

by Joe Hallett

HOMOSEXUALITY

WALKING



#128

my trust. So now I can say of all men I am the most fortunate, because I know where my hope lies: Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

"Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him." (Rom. 4:7,8)

For local help or information, please contact:

"Walking Out Of Homosexuality" was reprinted from an article in *The Last Days Magazine*, a colorfully illustrated publication filled with challenging articles, ministry opportunities, and more!

For additional copies of this article order Ref. #128. For more information about Last Days Ministries, our missions training schools, or our free Ministry Materials Catalogue, send your requests to: Last Days Ministries, Box 40, Lindale, TX 75771-0040 USA.

We have a few other articles that we feel would be very helpful to you, and we'd be glad to send them to you with no charge or obligation. Just write us and ask for: "The Man In The Mirror" (Ref. #059), "The Father Heart Of God" (Ref. #046), "Hurt And Bitterness" (Ref. #057), "Restoration Through Forgiveness" (Ref. #113), "The Justice Of God" (Ref. #114), "But I Can't Forgive Myself" (Ref. #067), "I'm Gay... O.K.?" (Ref. #058), and "Touching The Untouchable: A Story Of AIDS" (Ref. #127). Also available is Joe Hallett's teaching "AIDS, Homosexuality - And The Church" on audio or video cassette. For a listing of all our tracts, audio and video teachings, pro-life materials, and the music of Keith Green and Bob Ayala - request our free Ministry Materials Catalogue!

Are You Searching?

If you want to know more about what it means to be a Christian, we have some information we'd like to send you. There is no charge or obligation. Just write to Last Days Ministries and ask for the free packet, "Walking With Jesus."

Do You Want Help?

There are concerned people who know what you're going through and know how to help. Many of them have been set free from homosexuality themselves and would love to help you in any way they can. If you or someone you love is struggling with homosexuality, you can receive helpful literature, counseling, and possibly information about a support group in your area. Just contact one of the addresses listed below.

Exodus International

(A referral organization that can put you in touch with a ministry in your area.)

P.O. Box 2121, San Rafael, CA 94912
(415) 454-1017

Exodus Europe

c/o True Freedom Trust
P.O. Box 3, Upton, Wirral, Merseyside
ENGLAND L49 6NY

Exodus South Pacific

c/o Liberty
15 Eagle Terrace, Torwood, Brisbane, 4066
Queensland
AUSTRALIA

Regeneration Books

P.O. Box 9830
Baltimore, MD 21284-9830
(301) 661-0284

Carries Christian books on homosexuality, HIV/AIDS, sexual addiction, and sexual abuse. Write or call for their catalogue.

What I remember most from my childhood is a deep hunger to be loved. My father ruled our home with a tyrannical self-interest, and I was the frequent target of his bitter sarcasm. No matter how I tried to please him, nothing I ever did was good enough.

Gradually I began to look to other men for love.

For many years I would cut out pictures of men from magazines and hide them under my mattress. I would take them out at night and create whole worlds in my head. Worlds where these men would love me and care for me as my father never did. Initially there was nothing sexual in these fantasies - only a son desperately longing for the love of a father.

In the real world I had a crush on any man who was kind to me. It didn't matter whether he was a teacher, a bill collector, or a grocery store clerk - I was open and vulnerable to anyone that showed an interest in me. When I discovered sex with some neighborhood boys at the age of ten, it felt exciting and dangerous at the same time. I didn't want to say no to them because I'd never received so much attention from anyone in my life. Finally I was wanted for something, even if I felt dirty and humiliated afterwards.

But I knew it was wrong, and it wasn't just society telling me. Something deep within me immediately recognized the wrong, but being used sexually was better than being ignored. I saw myself as unlovable, ugly, and stupid - all the things my father said about me. I was bad. And the worse I felt about myself, the more I would return to sex to find that distorted sense of self-worth.

At first there was the basic need for the love of a father, but then sex became a way to fill my need for intimacy. Little by little homosexual relationships became my only way of coping with emptiness. Sex became my comfort, even though it was a false comfort. In my desperate search for male love, I unwittingly stepped into a deepening pit of lust and emotional dependency. My high school years became a dark blend of fear and forbidden desire.

I was terrified. What if someone knew? What if someone found out? I felt so different from everyone else. I knew the gay jokes and the disgust that society heaped upon "them" - so I hid inside myself. I tried to be noticed for my music, my humor, or for anything other than sex. My heartfelt desire was to be acknowledged as a person, yet casual sex only deepened my suspicion that I was less than nothing.

A New Kind Of Freedom

When I finally left home to go to college, something unexpected happened. For a brief moment, I was cut free from my past. There was no one there who knew where I'd been, or what I was. My slate

had been wiped clean - at least as far as other people were concerned.

Little did I know the scene was set for me to have a head-on collision with authentic Christianity. I had grown up in a "Christian" home - or so I thought. My family went to church every Sunday. I knew where God lived and what kind of people He hung out with, but I didn't know Him.

At college, some of the people I met told me God was not an all-powerful deity waiting to squish me like some kind of bug under His foot. They said Christianity wasn't a dry system of rules but a living, breathing relationship between me and the living God!

As a child I'd learned that God was distant and unreachable, yet here was a God who knew me better than I knew myself - and still loved me. If I reached out and took the gift of His love, He would cleanse me from all the sickness of my past.

I could not resist such love. I asked God into my life.

Falling Short Of The Glory Of God

Even though I had accepted Christ, I still refused to leave the homosexual lifestyle. Since I didn't know how to separate myself from it, I decided God would just have to accept me the way I was. Thus began the war between my love for God and my desire for homosexual relationships.

After two years of "living on the fence" - desiring God but also desiring men - I left college and moved to Minneapolis. It was a sort of a "mecca" for homosexuals in the Midwest, and seemed like a safe place for me to live.

As we drove into the city for the first time, my aunt pointed out a gay bar and told me I would do well to avoid it. Unwittingly, she provided the answer to my most pressing question. I had arrived. Freedom was mine, and I threw myself into the gay world with full abandon. I belonged. I fit in.

At first I felt guilty, but gradually my conscience became quieter and duller. I convinced myself that it didn't matter how you loved, all that mattered was that you did love. Rules and regulations seemed to destroy the freedom love could bring. I continually told myself it was okay to be a homosexual.

I dove deeper and deeper into sin. I didn't realize I was drowning. Love and intimacy were elusive, but sex was available and cheap. The men were different - but the situation was the same. I was a tool to be used, not a person. I would go out in search of love, but time and time again I would return knowing that I was only desired for how well I could perform.

To the world, I was just another homosexual on the street. But God continued to keep the small flame in my heart burning.



Joe at age 13



Army duty in Germany 1985



1986: Diagnosed with AIDS

A Second Chance

After living in Minneapolis and struggling for three years with student loans and other debts, I decided to join the army. My family thought I was crazy, but I was still on a desperate search for acceptance. I wanted to belong somewhere.

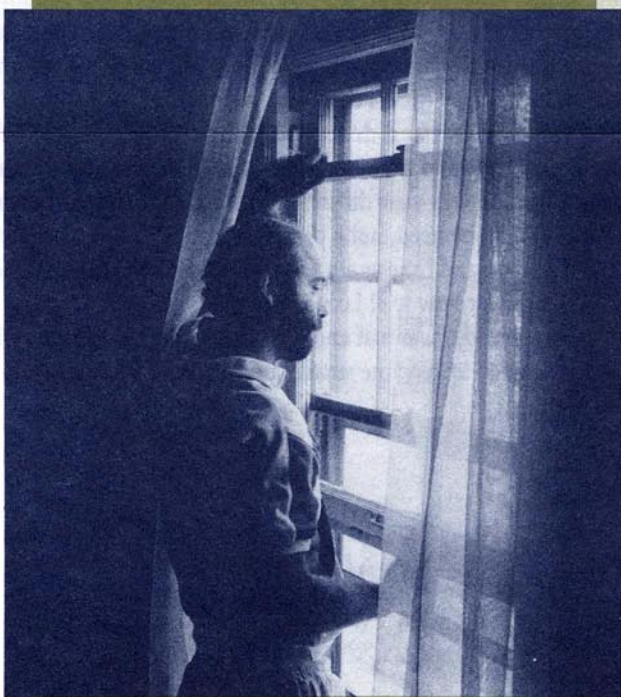
The Army sent me to a unit in Germany, and six months later I auditioned to sing with the Army Chorus in Europe. I was accepted and soon settled into my new assignment in Heidelberg.

I would like to say that I didn't continue in the gay lifestyle, but I did. Here I met a German named Claus and began my second live-in relationship. I didn't think life could get any better. I was singing before huge audiences in Europe and I was loved by a beautiful man. I had a life. I finally belonged.

But a strange thing was taking place. Even though I had the life I'd always dreamed of, I was growing increasingly restless. It was just about that time that the Lord sent an ambassador of His grace into my life. Actually, she was more like the "hound of heaven!" Her name was Debbie.

After many lengthy discussions about the Lord, Debbie began to invite me to her church. The first time, I turned her down. The following week she called again, and I made some excuse. But she continued to come to the barracks every Sunday morning. One month, two months, three months, four months went by – still she remained faithful. Finally, in the fifth month, I accepted her invitation. To be honest, I did this more out of frustration than from any real desire to go.

But her church was different from anything I'd ever known before. The people were truly friendly, and the service was alive – not so bound in ritual. That morning, an intense hunger for God awoke in me. I came away desiring to know the Lord in a new way. So I began to go to church.



But He Is Strong

Yet I continually complained about having to give up the thing I desired most. One day before Sunday School class, I again rehearsed my complaint against God: If homosexuality was sin, then why didn't He take it away? After all, God was more than powerful enough to deal with my sin! I accused Him of not doing His part to deliver me from my struggle.

But that day the class was reading from the book of Jeremiah, and when it came my turn to read the words leapt off the page: "Why has my pain been perpetual and my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Wilt Thou indeed be to me like a deceptive stream with water that is unreliable? Therefore, thus says the Lord: 'If you return, then I will restore you – before Me you will stand; and if you extract the precious from the worthless, you will become My spokesman.'" (Jer. 15:18,19)

The Spirit of God had rebuked me with my own mouth! I felt as if He had just dunked me in cold water. I was severely shaken, and began to pray in earnest that God would give me the desire to leave homosexuality behind for good.

No One Can Serve Two Masters

I knew I could no longer serve both God and my desire. Matthew 6:24 became the verse I couldn't forget: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other..."

But I didn't know how to change! I loved men. Everything about them attracted me – how could I give them up? I was so weak. I prayed that God would just give me the desire to leave Claus. That was all I had the strength to pray.

Two months later, while sitting alone in a gay bar in Berlin, I began to reflect on my life. None of my homosexual relationships had brought me closer to my true objective: an intimate loving relationship with a man.

I confessed my sin to God that day. I admitted that I had messed up my life and my sexuality. I vowed that, if He would change me, I would follow Him. But my vow was conditional. I told God that if He didn't change me by the end of two years, I was going back into homosexuality.

That day I began to walk a new way – but at first I stumbled badly. I fell many times, but eventually I did succeed in laying my sexual behavior down. But I was still terrified of being left alone. That fear dominated my every waking moment. Who would be my friend without me somehow "paying" them?

In answer to my terrifying fear of loneliness, God immediately began to provide the love and friendship I so desperately needed. He gave me a wonderful friend, Julia. She taught me about God, and we grew together by leaps and bounds. She even helped me do really gut-wrenching things like going to my lover's house and moving all my things. God knew I could never have done that alone, so He gave me a Christian friend to strengthen me in my weakness.

After that the Lord brought godly men into my life – men who demonstrated the pure love and acceptance I so desperately needed. These men put aside their own fears about reaching out to a man struggling with homosexuality. Thank God for their courage and unconditional love!

I'm sad to say many Christians are afraid to reach out to those trying to leave the gay lifestyle. It's true many homosexuals don't know how to relate to men on a non-sexual basis – but how will they learn if no one reaches out to them with real love and friendship?

Relationships with Christian brothers have helped me to walk in the light of God, and I know that will be true for others. The need for male love lures most men into homosexuality, and only the unconditional love of God's people will help lead them out of that desperate loneliness.

One Day At A Time

Laying down sinful desires is a very long process.

Although I'd given up the outward show of homosexuality in Germany, there was much I hadn't released. I still harbored a small hope that God would someday change His mind and make homosexuality okay!

Not many of us are willing to acknowledge the fact that it may take time to change. We live in an age where we're taught to want everything, and want it now! Everyone demands instant cures and easy answers. But sometimes those answers are not instantly forthcoming.

Too many people coming out of the gay lifestyle echo the same sentiment: "If Exodus or Outpost can't 'cure' me of homosexuality in six months, then forget it!" Each time I hear that I'm reminded of the very words I spoke to God back in Berlin.

Some people think you're not really saved if you still struggle with homosexual desire, but I don't believe that's true. All Christians struggle with the temptation to sin. We need to realize that a salvation experience is not a pre-frontal lobotomy or a substitute for exercising personal discipline. God does bring change, but not always instantaneously. And contrary to some popular belief, godly change does not always come about without pain or struggle.

A Tree Of Righteousness

A growing percentage of Christians, and even many unbelievers, think that believing in Christ should put an end to our struggle with sin.

But that is a lie.

God is interested in something much more important than our comfort – He is intent upon developing His eternal character within

us. And He uses our daily struggles with the flesh to shape and define that character. God can and does use struggle and conflict to bring forth His glory in us.

As A.H. Strong once wrote:

"A student asked the president of his school whether he could take a shorter course than the one prescribed.

'Oh yes,' replied the president. 'But then it depends on what you want to be. When God wants to make an oak, He takes a hundred years. But when He wants to make a squash, He takes six months.'"

I hope you want to be an oak.

Seeking God For Comfort

Although my sexual liaisons with men ended seven years ago, I am still imperfect.

When I give in to despair or refuse to seek God for comfort, then I find myself most vulnerable to my old romantic dreams. My fleshly desires still continue to war against my desire for the peace and righteousness of God.

Most of us want to be able to switch off our sinful natures like we switch off a lightbulb – but I don't think that's a very realistic attitude towards salvation. My desperate need for God's strength keeps me incredibly close to Him. Like a child on a busy city street, I know that if I let go of His hand – even for a moment – I'll get hit by a bus.

I am still a sinner who struggles with his flesh, but I'm being changed daily. I used to think Christianity was just God's scoreboard for keeping track of all my sins. But now that I've walked with the Lord for several years, I know that Christianity simply means total

dependance on the love and forgiving mercy of my Father in heaven.

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." (Is. 43:1-3)

For Your Light Has Come

God's love is reaching out to each one of us through the brokenness of our hearts and lives. But the question is: Will we trust Him even when it hurts? In Jesus, I have found Someone that I can give my whole self to – body, soul, and spirit. In Him I have placed

