

Led To The Living Waters

By Andy Comiskey



After being gang-raped, beaten up...and hit with several bouts of VD, I decided to reevaluate my "liberating" move and give my life to Christ.

Childhood has become a fond memory. My parents were loving, our environment nicely suburban and the major crisis seemed to be chicken pox or what instrument to play in the school orchestra. As Episcopalians, we learned the church's rituals and creeds, but not a lot about salvation. (When I say "we", I mean my two older brothers and younger sister, all spaced apart by two years.)

But for me, there was a difference. I remember an early and unusual desire for "feminine" things, such as playing house instead of war, wielding a paint brush rather than a baseball bat. The ambiguity of not being quite secure in a little girl's role or a little boy's was developing. With age, the situation became more complicated. Life was not miserable, just confusing. There was an increasing hypersensitivity to remarks about masculinity, or lack of it. With puberty came the realization of another difference, my sexual desires were geared toward other males.

Now that's a heavy secret to have in junior high school, especially when the term "fag" connoted a fate worse than death. The name-calling continued, as did the inner struggle. My self-identity became increasingly blurred. I didn't understand what I was developing into, or why. High school didn't shed much light on the question until I met a couple others with the same struggle. We began to frequent the Hollywood disco scene, thinking ourselves very chic. By graduation, we were ready to embrace the lifestyle.

One friend and I moved out together into the "gay ghetto" area of Long Beach but soon found the whole thing draining and dehumanizing. The bars, beaches and parties seemed to create a bigger void than they filled. One's sexuality became foremost and I became increasingly absorbed with my appearance, while losing sight of the moral standards taught me as a child. The downward spiral quickened. After being gang-raped, beaten up at a party and hit with

several bouts of VD, I decided to reevaluate my "liberating" move. A great need had arisen that nothing in sight could meet.

Then my two older brothers claimed to have become Christians. I was skeptical at first—people were always throwing out bits of dogma and they had inoculated me. But the need was great, and when a good friend from high school came back into my life reborn and full of peace and joy, I didn't hold back. In November of 1976, I gave my life to Christ at a concert and vowed through my ignorance to live for Jesus.

I had acquired a hard shell to break. Drugs, booze and sex weren't the main obstacle, the social perspective was. My roommate and gay friends thought of me as increasingly flighty, while I was having my own problems adjusting to the Christian subculture. Most of my problem was a shaky spiritual foundation, due in part to pride and a lack of sensitivity on the part of fellow believers. But home was near, so I moved back and made a greater effort to get fellowship and to reach out to others in Christ's name. It worked, slowly but surely.

Sexual struggles hit, though they didn't floor me. I guess from the start I had the idea that if homosexuality was wrong, then God would grant me the victory. Sometimes, the tension between the flesh and the Spirit seemed almost unbearable. But each time I sought God instead of giving in, the closer victory became the next time. Masturbation was a release at first, but then became a burden as it only perpetuated the desire I wanted to be free of. My slate was far from clean, but it became clear early on that either God or a sexual appetite could guide me. I had to make the choice. Choosing Him provided the strength and grace to move ahead of that which only kept me down.

After two years in Long Beach, I transferred to the University of California (Los Angeles) where God directed me to a Christian fraternity house. Fifty people in one small building, all of diverse denominational backgrounds, what an opportunity to grow! God changed many misconceptions I had about straight people and even saw fit to make me the house's chaplain, as well as the leader of several outreaches.

While witnessing on campus one day, I met some members of a local church, who told me about their group meetings for former homosexuals. Though I didn't join that fellowship, a hope for being involved in ministry to gays was sparked.

During the summer of 1979, I participated in an outreach project at Hope Chapel, a Pentecostal church in Hermosa Beach, CA, where I had a chance to share my testimony. From then on, doors began opening for ministry to gays.

In the meantime, the Lord was dealing with me. That fall, I met Annette, a warm and forbearing girl who extended herself to me, regardless of my past. She won my heart, and taught me what responsible one-on-one love is, something unchallenged in my previous "pious" independence.

We grew a lot together, and became involved in the Vineyard Christian Fellowship, an independent church similar to one of Chuck Smith's Calvary Chapel congregations. My burden for gays deepened, and as a church counselor, I had several opportunities to minister to them. After sharing my testimony before the congregation in the summer of 1980, I was called upon a number of times to counsel gays, which prompted the church elders to suggest I

start an ex-gay support group. In October, Desert Stream was born, a Bible study aimed to Christians seeking victory over homosexuality.

The growth of Desert Stream was gradual, and this permitted a firm foundation to be laid. Within six months, we were counseling and discipling about fifteen individuals; at the end of the year, about thirty. Because of the increasing numbers, we began a ten-week series composed of what we found to be the most practical and important issues to consider in the homosexual transition. Alongside of the ongoing Bible study and the series, our one-on-one counseling load grew heavier and thus I was put on staff as assistant pastor of the Vineyard.

Annette and I have been married almost seven years. Growth has been wrought through honest communication and Christ's calling, which stretches our capacity to love beyond what we alone are able. In the process, both of us are maturing into His intentions. For me, that means allowing God to pare off the misconceptions I've held about my sexual identity, and thus freeing me to stand upright and firm as a man of God. Upon that foundation, no doubt or temptation can topple the work God has begun.

"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord...He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers." Jeremiah 17:7; Psalm 1:3.

Andy Comiskey is the director of Desert Stream and the author of Pursuing Sexual Wholeness. You can contact him through: Desert Stream Ministries e-mail: info@desertstream.org

<http://www.desertstream.org>