

BUGGIN' OUT!

Newsletter

Applying Biblical Truth and Humor to the Struggle.

Thorns

It had been a drama-filled week for me. My car battery died, my toenail fungus wouldn't, and I couldn't find my house key. Two of my friends weren't speaking to me and I didn't know why.

It appeared the only thing I had going for me was the fellowship I was receiving from my friends in the support group. They were a great bunch of guys. They seemed to respect me and, unofficially, I began to assume a leadership role. The other men often solicited advice from me when they were feeling tempted or if they backslid into acting out. It's no wonder I answered the way I did when my buddy Don asked me how I was doing.

I told him I was doing great. Don confided he was not doing too well and that he had met a man the previous weekend and almost had a sexual fall. I put my arm around Don and spewed out some wise, comforting words. He asked me how I always seemed so upbeat and in control. He told me I was his mentor and that he wanted the same peace and joy he saw in me. I put on my "I'm more recovered than you are face", lowered my voice an octave, and said, ***Hang in there Don. God will deliver you from your homosexual cravings in His own perfect time. Let's pray about it.*** I never hated myself more than at that moment.

Sure I had come a long way in my homosexual struggles, but I still had attractions. Because of pride and my placing importance in others' expectations of me, I failed to tell Don the truth...that the joy in my heart and the peace in my eyes had only little to do with the freedom from homosexuality I was starting to experience. They had very much to do with finally being able to walk in intimacy with Jesus, without the barriers presented by intense gay cravings. I had to pause and reevaluate.

So what if homosexual feelings return now and then? And who cares if we don't feel immediate or any attractions to the opposite gender? Homosexuality is not the opposite of heterosexuality, but rather a barrier to attaining it and a hindrance to perfect fellowship with our Lord. The purpose of recovery is not to fall in love with a woman and prove the program works...its purpose is to attack the homo-erotic desires and cravings inside

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us that are getting in the way of falling more deeply in love with Jesus Christ. Falling in love with a godly woman is then an added gift.

How I wish I could go back to that evening and tell Don that the healing I gained was indeed a pleasant surprise to me, but it was not the fire in my heart. My fire was in knowing that Jesus was the One responsible for bringing about that healing.

Don, I failed to say it then because I was proud, but here it is. You are not alone. After four years of walking away, I still get cravings, I still have "bad days", and I can't say I have any plans yet to marry. But I can tell you this: some men have been able to change their sexual preference and actually report going through a second puberty for women. Other men gain control over their gay addictions and find peace in their singleness. And still others spend each and every day fighting an uphill battle to maintain their obedience to Christ. I am a little of all these men.

Don, having attractions to women is not a sign of a better heart. It is a sign that our God is a God of incredible miracles and tender graces. The miracles and graces He has in store for you may be different.

More often than not, we tend to focus on men who have successfully heterosexualized. And when we learn of their broken backgrounds, courageous journeys and outrageous victories the celebration is legitimate and justifiable. These are the men whom we mention in sentences containing words like "healing", "success", and "transformation". These men have had to work hard, sacrifice much, and learn the discipline of "dying to self" to get where they are today. These men are living proof that the program works...that you don't have to live gay.

And then there's you Don. You have been coming to our meetings faithfully for six years. You also have worked hard, sacrificed much and learned the discipline of "dying to self" to get where you are today. You readily confess you struggle daily with temptation and you state you have absolutely no attractions for the opposite sex, if someone asks you. Remarkably, I've never once heard you talk about giving up.

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In the Bible, Paul refers to the "thorn in his side" that grieves him daily. There are those who feel Paul was referring to a personal struggle with homosexuality in this passage. I am not one of them. Paul was a man gifted with the ability of excellent self-expression. Surely if this intelligent, articulate man had been fighting same sex attractions, he would have selected wording more accurately descriptive of the battle, perhaps something along the lines of "the railroad spike in my chest cavity" when describing the torment. But nonetheless, Paul, in spite of his unnamed personal trial, continued on in unconditional obedience to Christ. You and Paul have much in common.

Don, You called me a mentor, but it is you who has taught me. You see, Don, you are a beautiful example of taking Christ seriously. Your childlike faith in the midst of discouragement, your selfless adherence to the Word, and your unquestioning obedience to Jesus Christ are what the walk is all about. And, the next time we scan our minds for a name to mention in statements concerning "healing", "success", and "transformation", we need give you a second look.

Yes. You have made me see and understand that, although Paul complained of a thorn, he persevered joyfully for Christ's Kingdom. Too many times I have let my own thorn of homo-erotic cravings distract me enough to not reach out and help those suffering from thorns of depression, to not feed those hungry with thorns of poverty, and to not visit those tormented by thorns of loneliness.

At His crucifixion, Jesus suffered not one, but a crown of thorns. I believe the crown of thorns placed on Christ's head was not a casual gesture. I believe it was a divinely premeditated trophy placed on Him to symbolize the victory He won for us that day. The crown shouts that He suffered through and He understands all our thorns...the thorn of criminal temptations, the thorn of adulterous temptations, and the thorn of homosexual temptations too... that very day we were given the power to live and serve despite any and all thorns that pierce us.

When you reach out with Christ's love to those in pain, Don, boldly tell them about your thorn of homosexuality. Yes, proclaim it loudly for all to hear. In doing so, you will be compared mentally to those men with the same thorn,

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who walk without Christ. The Jesus Differential will be noted and your witness for Christ will be great.

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