a father or father figure, a coach or mentor, and male peers. I had none. My father was distant. I had a couple of uncles, but they weren't that interested in me and rarely gave me any attention. I didn't have any close family friend, coach or mentor. I never played sports, so I was deprived of both the coach and all the male companionship there. I also never had any close male friends. I was too shy to make any close friends, and most of my school friends surely didn't want to make friends with the "sissy."

If maleness is taught and learned from watching and spending time with other males, I certainly didn't learn it. As time went on, I continued to develop intellectually. Emotionally and sexually I was stunted and underdeveloped. When puberty hit, I took a different path. In school all the boys would be dating and have an intense interest in girls. I didn't. I didn't dislike girls, but they just weren't that interesting or exciting to me. I couldn't tell what all the fuss was about. I ignored the entire dating process.

I didn't see myself as a homosexual. I didn't know what was happening and didn't care. Looking back on it all now, it is so obvious. I was intensely modest. I hated gym class, not only because I couldn't do anything physically, but also because I was so shy about my body. While other boys seemed so natural and at ease in the nude, I was extremely prudish and modest.

It was at this time that God began to work with me. One religious magazine I was reading contained an article titled "How To Be A Boy." It had such a powerful impact on me, I would have done anything to trade places with the boy in that picture. There were pictures of a church college in which all the young men seemed to be just so robust and healthy, happy, at ease with themselves. Pictures of guys playing basketball and football, riding bikes and just having a wonderful time, and being so natural. What struck me was the accepting environment and how easy they all fit into the picture. If God could help me be accepted and fit in, I was willing to do anything and go anywhere. I needed to be in that picture. I needed that powerful influence in my life. I forsook my family, friends, and scholarships to get into that church college. I wanted to be normal, and I thought this school could do that for me.

I know now that my hopes were unrealistic. I am nonethe-

less tremendously grateful for the calling God has given me. Whatever hook He needed to get me to understand, I can't complain.

The homosexuality was sublimated for my entire college career. I say sublimated because I was beginning to see something coming to maturity in my life that both scared and interested me. Intense homosexual desires began to develop. Instead of being horrified by them, I found them neither scary nor unwelcome. I now began to realize that I had a serious problem, and I didn't know what to do about it.

At the time I was dating. I subsequently married and now have two children. I thought the homosexual feeling would disappear once I was married and started a family. My relationship with my future wife began as a very good friendship, a friendship that developed into love and finally into marriage. Sex has never been a problem. The mind is able to compartmentalize, and I have never had a difficulty with sexual performance, and even sexual attraction to females. However, the homosexuality never disappeared. In fact, over the years the homosexual attraction increased and intensified.

At this point it is important to mention that to most people, a homosexual is one who is actively involved in the "gay" lifestyle, who is effeminate and swishy, promiscuous and flamboyant. However, that does not describe me at all. I do not subscribe to any of the gay agenda. I reject all their arguments, as I must, being a Christian. God condemns it, and there is no way around it. However, that doesn't mean I can turn off my mind. It does mean that I must live within a certain code of conduct. The world makes that very difficult. There is a tremendous amount of pornography, videos, movie theaters, discos, clubs, homosexual strip joints, 976-lines, 800-lines, masseurs, classified advertising, etc., etc. It is not hard to find.

The problem for most Christians, as it was for me, was reconciling the fact that I was a Christian with the fact there was something in me that I didn't initiate, didn't want, and prayed and fasted fervently for God to remove. I wanted that change too much--I just wanted to be normal.

The Passover was always the most stressful part of the year for me. In my church, one of the ways we prepare for the Passover service is to examine ourselves in the light of God's Word and the example of Jesus Christ. I hated it because I felt like such a hypocrite. I would work myself up, believing and committing myself to a homosexual-free life for the rest of my years. I had to believe I was telling the truth; I didn't want to take the Passover unworthily. Yet, a month or six weeks later, there were these homosexual feelings again, inevitably and perennially. Each year I had to work up more and more energy. I was becoming two personalities: the individual who struggles and fights, and the other who wants to accept and embrace this powerful homosexual force.

The struggle is incredibly difficult, and it seemed fruitless.

I felt like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, fighting between these two conflicts. After years of struggle, I happened to be listening to a radio broadcast in which a well-known psychologist was discussing reparative therapy for homosexuals, primarily men. I had the sense that he was speaking to me. I immediately contacted him and began a long and enlightening path towards wholeness--a wholeness I have yet to achieve, but I am more *there* than *not*.

Homosexuality, I came to discover, is an attempt to repair something that was never given to me - my manhood, my male identity. I don't have the time to investigate the genetic argument. However, if I were born with a genetic predisposition to murder, would it be OK if I murdered because I had this proclivity? Certainly not. God condemns homosexual acts, no matter what the cause. There aren't any exceptions. I cannot be dishonest with what I know to be true. But how, then, do I reconcile what has happened and is happening to me? What I *have* come to understand through therapy, is that this is a process.

I went through an intense period of therapy trying to sort out what had happened. My father's betrayal, my anger towards him, my guilt, my embarrassment, my loneliness, my humiliation, my shyness, my disconnection from my body, all these issues and more were explored. I would be lying if I said that I have been cured, and am now a football player who goes camping and drives around in a jeep whistling and noticing all the women. The truth is, that has not happened.

But I have resolved many conflicts. I have forgiven my father for his inadequacies. I have taken responsibility for what I have done, and I have taken positive steps to solve some of my problems. As part of my reconciliation, I opened up to some close friends and to my brother. They all began to understand, and showed support and acceptance. I joined a gym in an effort to learn what guys do. It hasn't been totally effective, but it is a process. I am learning to play basketball, and although it isn't that fantastic, the friendships and camaraderie that I should have had as a child are something I look forward to now. I find that the powerful homosexual impulses have diminished tremendously. While I never acted out, that is, engaged in any type of sexual activity with other men, the desire to do so has diminished. In fact, it has almost disappeared.

Most importantly, because I had such a difficult relationship with my father, I have had to learn what it is like to build a relationship with God the Father. It has not been easy. The guilt and embarrassment were there at the beginning. I have come to see that God does not expect perfection today. It is a process that, with His help, makes the struggle easier. I now know that God has given me this trial. I am grateful that he has called me and that I have a future hope that I can depend on. The homosexual struggle is not unlike any other than man must go through, and it can be conquered. It must be conquered. ■