

Gender Re-orientation Testimony.

Ron Brookman's testimony of his change of homosexual orientation and practice to heterosexuality.

The Onset of Homosexuality

I experienced my first homosexual attraction at age 5 when I occasionally shared a bath with 2 similarly aged boys at a friend's house. I envied those brothers' close relationship with their Dad so looked up to them as better than I. Being naked together gave me a feeling of bonding together and somehow *belonging*. Because my father's anger and physical and emotional abuse of me caused me to detach from him I needed a sense of belonging elsewhere.

When we moved interstate in 1957 my connection with the brothers ended. However, 4 years later, aged 12, I was homosexually seduced by a slightly older teen. I quickly bonded with him and we remained sexual partners for 4 years. The wet cement of my emerging sexuality was well and truly set homosexually. During those years and subsequently I tried to be romantically and sexually interested in girls but could not work out what all the fuss was about. I was however constantly attracted to other males, fantasizing about them, seeking opportunities in change rooms for voyeurism, and seeking to form special relationships with them in the hope they would become sexual. I yearned for that 'special' sense of *belonging*.

I ceased the 4 year relationship with my teen friend in the hope of developing more exciting homosexual relationships with mates who were more in my circle of friends. However being attracted to guys who were utterly heterosexual, and whose time was spent pursuing girls I had little success. From my mid teens I ceased practising homosexuality because of lack of opportunity and because by that time I had become a member of a church, where, though homosexuality was rarely mentioned, it was understood to be clearly wrong. I conformed by establishing a persona which appeared heterosexual but which covered my constant homosexual fantasies, lusts and opportunities I created for voyeurism in dressing sheds. Every fibre of my being was homosexually driven.

I lived the next decade with a bitter sweet torment. Occasionally I dated women in an effort to keep up appearances but could not express any passion. My only desire was to find a 'brother' with whom I could spend the rest of my life, hiding our love behind an appearance of a deep platonic friendship. My secret could not be shared with anyone because I could find no-one who gave any hint of understanding my dilemma. My sexual frustration and the loneliness my secret caused was eased by my fantasizing over boys whom I taught in a country town. My reality was, in being unable to relate to others healthily, I secretly entertained dark obsessions.

Life moved on. At 26 I returned to Sydney to study to become a Uniting Church minister. I soon discovered homosexual pornography, which became a ready release for my frustration. It only provided an empty intimacy of self pleasure. The true intimacy of life-long love still eluded me. Releasing my frustrations every few months through pornography required development of a still more deceptive persona. I had to hide more than my dark thoughts. Now I needed to hide dark practises, and portray myself righteously as a prospective leader.

Making Shipwreck of My Life

In my brokenness and deception, which I readily minimized and justified, I did marry before completing Theological College. The marriage was not only to cover my homosexuality. It was an attempt to try to become heterosexual. Neither the attempt nor the marriage worked. I detested heterosexual sex, though we did parent two great kids. Within 7 years the marriage ended. In the wake of that I allowed myself to be homosexually seduced and entered a still deeper regime of deceit. Serving as a minister in Newtown I rationalised my exploits every few months into the 'gay scene' with mind game denial and personal vows that I would never repeat the behaviour. I continued that lifestyle for 6 years, finding myself performing acts which I never thought I would do, each time performing something still more depraved. I was caught in an horrendous cycle of sexual addiction, whilst desperately hoping that somewhere I would discover the man with whom I still yearned to belong to, and to share my life with.

In my shame I constantly cried out to God to deliver me from this deadly torment. My dilemma was that I wanted to be released from the torment, but not from the delight I found in the male body and my longing to find my identity and security in life long relationship with that special 'brother.' Carrying my secret alone and not bringing it to light in the Body of Christ further assigned me to an increasingly depraved mind and degrading passions. My relationships in the church became more shallow, more unhealthy and with some broken males, very co-dependent. Using huge amounts of energy to cover my secret life I was rapidly burning out.

God's Faithfulness

Through all of this I continued to love Jesus, and yearned to know God more clearly as my Heavenly Father. I lived as a dissociated person, with one part of me sincerely loving and serving God, and the other part doggedly pursuing my twisted sexuality and my fallen sensual passions. But God had mercy.

He brought me into a healthy relationship with another pastor to whom I was not sexually attracted, and with whom I could slowly reveal my torment, secrecy and degradations. David did not judge me, but spoke forgiveness on my confession, and prayed healing for my wounded heart. Gradually I began to be released from my homosexual activities. Over a period of 18 months I learned how to resist the temptation to visit homosexual venues, tore myself away from a friendship I had begun to nurture and became clearer in my thinking. It took another 12 months to learn to put the use of pornography to death, then a further 6 months to renew my thinking so that I no longer fantasized or lusted over men.

Ceasing homosexual activities and breaking thought patterns was one thing. Being cleansed and restored from the root causes was another altogether. That took a much longer time and was a much deeper process. Indeed it has been an ongoing process of the last 14 years and has been quite complex. It has required articulation, counselling and prayer in my thought processes, my emotions, my will, my body chemistry, my spirit and my relationships.

Wholesome Relationships

My friendship with David enabled me to be honest about my feelings and secret behaviour for the first time. Walking in 'light' with him lifted a huge burden from me. His prayer and words to me lifted shame and guilt which in turn lessened my drive to act out sexually to

mask my pain and to feel better about myself, albeit temporarily. Forming an open, healthy, transparent friendship gave me insight as to what true friendship was, and began to expose the lie I was chasing. The effect was slow, but certain. Gradually I trusted other men, and was able to be honest with them about my shame. Their acceptance, prayer, counsel and wisdom further released me from homosexual desire. On the many occasions when I may have been ambivalent, or vacillated about my desire to forego my homosexuality their encouragement helped me continue on the journey.

Mentally I needed to learn how to break lustful thought patterns. I practised reparative therapy principles to break visual stimulation leading to fantasy, imaginations, pornography and masturbation. Instead of viewing and assessing men sexually I learned how to appreciate them holistically. Gradually I became oblivious to physical characteristics which used to arouse me. I also needed to change the way I defined and viewed myself. Forsaking my homosexual self concept I learned to view myself as a man who was growing towards heterosexuality. The renewal of my thinking helped transform my being.

An Integrated & Exhaustive Process

No one aspect of my restoration was isolated. Each was integrated with other aspects. Changing the ingrained nature of human sexuality requires an approach which is complex, exhaustive and lengthy. So as I worked relationally and mentally I also attended to emotional and volitional aspects of my behaviour.

Emotionally I needed to address my deep desire to belong to and find my identity in another man. To do that I needed to review the formative influences which caused my heart to gravitate that way. Painfully I faced the abuse that dad had inflicted upon me. I realised how I had detached myself from him at an early age, and how I therefore closed him out as a source of nurture for my masculine soul. Subsequently I hungered to feed that malnourished part by connecting to and drawing from other males. With my adolescent homosexual experience that became sexualized and deeply ingrained. Facing the pain, forgiving dad, renouncing inner vows such as not wanting to be a man like dad, slowly brought transformation to my heart and emotions. Another foundational attitude I formed was a distrust of women, particularly at an intimate level. I realised that I had unconsciously formed that as a young child when I reacted to mum's 'dobbing' me into dad, which in turn caused some of his violence towards me. Working through such insights, forgiving, renouncing deep values and attitudes and purposefully forming and practising new ones, brought emotional release over the next decade. At the same time I renounced unhealthy emotional attachments to and dependencies on men. I learned how to evaluate each of my friendships, forsaking ways in which I met my emotional neediness through them, and breaking co-dependency or over dependency on men. At the same time I learned how to trust women at a much deeper level. I came to appreciate their gender differences. Rather than imitate them as I had been, I learned how to develop more masculine traits and to appreciate women for their spiritual and emotional insight that we men tend to be light on.

Realigning my will was yet another dimension of my restoration. Early in the process I had to work through my ambivalence which so often resisted change. I needed to remind myself of the reasons I was choosing to change and recommit myself to them despite the strength of my feelings and sex drive pressing me to revert to homosexuality. Others' encouragement and counsel helped me overcome my many vacillations. The body's conditioning and chemical metabolism is not easily changed. Hormonal rhythms, addictive patterns, learned responses and deep desire are formidable strongholds. To change these

requires a resistance and perseverance which is physically and emotionally painful. But slowly exercising will to change behaviour pays dividends.

Which brings me to the final aspect of the healing process which needs to be considered. That is the spiritual component. I could not have made the journey if it were not for my faith, and Jesus in whom I have my faith. He died to heal the broken hearted, to break chains which imprison us in destructive behaviour and to transform us back to God's original intention for us. The way that God has designed our sexual anatomy has never left me in doubt as to what that is. Jesus' death on the Cross enables forgiveness, the lifting of shame and restoration. His resurrection releases power through the Holy Spirit to work His good purposes into our lives. It has only been God's grace, released through others' prayer, counsel and encouragement, and through my own pursuit through prayer, Bible study and contemplation that has enabled me to make progress in any of the aspects of the process I have outlined above. As I have opened my own spirit to the presence and power of God's Spirit in me I have received His life into my very body and soul, and have been transformed by the renewing of my mind, heart, will and sexuality. Through trusting and transparent relationships within Jesus' church God's Spirit has brought further healing to me.

Testimony of Restoration

I conclude by giving testimony to the depth of this transformation. I am now happily married to Ruth and have been for over 13 years. We have 3 children. Our love and intimacy is a continually growing treasure in our lives. I have been totally released from my old addictive behaviours. I no longer lust after men. I find the thought of a long term relationship with a man repulsive! I look at men without sexualising them, and am completely freed from lust. I do need to guard my mind from old memories resurfacing, but they do not trigger me onto a lustful path. After years of the restoration process I now minister to other people who are dealing with unwanted and destructive sexual drives, fears or torments through the ministry of Living Waters, which was so instrumental in my own restoration.

I heartily attest to the fact that transformation of broken gender identity to wholesome masculinity or femininity is entirely possible. There are many variables including the willingness to change, the recognition of the need to change, preparedness to work through the many aspects of gender formation, support in the healing process and one's personal faith. The length of time that it takes to change may depend on the age at which gender brokenness first occurred, was practised, and the manner, length and intensity with which it was practised. But through the grace of God and personal perseverance broken gender orientation can indeed be re-oriented and transformed!

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