



In The River

January 15 2011



Followers of Jesus Christ—
Impacting our community
one person at a time!

Real People—Real Lives

by John Smid



Real lives, Real questions, Real faith, Real people, Real challenges, Real feelings, Real needs.

Over the holidays I have been doing some evaluation of my life, my time, my heart. I realized that I am often rapt with a burden for certain people. They call upon my heart often, in person, and in spirit. Yesterday I sat down and compiled a list of people that fit a specific slot in life. I have met some of them in person, some over the phone, some through social media like FaceBook. These are people who are often pre-judged, profiled and laid aside from preconceived notions as to who they are.

All I could really do is cry and say "I need help." Whatever you can do, thanks.

I felt compelled to develop the list because I want to remember them in prayer this year. I want to bring them before the Father in intercession. These men are questioning life at a very deep level.

Feeling alone much of the time, sometimes lost, and often confused but even in the midst of all of this, they are survivors at the core. They seem to get up each day and make it through to their pillow that night, whether or not they feel resolved with life. Some of their questions will never be fully answered. Many of their desires will go unfulfilled and their questions about faith may never find solid answers. But they continue on with life, stumbling over rocks, tripping into the ditch sometimes and exhaustion that requires rest that doesn't always refresh.

Some of them are Christians. They believe deeply in the gospel of Jesus Christ and they know they have received His eternal forgiveness. Others are not so sure, but they keep trying to understand God's grace more fully. Then there are those who are searching for what God is really all about.

In conversational circles I often hear people refer to "the homosexuals" or "the gays" and it can be connected to thoughts of promiscuity, unfaithfulness, perversion and other negative associations.

There may be some who do some of those things, but to profile someone into an extreme just because of their sexual orientation is to act in unreasonable prejudice.

I thought one of the best ways to exemplify what I am saying would be to let you see a little bit of what I see in their lives each week. I am quoting some of the things that they have written. They all have one very significant thing in common. They struggle with homosexuality, Jesus, God and their faith.

This came in after some dialogue.

I have been thinking about what you said and I am ready to hear your view points on life, being gay, etc.

I am just so glad to have a trusted friend to bounce my random thoughts to. Thanks. It is a great honor to call you a friend. I hope you enjoyed the holidays and look forward to hearing from you.

One man shared some things and ended up with this comment:

All I could really do is cry and say "I need help." Whatever you can do. Thanks, John.

A comment that came back showed me some of the heart issues that he faced:

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Memphis Grace Groups

Families of Grace

A monthly encouragement group for those who have loved ones that wrestle with homosexuality; this group is a safe place for you to be with others who understand.

Grace for You

A monthly group for those who experience homosexuality and want to share fellowship with other believers in a non-judgmental environment. A safe place to be encouraged in your faith in Christ.

Contact us for further information.

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Heb. 10:25

Real People; Cont'd

I must say your last message brought tears to my eyes. It's been so long since someone who claimed to be a Christian (besides my partner) talked/wrote something to me that showed any respect for me as a person.

So many are willing to try and convert me but unwilling to listen to what I have to say. I don't know how many books/novels are sent to me and when I say that I've read similar books many times, they tend to get mad. I can see their point, but when I bring up questions, they don't want to hear it.

I have had many people who call themselves Christians say some of the nastiest things to me about me questioning matters of faith. Some of them have hurt so much that I don't even want to discuss matters of faith since when I ask a tough question, I get attacked normally. I've given up on expecting love and kindness. Any ideas on why this happens?

There are times when someone moves towards the desires to connect with someone who understands. This guy is a very conservative Christian who has fought for years to remain close to his convictions to remain celibate. He struggles terribly with loneliness and desires to feel connected to someone he can relate to.

I feel torn about this relationship but at the same time I want to be with him. I like him as a person and enjoy his company. However, he is "out" in the gay community, which is something I don't really care for or subscribe to. I know that the end result, should I remain sensitive to my convictions, will be major hurt and pain for both of us. Maybe I just want some relief from the pressure I feel and this is the way I am seeking it. Maybe it's just time to enter this world that has been knocking on my door for so long. I feel so selfish, yet it feels OK.

My response to him was to see Jesus first and foremost. I asked him to consider leaving all of this to Him and that he would find his way through this. In the end, amazingly, the new guy broke off the relationship sensing that there was a spiritual and emotional struggle. He just

didn't "feel it" so he called an end to the relationship.

My reply was to encourage my friend to look at God's grace in this, protecting both of them from their ambivalence that is not healthy for either of them.

And then some men really call upon my heart. This guy was only 19 when I first met him. He is now in his thirties.

I've been in an 8yr relationship now with my partner (name withheld), and I knew going into it that it wasn't what God wanted, yet my life HAS indeed changed for the better, and it hasn't all been bad. I think God works even when we choose to go our way. Now, my mustard seed of faith is all that keeps me bound to God's truths... Please just pray for me as I believe I'm beginning to question things a little more... Thanks John... and take care. Love, your bro.

Real life, real stories, real people. What is the answer? What is the right word, or the response that will touch their heart in a place where they will move closer to Christ. I understand that He, and only He, will be able to set them free into what He has for them.

In truth, the best thing I can do is to show them I love them and that I will listen without judgment. I understand the struggle with homosexuality. I struggle with it too. Sometimes I am on top of it and other times it really bothers me. There are times I have some of the same questions.

What would Jesus have to say about this? What should I do about what I am feeling right now? Will I go through this until my last breath?

I remember those days when I tried to give the expected answers. But today, those answers don't fly any longer. Too often typical Christian answers are "repent" or "trust God" but in the end, those don't typically bring the real hope needed in order to connect with Christ.

I want to spend extra time this year focusing on these guys and others that I come into contact with.

They deserve to hear of Jesus love for them! I want to be one of the vessels to let them know that. I pray there are others to join me!

Every homosexual man and woman deserves to know that Jesus loves them! He is capable of showing them His way.

There is more to this story. You can read the entire article by going to our website.

www.gracerrivers.com/real-people

"Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."
John 8:7



Prayer Requests

- Pray for 16 men I am currently in contact with who wrestle with homosexuality and their faith.
- Pray for the participants in our local Families of Grace group.
- Pray for men and women who will be coming to our Grace Group for men and women

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