

Obedience Made the Difference by Tim Wilkins of Cross Ministry

“Up on your feet so I can knock you down again!” I stood horrified in the middle of our circular hallway as my father shouted those words at my mother who lay at his feet. He had just knocked her to the living room floor. My parents' altercation had awakened me in the middle of the night.

This was one of my earliest memories as a five or 6-year-old child. I believe I unconsciously made a promise that moment, “I--will--not--be--like--that--man!” Thus began my rejection of masculinity and embracing of homosexuality.

Chaos characterized the place we called 'home.' Tables were overturned and traumatizing profanity echoed throughout the house. It was not uncommon to find shards of glass covering the floors many mornings, a domestic battlefield from the night before. On one occasion, dad struck the side of mama's head with a shoe and burst her eardrum. She cried in horrible pain! The next night he vowed to do the same to the other ear if she did not stop crying.

Unconscious Cries for Help

So intense was the atmosphere I began to sleepwalk. As related to me by my mother and a brother, I would walk to that circular hallway, kneel facing my parents' bedroom, clasp my throat and make choking sounds. My nightly routine would bring my mother to utter horror; my father slept through my unconscious cries for help. Neither parent recognized their youngest son might need counseling, though they probably did surmise their perpetual rages contributed to my growing fears.

Several decades have not erased the memory of a summer afternoon, playing alone on a hill beside my house, and desiring to be held by a man. I was a small boy. There were no erotic feelings then, just a distinct desire for male intimacy and protection-- a God-given human need that had gone unmet during my early childhood years.

I knew I was 'different' even then; something did not fit.

Emotional Pain

Rarely did I experience my father's approval and love, and my mother, whose own needs went unmet, turned to me for counsel and help. I became her surrogate husband. She openly expressed to me her disdain for my dad and disgust for sex. She frequently berated me in order to get me to be a mediator between her and dad. (It is important to note I have never heard or read of a case where a parent consciously tried to make their son or daughter gay.)

I was extremely self conscious and excessively modest; as a child I had never felt I belonged. My self esteem was pitifully low.

On reaching puberty, I recognized an attraction for guys at school. Listen up! I did not consciously choose to be attracted to the same sex; one of life's mysteries is that we don't get to choose what we are tempted by, but I DID consciously choose to eventually give in to those temptations.

My emotional pain was so severe I wore a tiny piece of paper under my watchband for years on which I had scribbled almost microscopically, “Lord, I am trusting you for healing.” Although at age nine I had given my heart to Jesus, knowing He died for my sin, my emotional turmoil continued.

Abandoned!

When my parents' ballistic tirades reached an intolerable level, dad left us and went to his parents' house for several months. Mama invited me into her bed for emotional support. Eventually our utilities were turned off. On one occasion, dad stopped by for a brief visit; as he left our rented house to return to his parents, mama hit him in the back with a flowerpot.

On an occasion in my early teens, dad became so angry with me that I fled to the bathroom and locked the door. He pounded the door, demanding I come out. “Please stop” I screamed! When I refused for fear of being beaten, he began to kick down the door while mama stood alongside him pleading for me to come out; “everything will be all right” she said. I knew everything would not be all right! As the door shattered under his strength, I jumped out the second floor window and ran to safety, hiding in a nearby vacant house.

It was about this time that I gave in to my same-sex attractions. I had been friends with a guy from school for years. His pleasant and approving smile fascinated me; he liked me. For the first time in my life another male liked me. Thus began my sporadic involvement in homosexual activity. I quickly found that homosexuality provided excitement, but not fulfillment. It gratified, but never satisfied.

Life at home remained hell. Mama manipulated me to get at dad. When I did not cooperate with her wishes, she would accuse me “you love him more than me, don't you?” I didn't want to choose between them; I simply wanted them to love each other and stop fighting.

On another occasion she and I argued over an incidental matter. When dad came home from work, she demanded he punish me. The resulting purple whelps on my legs were conspicuous – so much so that the following morning I woke my mother before going to school and asked her to write me an excuse from dressing out at PE. I was ashamed to dress out for track, knowing the belt marks would draw attention.

Obedience

My homosexual activity continued until my early twenties when I decided that although I honestly did not know how not to be homosexual, I did know how to be obedient.

Although the Bible gives no explicit steps for coming out of homosexuality, the Bible is replete with principles I could apply to my life. The Psalmist wrote about turning his eyes away from temptation. I refused to look at pornography and averted my gaze from anything which might cause me to stumble. I had to make major adjustments in my life. To focus on God's best for me rather than my psychological pain I meditated on Paul's admonition, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true... noble... right... pure... lovely... admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things.” (Phil 4:8) I asked

the Holy Spirit to become my personal mentor and to guide me into all truth. More importantly, I asked The Holy Spirit to teach me the right way to relate to other men.

I recall reading about Jesus' first miracle – at a wedding of a man and a woman. When the good wine was gone, Jesus' mother told Jesus about the dilemma. Jesus said “My time has not yet come.”

But a moment later Mary tells the servants of the house “whatever Jesus tells you to do, do it.” I do not believe Mary recognized the eternal significance of her advice that day; when we do what Jesus tells us to do, then the miracle occurs. I've often wondered if the servants of the house expressed any hesitation about bringing barrels of water into the house. Is it possible they feared the master of the house might fire them for such a stupid act – offering water to wedding guests?

But they followed Jesus' instructions and the water became wine.

The Transformation Continues

At age 22, I knew God was saying “Tim, go back to college” and I did! During those years I became aware that God had a purpose for me. Living in a men's dorm had a healing effect on me. I was forced to interact with other guys on a daily basis, to become their peer, to learn appropriate relationships with them. I excelled in music, receiving five music awards during my undergraduate work.

During my college summers, I served as a music/preaching evangelist and youth director through my state denominational convention. I went from a shy, introverted, self-conscious wallflower to an assertive man who boldly proclaimed the authority of God's Word. The boy who despised oral book reports in high school was being transformed into a godly man who unashamedly shared his love of Christ.

During one of those summers while I preached across the state, my parents separated and divorced after 33 years of marriage; our beautiful home was sold. I learned all this after the fact. The news shook me, but it did not deter me.

From college, I went to Southwestern Seminary – to study the Bible versus music. When my college choral conductor learned I was not going to pursue music ministry, he voiced his opposition in pleasant but firm words. “Tim, you have excelled in composition, music theory, choral arranging; why are you not pursuing music in seminary?” All I could say was “this is what God wants and that is sufficient for me.”

On beginning seminary I was like a dry sponge thrown into a huge lake; I soaked up everything. The Bible became increasingly alive to me. Not only was I receiving a great theological education for a future ministry I knew nothing about, I was applying biblical truth to my sexual brokenness.

Same-sex attractions continued throughout college and seminary, but to a lesser degree. I remained steadfast in refusing to give in. In fact, by this time I had told God “it does not matter if I am ever attracted to a woman as long as I get You!” That prayer was a milestone; it did not matter if I was ever attracted to the opposite sex. What mattered was becoming a follower of Jesus Christ.

What Next?

After graduation I was called to a pastorate in my hometown-- a single man living in a four-bedroom house. During this time my father went through a foreclosure on his home, a separation from his second wife, alcoholism and near suicide. With all the responsibilities of a young single pastor weighing on my shoulders, I took my father into the parsonage and tended to him until I could enter him in an alcohol abuse facility – none of this known to my congregation.

I eventually resigned from that pastorate – disillusioned and depressed. I cried out to God “what do you want from me? I've lived a life of celibacy for more than ten years now. I've followed you as closely as I know how. What do you want from me?”

God's Dramatic Intervention

I was about to find out! A lady friend from seminary visited my city. I remember liking her in seminary, but had never pursued her. We spent several days together. We were affectionate, nothing else, but that was enough. On that November day I experienced for the first time in my 33 years a dramatic, ecstatic and romantic attraction for the opposite sex. What had God wanted from me? The faith to trust Him unreservedly!

I wanted to tell the world what God had done but couldn't, for to do so would mean I had to divulge my past homosexuality and that was politically incorrect.

This lovely lady and I did not marry; today she is married to a wonderful Christian man and they know the story and are very supportive. (You know who you are.)

Five years later, on a Thursday, September 17, 1992 at 7:19 PM, Lisa came into my life. We met at a single's event and sparks flew – in the best way. Lisa was everything I longed for – a beautiful godly lady with a smile from Heaven. The Bible is right! “Delight thyself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.”

Before we were engaged, I sat down with Lisa for a long talk. “Lisa” I said, “you need to know something about my past since it may influence our future.” With a firm voice the words emerged, “I used to be gay!”

Lisa never wavered in her love for me. Unknown to the two churches I had served as pastor, I had specifically studied and preached biblical texts I could apply to my healing process. Those sermons and exegetical material were stacked on the coffee table for her to see.

Lisa and I married August 21, 1993. I was 38. I rejoice to say “although I'm no longer gay, I'm the happiest I've ever been and I owe that to Jesus Christ.”

More than a year later when Lisa and I were convinced I should go public with my testimony, several prominent Christian friends advised against it. One told me “But it will ruin your testimony” to which I replied, “But this is my testimony.” I was reminded that after Jesus healed a man from Gadara, Jesus

told him “go and tell what great things the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you.” I have been doing that ever since!

God has blessed us with more miracles-- three daughters--Clare, Grace and Ellie. As the song says, “God is good, all the time! And all the time God is good.”

Addendum: God has graciously provided healing within my family. Mama, now with the Lord, is sadly missed; "O God, I long to hear her voice again." And I will! And prior to dad's death, we finally became what God had intended from the very start . . . “father and son.”