

THE JOURNEY TO FREEDOM: FROM HOMOSEXUALITY. THIS IS _____'S STORY.

Maybe your story has some different players and components, but some of the same thoughts plague:

* "I have to accept who I am and just live with it"

* "I can't talk to anyone about this because they won't understand."

* "I know there's only one way out of this. I'll just end it all, and it will be easier for everyone."

But, as _____'s story emphasizes, there is hope!!

For as long as I can remember, I've always felt that I was different. However, I could never say exactly why. At about the age of 14, I discovered what I thought was the reason I felt different. I was with a friend from school and had my first experience with homosexuality. At that time, I believed I had discovered what I was searching for and that this was the lifestyle for me. After many years of living this way, I discovered this lifestyle left me feeling unfulfilled and empty, but I didn't know why.

Years later at a home bible study, I came across a verse that stated my homosexual encounters were morally wrong. I wanted to do what was right. I wanted out of this lifestyle, and I desperately hated what I'd become. I told myself "no problem, it's wrong; I hate it; I'll quit it." As I struggled to break free of this, I encountered people's opinion on homosexuality. This ranged from ridicule to hatred. *I realized that I could not go to any of my family or friends for help. Their reaction would be rejection of me, not my lifestyle.* I was all alone as I fought this battle raging within. I felt the only safe place I could possibly discuss my feelings was with my gay friends, and the gay community. However, they could offer none of the help I desperately wanted. The attitude of the gay community and also the "world" is, "You are what you are; just accept yourself for what you are."

For over 15 years, I tried and failed to get free of the grip that homosexuality had on my life. This cycle of trying and failing threw me into a deep depression. My career at that time was a cross country truck driver. While in this depressed state, the solution was placed in my mind. "The reason you have such a struggle is because you can't change what you are. Either accept it or die." I happened to be in Pennsylvania crossing Snow Shoe Mountain when the "way out" presented itself. This mountain offered me an escape. On the way down, there is a ravine about a ¼ of a mile deep with lots of trees. I'd be free of these homosexual feelings forever. It would be just another truck driver that fell asleep at the wheel. It's a terrible thing, but it happens. Ready to take this way out, I headed towards the ravine. Just before I hit the edge, one of the Bible study lessons I had recently studied flashed across my mind. My life is a gift from God and to throw that away would be far worse than anything I could ever do or have done. Suicide was not the "way out". I regained my composure and got back on the road where I belonged.

On my way home, I stopped at my neighbor's house. He knew me well enough to know that I was in deep trouble. He offered prayer and suggested that I get involved in Christian fellowship somewhere. Following this recommendation, I attended _____ Church in late 1989. The love and compassion I felt on my first visit assured me that *this* was the right place for me and may hold the keys to my "way out".

After a couple of visits, I confided in the pastor about some issues in my life, carefully avoiding the important issue of my homosexuality. As he helped me through those areas, I began to trust him more and more. *Finally, I shared my homosexual struggles with him. The response was one of love and acceptance of ME.* Now, I didn't have to struggle alone. It was like a giant weight had been lifted. Now in times of overload and depression, help was just a phone call away.

I became involved in a discipleship class. I continued to grow in the Lord and eventually felt comfortable enough to talk with another brother about my sinful past. As I learned to walk away from this behavior, they became my accountability net encouraging me in times of weakness and during times of severe trials. In each, they worked to get me back on track with God's will and *never* gave up on me.

However, temptation was out there, no matter what I did or where I went. Even my thoughts were used against me. Thoughts like "remember how much easier living was when you just accepted what you were" or "just this once won't hurt, who is going to find out?" I left the truck driving profession because I thought this would stop the temptations since this profession seemed to offer an abundance of opportunities. However, the temptations were as strong as ever. I discovered at times like these, the memorized word of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the tough questions I knew I would get from my accountability group gave me the strength to resist. I began to rely on *1 Corinthians 10:13* "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." This verse helped me in two ways. First, it assured me that this isn't something new that has never happened to anybody else, so God won't be surprised or shocked. I'm not the first, and I won't be the last. Second, it told me that God *always* provides a way out. The way out can be many things such as a place, a thing, or a person to go to for support.

I learned that my best defenses were building my relationship with the Lord through prayer and Bible study and by building my relationships with fellow believers. I learned that if I was to succeed, these two things had to happen. Without these, my life would only get further out of control.

As time went on, I realized God had a plan for my life. The Lord wanted to use me and the experiences of my life to help others. With the support of other believers, I began this journey. My biggest step was to tell the story about the struggles I've had with homosexuality. A secret I would have rather kept to myself. It has been a long hard struggle to get to where I am now, and it is a long way from over. Of all the difficult things I've had to do in my life, letting anybody see a side of me that is not pretty was one of the most difficult. But as I am following the Lord's will for my long journey with Him. I... hope that maybe somebody else will not have to struggle and suffer alone as long as I did.

I'm not asking anyone to accept homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle. It is imperative to understand that God makes it clear in His holy word that homosexuality is wrong. This can be found in Leviticus 18:22 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 "... the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God... nor effeminate... shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

If you feel trapped in homosexuality, I want you to know there is HOPE. You don't have to stay in this lifestyle there is a way out and a chance to change through Jesus Christ. It isn't easy or an overnight change no matter how much anyone wishes it could be, but you don't have to struggle alone. Help is available through the Lord and His people. As a matter of fact, it has been my experience that it is impossible to do it alone.

And finally, if you have a family member, a friend, or a fellow worker trapped in homosexuality's ugly grip, they need you more than you will ever know. Don't reject them or turn your back on them. Simply show them the same Love Jesus showed you when you were struggling.

The Bible says "With God, all things are possible," and in the words of Jesus, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" Luke 5:31-32.

This is the testimony of a brother in Christ from a Church I attended and He was married.

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