

God's Amazing Grace

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My name is Andre from South Africa. I was born on 28 February 1965 and was one of seven children.

My sensitive nature, detached relationship with my dad and older brothers and over identification with my mom and sister as well as my experiences with my peers and religion left me with feelings of insecurity, inferiority and inadequacy regarding my masculinity and my identification with other men, as well as sexual identity confusion. I didn't feel like one of the guys. I always felt different and not belonging. I never felt attracted to the opposite sex. It came as a shock to me in puberty when I did not feel attracted to girls, but to boys. I didn't know how to fulfill that deficit inside myself.

As a result of these feelings about myself, I found myself searching for masculine connectedness and identification, and that search led me to sexual behaviours and actions. These things left me dissatisfied and did not represent my values or who I really was.

Many times I prayed to God to take away these same-sex feelings from me. I was even willing to cut off my private parts. I reasoned according to what the scripture said, "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off." But I stuck with the sexual desires. This made me mad and despondent. Many times I was arguing with God and fighting these desires. How many times did I say to God that I never chose to have these desires nor did I ask for it and neither did I want it.

But I could never accept the fact that I was born gay. Furthermore, how could he make me gay and then still condemn me to hell because it's sin. However, deep inside of me a nagging voice was always telling me that same-sex attraction is not normal nor is it just another expression of normal healthy sexuality.

I thought that after I became a Christian everything would change and I would have no more same-sex attractions or desires. I was disappointed to find it did not change. I went for prayer and exorcism on several occasions, but it made no change to these desires. However the one thing I could not make peace with is the fact that people wanted me to believe that I was born gay. I continuously said to God that He could not be so confused to have made me a male and then give me desires that left my body incompatible with the persons I was attracted to. It was just totally against natural law.

I tried to find help but found no one with knowledge about same sex attraction that could help me. In the meantime I said to the Lord that I will not give up seeking solutions. I was convinced that I was not "born gay" and that somehow I would find solutions. At times despondent and

hopeless and at other times more hopeful, I continued the cycle of making promises and resolutions to God to stop my sinning just to find me breaking my promises again. The story of my life was what Paul said: "The good I want to do, that I did not do but that which I hate that I kept on doing." It was like a power stronger than me that was driving me.

These same-sex attractions became a real barrier to me in my ministry and doing God's work. I always had to fight against these desires and eventually gave in. I was always ashamed and guilt ridden. I felt like a hypocrite and could not stand it anymore.

All along I was searching for help here in South Africa but could find no one to help me. By now I have learned that conversion alone, more Bible reading, more praying, trying harder, attempting to drive out demons, attending more meetings and worship and praise is not going to change it. I have tried all of these without success. I tried surrendering more fully to Christ as Lord of my life but somehow my faith and practice did not match to bring me to victory.

I have also learned that the left wing of the church brought no solutions by trying to have me accept that being gay is what God made me to be. Trying to convince myself that *"I am born gay and that it's normal in every way just like heterosexuality, it's just a different orientation and preference of object. You can't throw it back in God's face the way He made you. God is love and He loves and saves Gay people too, though they remain gay. God is a God of love and will never condemn people of the same gender that love each other and stands in a relationship with each other", etc.*

I heard that the Bible should be reinterpreted against the cultural historical background. One after the other Bible verses are ripped apart to make it mean something so different than what I was used to. It's told that Jesus had a homosexual relationship with his beloved disciple. Naomi and Ruth and David and Jonathan are examples of Lesbian and gay relationships. On and on it goes.

Affirmative therapy did no better. Trying to be brainwashed *"To get rid of internalized homophobia and to accept who you are. You are born gay and that's how God made you. You are not sick. There is no scientific evidence that supports the idea that people can change. Get all your conservative ideas out of your head. That which the Bible, your church, and your parents taught you are utter nonsense. The science says its genes, hormones, your brain etc.*

Throughout all this the voice of the Holy Spirit never stopped speaking to me. I prayed Lord lead me to the truth.

It is then that I started to search the Internet. I contacted several organizations in America but the only one that responded was Richard Cohen from International Healing Foundation. That started a relationship that is still in existence today. Once I came in contact with Richard's work

and therapy, a new world opened up to me. I started to understand what happened to me and where these desires came from.

Two years of hard work followed. As I prayed to the Lord to lead me and show me the wounds and help me to heal from the emotional pain and I started to work the program, slowly but surely things started to change. There were times that I felt I want to give up. At times it felt like I was giving one step forward and two steps back. However I made this commitment never ever to give up. Even if I fall a thousand times, I will get up and walk again. That is also what happened. If there is one thing I have learned then it is that there are no quick fixes. It seemed like it first went worse before it became better. I have learned how weak I am and how I need Jesus. I have learned that when I am weak then I am strong because His power is shown in my weakness. I discovered that God was with me each step of the way, but He never did for me what I had to do for myself. He showed me the way but I had to travel it. He made me see the pain and the deficits in my life but I had to take action.

I had to deal with social phobia, build healthy good non-sexual male relationships. I had to expose myself and stretch myself outside my comfort zone. I also had to heal emotional hurts of the past and get legitimate love needs met. As I started to feel equal to other men and got affirmed in my gender identity and male sexuality and I learned to get in touch with my own feelings and needs and I learned to set healthy boundaries and to be assertive, life started to change for me.

As I progressed over time there came a stage where I realized that I had no attraction to the same sex any more. I could walk past billboards, see half naked men etc. and find it had no effect on me. I then went into a period where I was not attracted to any sex.

What did remain was a type of sexual lust and all I knew was homosexual sexual acts. So at times I would find myself fantasizing about males. However it was not because there was any attraction to men, but I had no knowledge of any other sexual activity.

I continued working on the heterosexual wounds and had to learn about the opposite sex. Again a lot of work had to go into it. I then came to a stage where I felt I was ready to pursue the opposite sex. I prayed to God to give me the wife he had in mind for me and so it happened that God showed me a lady to whom I am married today.

When I look back and wonder how I ever made it this far, you would realize it is not that I have been clever, but God has been wise. Not that I have been strong, but God has been mighty. Not that I have been consistent, but God has been faithful. I call it GOD'S AMAZING GRACE!