

MY VICTORY OVER HOMOSEXUALITY

I was born in 1956, the second of three boys. I don't remember much about my younger years, but I do know that my mother was a Christian, and she made church attendance a priority. I've gone to church all my life. Being in church at least once a week however, did not make me a Christian.

For a child, perception is reality, even if that perception is flawed, and I grew up believing my dad hated me. His approach to child-rearing was very similar to the way a drill sergeant handles raw recruits. To say that my father had a great deal of respect and admiration for the Armed Forces is a gross understatement. He joined the Army, when World War II began and served through two wars. A grenade landing too close to his head ended his dream of a military career.

I do not remember the event, but my mother said that when I was 18 months old, my dad beat me with his belt. She said I had been crying, and was apparently inconsolable. I suppose my dad's reasoning was that since I wouldn't stop crying, he would give me "something to cry for". My mother told me about this, when I was in elementary school. I'm not sure why she told me, but when I heard it, I became angry. Why would a father beat his toddler son, with a belt? Was my dad bitter? I really don't know; I guess, in some ways, he was. My dad was an abusive alcoholic. I remember times when he would have too much to drink, and make us sit at the dinner table, for long periods of time and assault us with his anger. He also had some really harsh things to say about other people.

I often heard from other boys whom I attended school and church with, about the wonderful times they shared with their dads. Some went on camping trips; some played sports. My dad played baseball with me, but made it very clear that it really wasn't a choice. If I didn't play, I could spend time in my room dealing with the pain from a beating. Baseball is a great game, but I grew to hate it because I hated the "do-it-or-you'll-wish-you-had" scenario. I definitely had low self-esteem. Both my own parents called me, "Stupid!" and then I began hearing it from boys and girls with whom I went to school. If I didn't understand something, I'd ask questions, but it seemed like they were exasperated with me, for having to explain something that I apparently should already know.

I didn't deal with gender identity issues. I never wanted to play with dolls. I never had crushes on other boys. I remember once, when talking with my brothers saying, that I'd marry a girl one day and have children. I've heard stories from others who also are the children of alcoholics. Many of them suffered terrible physical abuse. My dad's abuse was mostly verbal, however it sometimes did become physical. I remember being nine, taking a bath and splashing some water out of the tub, onto the floor. My dad beat my bare behind with the back of a wooden hairbrush. I had bruises for at least 3 months. .

I began to carry a lot of anger. My dad would finish up his rants, with, "It's over! Just forget about it!" He had let loose a tirade in which he had cussed everyone and everything, telling us we were "sissies" (that's one of the nicer names). But I wasn't allowed to say anything. I began to wonder why God gave me this man for a father. It's not good to hold anger inside. A root of bitterness is easily formed. Even though I didn't think life was worth living, I really didn't think about suicide; I thought more about becoming an adult, and moving far away. When I was 15, things came to a head. My dad decided he'd go to a bar, and get drunk. He had a wreck and was arrested that night for driving under the influence. My anger towards God reached the breaking point. A tree my dad hit in the accident actually kept him from driving into a river and possibly drowning. I didn't say, "Thank you, God, for that tree!" My anger erupted, and I let it come out as I blasted God for having the nerve to put that tree there, so my father would be saved.

I'd like to take just a moment to say that God's love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness, are so far beyond what we can possibly understand! God poured out on me, an incredible amount mercy and grace, that night! He looks upon our hearts! Under the Law of God, I would have been stoned. Those doing the stoning would not have been permitted to show any pity or compassion. ***"But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*** (Romans 5:8)

God began to deal with me after that. I felt His love, but I also felt Him telling me that I was a sinner, and needed to confess my sins, and repent. On the last Sunday in July 1972, I went to an evening service at my church. Because of a mother's testimony and God working on my heart, I accepted Jesus into my life that night and asked Him to be my Savior. I felt a weight had been lifted off me! But my circumstances and my life didn't change. I still had an alcoholic dad who appeared to hate me. I thought life was supposed to be wonderful after one got saved.

When I was around 16, I went to the department store where my mother worked. I needed to use the restroom and it was then that a man sexually abused me. He didn't force me. I believe I could have resisted, but I didn't. Finally, a man old enough to be my father, had shown interest in me. After that, I tossed aside any hope of having any kind of normal relationship with my father and began going to this restroom every chance I could. Being a Christian, however, I was also



miserable because I knew what I was doing was wrong. Homosexual acts seemed to be the only way that I received affection from men. After graduating from high school, I wanted to leave home. Going to college appeared to be the only option. My dad was very adamant that I was going to go into the Marines, but that was not something I was willing to do so I worked to get a scholarship to college. I went as far away from home as I could, without leaving the state.

I still wanted to get married to a girl, and have children, but when I thought of sexuality, I began to see myself with guys. I couldn't seem to help myself. I wanted to be "normal" but found myself drawn to what the Church said was wrong. While in college, I was invited to a charismatic church. I really loved it! I felt an excitement I had never felt before! One night, a woman gave a testimony about having been an alcoholic, and how God had delivered her. She said she was drinking every night, and couldn't stop. She said she came to the end of herself, and cried out to God, and Jesus met her, saved her, and from that moment she said she never again had any desire to drink hard beverages. She said anyone could have that too, so I went forward. I cried, prayed, said what the counselor said to say, and believed God had done something. But on the way back to my seat, I felt a sexual temptation. I was devastated! I sought counseling, and was told that I still had unconfessed sin in my life, or my faith was weak.

I was miserable because I just knew God was angry at me because my faith was weak, or I had dared to ask forgiveness for my sins, while trying to fool God by not confessing everything. I was trying to live the Christian life on my own strength and understanding. I eventually gave up. I knew the only future in Heaven, for me, was standing before God and hearing Him tell me that I was saved but how mad He was at me, because my faith had been weak. I would have to sit through eternity looking at all I could have had, had I only enough faith. I was convinced that to overcome homosexuality all that was required was to stop doing that which I was tempted to do. If I stopped acting out, God would be pleased with me. I know now that is a works-based religion. It doesn't require a relationship. One does what one is supposed to do, and checks off one's list, and one is in right relationship with God. Ephesians 2:8-9 is a passage that many people have memorized, but maybe were like me, in that they didn't apply the truth: ***"For by grace ye have been saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast."*** We are saved BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH. Period! Even faith is a gift. If we try to work, we'll be lost, because the Bible says salvation is a gift. Even faith to believe is a gift. But I didn't apply God's truth. I kept going to church; kept praying; asking for deliverance; not acting out for periods of time, then feeling tempted, feeling terrible, asking for help; feeling a lot of pressure, and eventually giving in because I felt I didn't have a choice. Then I would feel bad because I had fallen. God was mad at me! Eventually I believed God had stopped wasting His time and gifts on me, because He knew I would eventually sin again. My double life went on for years.

During this time, I met a wonderful girl. We've been married for almost 34 years. It was also during this time I felt a strong call from God, to full-time ministry. I left my job and went back to school. It took nine years to get my Master of Divinity, but I believed it was God's will. However I continued the crazy sin/addiction cycle, described above, throughout this time. By December of 2003, I'd had enough. I begged God to do something in my life. It didn't matter what He did, as long as He did something, at that moment. If God didn't move, I was going to kill myself. I was serious, but I still didn't want to die. I wanted God to move. All I can say about that moment is that God filled me with His Holy Spirit in a way I hadn't experienced before, and I had a new found peace to help me move forward. In 2007 I found New Beginning Support Ministry (Truth WNC then). I began attending the men's support group and started to deal with some of the roots of my same-sex attractions. I've been involved since that time and now serve in a leadership capacity. I have found greater spaces of grace and freedom than ever before.

I now have victory over homosexuality and depression yet I'm still tempted sometimes daily. I've learned that victory is not in never sinning. It's not in doing good. God said in His Word, in Isaiah, that ***"...all our righteousness is as filthy rags."*** Victory is also not in facing only that with which one can handle on one's own strength and resources. Victory comes when we are empowered to choose the path God has provided for us, to escape the temptation. I've learned that it's not a sin to be tempted. If it was, then Jesus Christ would be disqualified to be the LORD and Savior of the world; Hebrews 4:15 says, ***"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."***

I've also learned that it's God's will that we face challenges we cannot handle with our own strength and resources. God WANTS us to face situations in which we must choose to submit to Him, and resist the enemy. When God does it, He gets the glory! It's okay to be tempted! God loves me! He isn't mad at me! The more we're tempted, the more we can choose God's way of escape. The more we choose God's way of escape, the more we see that God is good, and will lead us in ways that show us He can be trusted. The more we see God can be trusted, the more we'll want to submit to Him. The more we submit to Him, the more we talk with Him. The more we talk with Him, the stronger our relationship with Him becomes. And THAT is what God wants: a RELATIONSHIP with us!

Larry is a leader in the men's ministry with New Beginning Support ministry. He assists with the support group and mentors men in need. Larry has been married since 1979. He has three adult children and four grandchildren.