

A JONAH Man Talks About His Bi-Sexuality (posted 2008)

Written by A from Florida

This essay is prompted by questions posed to me in an earlier post. I stated that even though I've always identified myself as a heterosexual man, my sexual arousal pattern was very strongly oriented toward the same sex since puberty, that is, age 12 or so. The questions posed: How is this contradiction possible? Why doesn't this fact simply confirm the gay pride propaganda about "internalized homophobia?" Therefore, they would argue I should give into these same- sex attractions of mine and identify as gay?

I always suspected that my homoerotic desires were simply manifestations of some other need. After all, my same-sex attraction (SSA) would really flare up when I felt alone or rejected; on the other hand, it all but disappeared when I was hanging out with good friends and feeling accepted. I recognized a sobering fact: this sexual attraction to other boys was totally unlike my attraction to women, which is independent of my social situation or mood. My attraction to women was constant regardless of my mental state or emotional feeling. I remember even telling myself, at a fairly young age (15? 16?) -- "You don't really desire these guys sexually, you want them to like you, you want them to think you're cool, you want to be part of their group." Rather than pursuing this early-on insight, I embarked on a self-contradictory process of suppression and denial. I refused to deal with my issues by simply denying them. Sometimes I would grind my teeth and mutter to myself, "No! You are NOT

attracted to that man!" -- which was, of course, a lie. At other times, I would accept that I had unwanted attractions, but would tell myself that as long as I didn't act on them, it's as if they didn't exist; indeed, plenty of willpower and a fear of the consequences kept me from acting out for some 15 years. I accepted the SSA as a permanent fixture, as something I'm stuck with and can't do anything about.

Since I refused to admit that I had a problem, I wasn't looking for a real solution -- certainly not one attacking the root causes of the SSA. The homoerotic fantasies and urges got stronger and stronger until the dam broke. I began to act out homosexually last year.

About the same time that the acting out began, I was fortunate enough to discover JONAH, a therapeutic organization. They provided me with the necessary tools to formalize and crystallize the insight I had early on but lost along the way while in my process of denial. I also discovered that the best psychiatrist is the one who tells you something you intuitively already knew about yourself. I got the help to analyze what I really wanted out of life.

In truth, I was repelled by the dominant gay culture, the stereotypical mannerisms learned by gay men, and the whole idea of being sexually tender with another man. The gay world was diametrically opposed to my personal goals of having a traditional family, wife and children. Moreover, I always had Opposite Sex Attractions (OSA), an attraction totally different from my SSA attractions. I never had a problem being attracted to women, or having meaningful, emotional relationships with them, including satisfying sexual relationships.

My identity was always strongly heterosexual. Perhaps

my identity actually became hyper-masculine to compensate for the SSA (the martial arts, the physical and social "aggressiveness", etc.). So what then are the differences between my feelings of OSA and SSA?

I see attractive women all the time (I am attracted to several types, which more or less conform to most other men's judgment of female beauty). Of course, the attraction is never based on appearance alone -- there must be an emotional and intellectual connection as well. But my fantasies regarding women are always part of a complete story. I see us holding hands, talking, cuddling on a couch, making passionate love while looking into each other's eyes, that kind of stuff. The women to whom I am attracted are ones with whom I can visualize myself raising a family and being my best friend. When I experience intercourse with a loving woman who fits the model above, it has a wholesome, manhood-affirming, empowering effect. It makes me proud to be a man, proud to be able to please my woman.

Contrariwise, the SSA had a totally different feel to it. I'd see a man, and feel a certain pang of hunger. I wouldn't want to talk to him, nor get to know him, or even to be his friend. I would picture us in various very specific, very graphic sexual scenarios. And, as soon as the fantasy would be over, I'd want him gone -- out of sight and out of mind. These scenarios describing my SSA and OSA are total opposites.

I realize that I tend to be attracted to younger, boyish or innocent-looking, slim athletic men. For a long time I thought it was simple aesthetics, but in light of what I've learned about myself, it's not that simple. What I subconsciously looked for in SSA encounters, strangely enough, are friendships reminiscent of the friendships I desperately sought as a younger boy. It's a very strange

realization because I have no shortage of very good friends now, and by no means do I presently feel lonely or isolated. But SSA doesn't work on rationality; it feeds on scars formed long ago during one's formative years. As a child, I lacked deep meaningful friendships and healthy male affection due to a fear that I did not measure up. The men I'm attracted to now in some ways remind me of the friends I would have wanted years ago. In effect, I am trying to repair earlier same-sex peer wounds by a totally inappropriate means. After all, none of the homosexual encounters felt wholesome or manhood-affirming. Rather, like taking a drug, it had medicated my pain, albeit temporarily. What I experienced was an intense euphoric "high" followed by guilt, shame, depression, and a compulsive urge to seek more. (On the other hand, it should be pointed out that real life situations that provide negative responses often have an opposite effect as well: In my case, the isolation from my peers during adolescence created a self-reliance that to this day is one of my strongest character traits.)

Heterosexual relationships and sex are a hefty effort -- going out, talking, the slow progress of intimacy, the foreplay, worrying about the possibility of premature pregnancy, etc. The homosexual encounters, on the other hand, took the essence of sexual gratification and packaged it in a cheap, easily accessible container. You can get right to the point without wasting any emotional effort -- most of my encounters lasted only an hour or so (without knowing anything about the other person involved). It's the ultimate instant gratification, and I found it extremely addictive.

Since I have always had both SSA and OSA, in a very real sense I made a choice regarding my orientation. There were many reasons for rejecting the gay (or bi) lifestyle: religious, ethical, and pragmatic. Ultimately, I

always believed that only a wife and children could bring true happiness to a man; any man who claims to be happy otherwise is, I believe, simply coping (perhaps effectively) with a pathology.

When I traced my SSA history as a product of years of legitimate unmet needs, it all started to make sense. Of course those encounters would be so euphoric: they were tapping into those needs -- bottled up, pressurized (and deformed under pressure), explosive. Of course once exposed that emotional scar tissue would be particularly sensitive and raw. It's all so simple in my mind now, but for many months I was greatly distressed and confused. If the SSA experiences were so much more intense than the OSA ones, then what is my "real" orientation? The messages I heard on TV and read in the newspapers tried to convince me to think I should identify as "gay." But my inner self said "au contraire".

In this battle, I formerly viewed my effort to be straight as one of a painful sacrifice, one of "toughing it out" requiring me to give up the physically addictive high intensity for the greater ideal of having a normal family. Now I see how that thinking was all misguided. Those men could not possibly give me what I need -- there is no "sacrifice" to grieve over. If I fulfill my need for healthy authentic male connection in intimate non-sexual ways, I can be and in fact am at peace with my inner self and my physical drives. I can finally enjoy my OSA feelings without my former SSA feelings impinging upon them.

This essay cannot be complete without a comment on the disservice done to me by the education system, media, and prevailing culture. Starting from high school and all through college, I was bombarded by gay-affirming messages and offered countless resources in the form of counselors and straight-gay-transgender alliances. Not a

single mention was ever made of how to deal with unwanted same-sex attractions. The popular culture also sent out a very clear message that a person is defined by his urges ("obey your thirst"); this conveniently makes any internal struggle pointless at best and harmful at worst. If a man chooses to give into his same-sex attractions and lead a homosexual lifestyle, that is certainly his legitimate choice. If only the gay activists would afford me the same recognition of legitimacy!

My desire to free myself of my same-sex attractions is being attacked by the gay activists as an illegitimate denial of my "true" orientation and a capitulation to society's homophobia. The fact that even the few friends I've told about my SSA take more or less this stance is a testament to the massive victory of gay activism. When I think of the pain (and dangers) I could have been spared, had I had the opportunity to speak with groups like JONAH in my adolescence, I am filled with anger. All those years of pain, confusion (even fleeting thoughts of suicide) -- all inflicted on me, not because there isn't an alternative voice to the gay propaganda, but because this alternative is being viciously stifled, censored and delegitimized. I will do everything in my power to help groups like JONAH disseminate their message, in the hope they will reach the thousands of adolescents like myself who struggle with the shame, confusion and loneliness of unwanted same-sex attractions.