

## *Steve's Testimony*

It was in the fall of 1969 in my 4<sup>th</sup> grade year when my life as a young boy changed. My teacher, Mrs. Wren returned that fall to teaching after being out since the beginning of the year for health reasons. It was shortly after her return that I became the target of her hurtful remarks and unfair treatment. She could see immediately that I was a sensitive boy and decided to make my life miserable by teasing me in front of my classmates. Each night I would dread waking up in the morning worrying if this was going to be a day of psychological torture she could so easily inflict. Her treatment of me caught the attention of my classmates and I started to notice that I was being treated differently by them – and not in a good way. It was January of 1970 during 4<sup>th</sup> grade that I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and was baptized.

From that time on, I would gradually withdraw from the world I knew, avoiding the peer interaction especially with other boys for fear of not fitting in that I know now, was necessary to grow into manhood. As Dr. Joseph Nicolosi describes in *'Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality'*, boys like me became “kitchen window boys” withdrawing from active involvement in the competitive, rough, physical world of boys, and becoming a mere observer of that world, watching from the kitchen window. It wasn't only the world of playgrounds, ball fields and tree houses from which I withdrew, I withdrew from the very ground on which my manhood was to be formed – putting my growth into manhood on hold. Since my father and I shared no interests, I became an island unto myself with my mother being the only one who I truly believed loved me.

My relationship with my father was a distant one. He traveled 2 -3 days a week and when home, spent his time reading the paper, watching TV, or working around the house. I remember having no connection to my father growing up – it was hard to get his attention – his mind occupied elsewhere. I knew then that I didn't have the same kind of relationship with my father that other boys had. As an adult, I now realize that something happened or didn't happen with my father that caused him to reject me or maybe I rejected him, probably at an early age around 3 or 4. The father-son bond, nurturing, and modeling that a young boy needs stopped from that early age on.

In my pre-teen years, I grew increasingly aware that I was different from other boys – I didn't feel that I was accepted by them and I wasn't comfortable around them in groups. I wanted so badly to be “one of the boys” but the knowledge that I was different and the fear of rejection was too overwhelming for me. They took the risks that I was unwilling to take – they sometimes failed but mostly succeeded in the “tests” of manhood with the other boys and like most, grew into men comfortable in their masculinity.

During my high school years, I would fight what was happening to me. I was part of the Jesus movement of the late sixties and early seventies and proudly wore the label of “Jesus Freak”. I was a leader in our youth group and my church friends became my refuge in my otherwise troubled life. I had girlfriends, having intercourse with one of them trying to prove to myself that I was normal while secretly being envious of what other young men possessed – confidence in themselves and their masculinity. They had something I wanted but didn’t have. Like most young men like me, the envy became obsession and the craving for their masculinity eventually drew me into the world of same sex attraction. Since I didn’t have it myself, I would steal theirs. Yet, I knew that this is not what God wanted for my life.

Along with adulthood came the extreme emotional pain of facing up to what I really was – a man attracted to other men. Fleeting thoughts of taking my own life entered my mind from time to time as a possible way out of my horrible dilemma. Over a period of 4 years, I reconciled myself to the fact that I was gay – finally I admitted it and finally there was peace, and the emotional battle in my mind was over. With that acceptance came denial of God in my life. There wasn’t room for both; the conflict was too great. Blaming God for my predicament somehow made life a little easier for me.

Dabbling in this dark world would become my life throughout my twenties as I bounced in and out of relationships. Eventually, in my early to mid 30’s, I retreated from intimate contact with either sex – the world of women was too uncomfortable and world of men became too dark a place for me to dwell – I was floundering without much of an identity. Although I had no relationship with God, he would prove to be with me, guiding me through my life with a purpose only he knew. I would realize later that he had been with me from the day I was born with a master plan I have yet to fully understand.

When I was 36, in June of that year, I met a woman named Marcy. We met at a hotel function where I worked. She had just accepted a position there and attended the function to get acquainted with some of the people she’d be working with. Our friendship grew quickly and we became best friends. We knew everything about each other, our greatest joys and our deepest fears. She knew all about my past and I knew hers. Later, I would find out she needed me as much as I needed her during those first few months.

One day that December on the drive home from work, a revelation occurred to me that I now know was planted within me by God. I realized that I was in love with this woman. I remember immediately thinking that was crazy; it couldn’t be possible. But the more I thought about it, the more I began to believe it could be true. The connection I felt with this person I had known only a few months was indescribable. I fell for her like a ton of bricks – a feeling I had never known before.

Shortly thereafter, we began talking about the possibility of being together as a couple and we quickly fell in love in a matter of days. I had no fear about pursuing this relationship and at that time, I didn't understand why and I didn't care. Every minute we were together was like magic. I can't describe the depth of feelings I was experiencing. I couldn't imagine that someone like her could fall in love with someone like me. It is best described by a part of our wedding vows. *"She put her hand into my heaped up heart and passed over all the foolish, weak things that she couldn't help dimly seeing there. She drew out into the light all the beautiful belongings that no one else had looked quite far enough to find. She helped me make out of the lumber of my life, not a tavern, but a temple. I fell in love with her not only for what she is, but for what I am when I am with her. I love her not only for what she made of herself, but for what she is making of me."* We were married on September 27th, 1997; the best day of my life.

Our early married life of course, was an adjustment. I became an instant step father to Marcy's 6 year old daughter Samantha, we moved to Albuquerque, NM to take over a business and I was suddenly living in a heterosexual world. Intimacy was not a problem – I attributed the successful adaptation to this new world to finding my soul mate who just happened to be a woman. And for some reason, her gender didn't seem to have any bearing on my ability to be intimate.

As time passed, I found myself doing things that I never had any interest in doing before. I started tinkering with mechanical things, tackled landscaping, started doing yard work, and fixed things that were broken. Without realizing it, I was doing the things that men do. Eventually, I began participating in "guy things" like playing golf with other men, working out at the gym, and playing poker. Over time, I just started feeling more at ease around other men and, as a husband, gladly assumed the role of taking care of the things that husbands take care of. I didn't realize it then, but I was resuming my growth into manhood that stopped when I was a young boy.

While the attraction to men has almost entirely diminished, thoughts still enter my mind from time to time. Growth into manhood and heterosexuality is very complex and the things that contributed to homosexuality were, by nature, self-protective. As a boy, I removed myself from situations that were threatening and broke off relationships where I felt rejection. I had made a vow to never let anyone hurt me. The most damaging result of this vow is that it makes loving and being loved a challenge. Loving means being vulnerable – something I have discovered is difficult for me. Living in the moment and being emotionally present in my marriage is the area where God is convicting me now. He is helping me to strip away the protective armor I have grown accustomed to wearing and taking me to a place where I will be one with my wife on every level and ultimately, the husband he intended me to be.

Like any married couple, Marcy & I have had our fair share of problems over the years with complexities that a lot of marriages don't have. There have been times where we could have walked away from our marriage, but something deep inside each of us has always known that we were put together for a purpose far greater than our own needs. While we were happy, each of us knew there was something missing both individually and in our marriage.

In August of 2008, the impact of the death of a family friend made it clear that God is what was missing in each of our lives. We started going to church and shortly thereafter made Sagebrush Community Church our home. We rededicated our lives to Christ and have since vigorously pursued his direction in our lives and marriage. We joined a small group where we can grow together spiritually with a few other couples which has been a huge blessing. God became the center of my life again and quickly pushed me down the path of continued healing.

In early 2009, I started working with a Christian counselor, Bob Gates, who heads up Lifemor, an extension of the ministries of Exodus, Regeneration and NARTH – Christian based organizations that believe and promote the concept of transformation from homosexuality to heterosexuality. This transformation is best explained by Alan Medinger in his book *'Growth Into Manhood'*. Young boys who never assimilate into the world of men grow to covet the masculinity of other men and their envy becomes obsession that grows into same sex attraction. Resuming the journey into manhood lost in youth restores the confidence in ones masculinity and the world of men. The same sex attraction diminishes and the pursuit of male/female relationships becomes possible.

I also joined a Lifemor support group of men who have similar backgrounds who are collectively growing into their God intended manhood. The group is now based at Calvary Chapel in Albuquerque where an outreach to those in the church suffering from same sex attraction is underway and God has provided a ministry for me to serve as a lay counselor to men as they begin the program.

This powerful ministry has helped me see that God was moving in my life long before I rededicated myself to Him. I now see that what I always viewed as a curse is really a blessing and a gift from God – something I can share with others afflicted with the same circumstances that I suffered from. Healing requires forgiveness. I forgave my father years ago and now I have forgiven myself. My father was raised in a home without love but he did the best he could as a father and I did the best I could as a son. We are close now and I love him very much.

With Gods help and the never ending support of my wife, I continue my transformation into the man that God intended me to be. He is my friend, encourager, helper and comforter. I have placed my hand in the hand of Jesus and He is the one who will walk with me the rest of the way. He is the one who will bring to completion the work that was begun before I was born. **Praise God...**