



Clean Heart Ministries

a ministry of Exodus International North America

Create in me a clean heart, O God. And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Psalm 51:10

The Redemptive Power of Jesus Christ

By Karen Toney

When I look back on my life, I see the truth clearly. I see the triggers and events that led me to choose my first lesbian relationship in college. Even though I had grown up in the church, I had no idea what it meant to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Instead, I lived a hypocritical life of judging others for their sins while hiding my own. But God in His gentleness and grace quietly pursued me until I realized I could no longer pretend to hide my sins from Him. He patiently wooed me until I came to the end of myself and He freed me from homosexuality.

The set up

In 1987, I began college after graduating from high school in West Virginia. Even though I dated a few men, I mostly saw men as friends. I was more emotionally wrapped up with my female friends, finding my self worth in what they thought of me. I never seemed to fit in with what society thought women should be like. My high school years were filled with quiet confusion and a feeling of being different.

In college, I continued the unhealthiness of having others define my self worth. I met a woman who told me she was gay. With her confession, I thought I had finally figured why I felt so different. As I got to know her more, I perceived that I belonged, that I was truly loved. After a time, she and I began a physical relationship. This woman was the first person to give me what I was dying for, attention, validation and affection. I thought she was the answer to my prayers to be needed. Life with her was great for a while, because my physical and emotional needs were getting met for the first time. I found the community and love I was looking for in my new gay friends. I thought my life could not get any better. It did not last.

After she and I broke up, I got involved with another woman. That relationship ended when I moved to South Carolina to resume the first relationship. It was in this time that God began to woo me. He was gently calling me to Him and not allowing me to have peace in the relationship. I know now, that the drive to find a community and to be known by others was God calling me to find those things in Him. I was looking everywhere to find that perfect love, when all along the true Lover of my Soul was right there, waiting for me to ask Him into my heart and life.

My conviction

I eventually broke up with that girlfriend for all the right reasons, but with no Heavenly power. I broke up with her because I knew that homosexuality was wrong, but hadn't asked God into my heart. I didn't have the power of the Holy Spirit, so the victory was short-lived, and I returned to physical relationships with women. Over the next three years I was involved with other women and became even more convicted that what I was doing was wrong. Eventually, I decided to move to North Carolina. I was determined that with a change of states and friends, I could leave the old "gay" self behind, and begin anew, where no one knew my past. I could recreate myself into anything I wanted.

Without the Holy Spirit or fellowship with other believers, my attempts to have victory over the struggle failed. I confessed my past to a female, Christian friend in hopes that she could support me in my journey out. That relationship also fell into sin. I gave into the need to be needed. My attempts at “white-knuckling” my own exit out of homosexuality for so long had worn down my convictions. The old me that longed to be wanted and valued by other humans resurfaced. Why couldn't I see the value I held to God?

During that same time, my brother Steve asked me, “If you die today, on a scale from one to ten, would you go to heaven?” I said I would score about a seven, because I knew there was a God. I had a good heart and cared about people. He told me there were only two answers, either one or 10. He said all sin is equal in God's eyes. Then he asked me if I wanted to know how to make it a 10? I said, “Like duh, of course I do.” He led me through a sinner's prayer. He and his wife Christine were crying and so happy for me to finally accept the free gift of God's salvation. I was happy, but waiting for the thunder and the lightening to strike. I thought salvation would “feel” different. Shouldn't I get a signal from God? I wasn't sure if I did it ‘right’. I had prayed for my salvation and as Scripture says, I received it. But now what?

The wrong goal

By 1997, I had broken up with my final girlfriend. I had accepted the free gift of salvation. But my previous nine years had been involved in the gay life. I had lived in deception and deceit. I learned how to lie to survive. For if anyone knew the truth, surely they would see me how I saw myself. They would see me as the sum of my sins, never to be more. I once again made the right choice to leave the life. With that goal, I went into a self-imposed exile. In my mind, it was obvious that I could not have healthy friendships with women. The last one had fallen into sexual sin. So I struggled alone, trying to do what was right, but harboring guilt and shame for my past lifestyle that clouded my perceptions. I walked in the skin of a sinner. I prayed for God to take the homosexual desires away, but they remained. I viewed my friendships through the lens of my sins, so I avoided them. Even though I was not acting out, I still had attractions to women. I still felt needy and smothering. I still felt alone. I wanted someone to come save me from myself. And that is exactly what happened.

The right relationship

My Christian brother came online in February of 2000. On that evening, God prepared my heart to receive the words of my brother. Steve provided me the truth that God could free me if I would just allow Him. I told him I thought that's what I was doing! Steve pointed out that God wanted me to give it **all** to Him and let Him do it. Jesus wanted all of the guilt and shame. He wanted my fears and insecurities. In the past, I had tried to do it myself: "Yes God, I believe in you, but I know you help those that help themselves!" Steve gave me these scriptures:

Matthew 7:7,8 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Revelation 3:20,21 “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.”

Steve told me that I didn't have to do anything but open the door, and that God was waiting behind it, and He would come into my heart and live in me. And that is exactly what Jesus Christ did!

The very next day, things began to change. The guilt and shame I had harbored for years was gone. A recurring dream of being raped was gone. Truly, a peace came over me like never before. Although my attractions weren't gone, there was something new. A peace that brought hope and gave me a reason to get up and look forward to the next day. I became a New Creation in Christ.

God has been faithful to His promise in scripture. He has delivered me from the bondage of my sins. I am His child and am becoming the true woman in Christ that He has always planned for me. I have chosen to follow the one true freedom of Jesus Christ and not the deceptions of Satan in the form of homosexuality. Satan had convinced me that my fight was with my feelings, thoughts, and myself. If I felt it, it must be true. God has shown me **THE** truth.

Ephesians 6:12,13 "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

Has my life been stress free and perfect since I got saved and began the journey out of homosexuality? No. I am living in a fallen world, but life is the best it's ever been. God created me with a strong will. It used to be my biggest shortcoming. Now it's the backbone of my conviction. My life is no longer my own. God is using me to counter the lies of Satan with the truth. I finally understand the truth. I am living the Truth - the truth of God's salvation and redemption.

Spreading the Word

I'm excited to be working with other women at Clean Heart Ministries. Homosexuals are not born gay. Events of life, the sins of others, and the hard and bad choices we make all contribute to the fall into the homosexual life. Thank God that He gives us another choice, the choice of His Son Jesus Christ. God has given me the free gift of salvation. He has put a desire and compassion in my heart for others that struggle as I did. I know where they have been and how hard it is. My hearts desire is to share with other strugglers and their families the hope and freedom that is found with Jesus Christ.

Why do I choose to follow Jesus Christ? Because on that cross, He suffered and died for my sins. I choose Him because He first chose me.

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