



A Dream Come True

by Alan Chambers

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I know what is like to be a lonely boy, not to fit in, to be teased to tears, to watch the boys on the playground and feel such anxiety and insecurity about joining them that I would literally do anything to avoid it. I know what it is like to play with the girls with whom I have more in common and what it is like to feel different from the other boys my age yet have an insatiable need to be accepted and liked by them. I know the pain of molestation and what it is like to believe the lie that it is my fault, to feel shame and pain because a part of me wants it to happen again because if nothing else, he chose me and thought I was desirable, even if it was only for a moment behind a locked door, under the guise of secrecy, full of confusion and stolen innocence. I know what it is like to be so emotionally hungry for male love, affirmation and attention that the dirtiest of acts satisfies a portion of my hunger. I know what it feels like to believe that my longing for male love and acceptance wears the name "sex." I know what it is like to come to the realization that I am a homosexual even though I have never asked for or chosen my same-sex attractions. I know what it is like to be called "homo," "fag," and "queer" and to believe it is the truth. As a little boy, I dreamed about everything good: being loved, accepted and secure, about commitment and relationship. I dreamed of more, but lived on less.

At the age of 6, I heard and understood that Jesus loved me and gave His life for me and I came to know Him as my personal savior. By the time I was 10 I was battling homosexual thoughts and temptations and began to hear at church that "homosexuals could not share in God's Kingdom"; under no circumstances did I hear "such were some of you" (I Corinthians 6:9-11) which is 2000 year old evidence that homosexuals can change. I believed that there was no hope for me; because of my feelings, I was a "homosexual" first, last and always. *The church wanted nothing to do with me*, I thought, *so why would Jesus*. Thus began a legalistic process of trying to do all I could to gain His and everyone else's approval: attending church every time the doors were open; leading my youth group; studying my Bible; going on mission trips. Nothing made *those* feelings go away. I prayed night after night for years that God would take away my homosexuality only to wake up with those same longings. In conjunction with sermons on homosexuality, I heard if homosexuals "nailed their sin to the cross", "laid it at the altar", simply "obeyed" or "read their Bible more" that Jesus would take the burden away. I tried all of those things to no avail. Disillusioned and desperate, I remember going into my parent's room nightly to see if they had been raptured, taken to heaven, without me. As a teenage driver, I used to close my eyes and speed through blinking railroad crossings hoping a train would hit me. I was living with a secret, feeling utterly unacceptable and thinking that I was bound for Hell. I was so angry with God for giving me a need for something that He condemned.

This was my daily reality until 1990 when as a high school senior I attended a youth conference where the speaker said, "There is a young man sitting in the audience who thinks he is gay. He's been molested. He thinks the only way out is suicide. If that is you, I want to talk to you." When I went forward, he told me what I had never heard before, "**God loves you--no matter what.**" Though that conflicted with what I *perceived* was my church's message, I finally believed God loved me. The speaker also re-introduced me to I Corinthians 6:9-11, gave me hope for change and referred me to Exchange Ministries, Exodus' member ministry in Orlando, for counseling

Six months into counseling, I was a wreck and before I started making wiser choices, I met someone who invited me to hang out with him and his friends at a gay bar. There I felt acceptance for what had been my greatest source of shame. I savored not having to hide the fact that I was gay. I also became addicted to anonymous sexual encounters, which lacked the relationship that I was really craving—but, for 10 minutes

or so at a time a portion of my need was satisfied. Later I learned Proverbs 27:7 which states, "To the hungry, even what is bitter tastes sweet".

Easter Sunday 1991 found me alone in a gay bar having been stood up by my friends, where God began clearly speaking to me. He said, "I love you *no matter what* and if you chose to continue living as a homosexual I will still love you." He went on to say, "The life you have found might seem good, but good is the enemy of *My* best." I told the Lord that I believed Him and that I wanted nothing more than to please Him, but that I was tired, could not fight alone anymore and needed help. At that moment, two friends from church walked through the doors of the bar, over to me and told me that God had prompted them to come and help me. We walked out together.

That night I chose to begin obeying the Lord instead of yielding to my feelings. I began trusting Him instead of holding onto ungodly ways of meeting my needs. I learned that it was okay to hurt and to desire, that the need for love and acceptance from a man was not bad, but homosexuality was an illegitimate way to meet a legitimate need. The Lord taught me that sex was not created to meet my needs--only He, my heavenly Father, could do that. He let me know that all the times I cried out to Him He had been there with an answer. I learned the necessity of forgiveness: to accept the forgiveness that God offered me and to offer forgiveness to those who had hurt me.

I recommitted myself to the process I had begun a year and a half earlier, attending support groups and seeing a counselor. I discovered some of the underlying issues that contributed to my same-sex attractions. I committed to a church that truly represented His heart full of people who were willing to not only tell me the truth that homosexuality was a sin, but who exemplified God's kindness and tolerance that led to my true repentance (Romans 2:4). I began to share my experiences with those whom I loved the most: my brother and his wife, friends, church members, and eventually my parents and the rest of my family. I found that after telling them my deepest darkest secret, when they knew that part of me and still told me that they loved me, it was as if I had never heard those words before. It was acceptance, security, love, and commitment on the deepest level.

Gradually, my will and then my desires changed. I no longer needed homosexual sex. I had pure relationships with men and women that far exceeded any encounter I had ever had. My hurt was real and a struggle-free life is not what I have found. What I have found is freedom in the hope that after this short life, God will fulfill His promise of healing to completion. I also found "the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalm 27:13).

In 1998 my ultimate earthly dream came true when I married my best friend. My wife, Leslie, is the embodiment of all I consider to be godly, pure and beautiful. She is not my diploma for healing, nor is she proof that I have changed. She is, however, evidence of God's grace in my life, a part of the 'best' that He promised me back in that gay bar. God uses her in my life to bring constant encouragement as I grow in my manhood. I am a better man today because of my life with her and because of God's continuing work in me. Leslie is every way my compliment; loving and being married to her is confirmation that God intended marriage only to be between one man and one woman for one lifetime.

