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SIHOL GIANITO SITUMORANG'

# sol the SAME LOVE

a love revolution



### LONE VOICE PUBLISHING

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### Foreword

I am compelled by the love of Jesus Christ, our Lord, to write this book primarily to help those who struggle with same sex temptation (SST). As a person who used to identify as 'gay', I realize how confusing and distressing it can be dealing with such a thing.

Same sex temptation (SST) is often the result of unresolved issues and so the way to deal with SST is not to deal with SST itself but rather the root problems which open the door for the SST. Once the roots are taken down and the door is closed then the SST will diminish immensely.

This is <u>not</u> a self-help book. This book is not meant to help someone change his/her sexual orientation. Rather this book is a collection of teachings which the Lord Jesus has taught me to consistently overcome SST by uprooting the lies of the enemy planted deep in my heart and replacing them with the truth of God.

Last, please pray beforehand as not even the most eloquent words can bring healing and redemption but only the ministry of the Holy Spirit through any means He chooses to use.

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. In Jesus name, Amen.

### Eable of Contents

INTRODUCTION: MY TESTIMONY	05
CHAPTER I. THE BIG PICTURE: GOD IS OUR TEACHER	13
CHAPTER II. SHAME & GUILT: GOD IS OUR REDEEMER	29
CHAPTER III. INSECURITY & REJECTION: GOD IS OUR FATHER	42
CHAPTER IV. SINGLEHOOD: GOD IS OUR HUSBAND	60
CHAPTER V. IDENTITY: GOD IS OUR CREATOR	75
CHAPTER VI. STRANGE LOVE: GOD IS OUR LOVER	95
CONCLUSION: JESUS IS MY ORIENTATION	120
EXTRA: FOR PARENTS, FAMILY, FRIENDS OF THOSE WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBT	125

## Introduction MY TESTIMONY

### **INTRODUCTION - MY TESTIMONY**

was brought up in a 'Christian' family but even though my family went to church once a week, our life was not at all Christ-centered. My parents were sometimes too busy doing whatever they wanted to do at that time. My mom physically abused me and as a result I felt less of a human being in general and less of a man in particular. I thought my existence was worthless and because of this I have made so many bad choices. However I am not blaming anyone for my choices. Even though what my mom did was wrong, I was still responsible for my own choices regardless of what or who might have influenced me. As for my dad, he was not around very often because he was in the military and there were times that he said certain things that really hurt my feelings. But by God's grace my relationship with my parents has been restored.

### REPRESSION

In a way you can say that I grew up with a lot of spiritual hurt and baggage. My spiritual wounds stayed there unattended leaving an open door for evil spirits to influence me. I began having suicidal thoughts to end everything several times and even got to the point where I had a knife at my wrist, but God stopped me by His grace. Despite all that, never once did I blame God. I believed that everything happened for a good reason and that God was planning something good for me at the end of this road. So I felt like there were two opposing sides in me. The good side was hopefulness in God which gave me strength and the bad side was despair, hatred and all the evil feelings which brought me down.

Somewhere in my childhood, around the age of 6 or 7, I began having sexual desires towards the same sex. And as I grew up, I became more and more aware of the feeling and was troubled because it felt wrong. So I decided to repress those desires. I pretended that they were not there. I told myself many times, "This is not real!" and I kept repeating that over and over. I also tried to 'pray the gay away'. But after every attempt, I only found failure at the end. So, I began to hate myself even more as I was ashamed of having those feelings. Since I didn't want anyone to know about the sexual desires that I had towards the same sex, I tried to act and look in such a way that people would not know my 'secret'. But that only made me even more insecure. I kept getting scared of people finding out about it and making fun of me for that. It got to the point where I hated people for no reason and decided to shut myself off from them, because I felt like the whole world hated me and was against me. My thinking at that time was "people = problem". Since I had already enough problems, I didn't intend to add more by knowing more people. I had so much hatred towards myself and other people because of the repression. I ran away from the struggle rather than face it. Years of repression and a bundle of hatred really wore me down to the point I decided to give up trying to change myself and to just accept the fact that I had these sexual desires towards the same sex.

### **GRATIFICATION**

After so many failed attempts to free myself from those desires, I began to think that it's futile to fight against them. So, I decided to accept them, live with them, and simply enjoy them. After much consideration, I decided to give myself over to these desires. And because I knew I could not serve two

### INTRODUCTION - MY TESTIMONY

masters, I said 'good-bye' to God. I told Him that I was helpless, I couldn't change myself and that I fully realized the consequence of my decision. I thought to myself if I was going to hell, I might as well enjoy my way there. I really thought I was 'ready' for hell. But guess what? God was 'not ready' for me to go there!

Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?' Ezekiel 33:11

After I made that decision, I started to indulge myself with anything that I wanted. For once I was able to watch gay porn while denying the guilt. It gave me pleasure and it seemed good for a while. At first everything was finally getting 'better'. I was 'happier' or at least I thought I was. But the more pleasure I got, the bigger the dose of porn I needed to get that pleasure. I was at the point that I needed to masturbate at least 3 times a day. I'd become so addicted to it. Sometimes when I had nothing to do and I didn't know what else to do, I just went back to porn, because I didn't know anything else! And even when I didn't want to watch porn, that's all I seemed to be doing. After I got somewhat bored with porn, I switched to video games. I could play games for hours and hours. The only time I was not playing was when I slept, ate, or was in the bathroom. After I got bored with games and I moved on to movies, especially gay themed movies. And somewhere in between games and movies, I watched porn.

Aside from my addictions, I noticed that I had become quite an angry person somehow. I was easily vexed, especially by my parents, and I shut myself off even more from my family. My sister would joke and call me a ghost because I would lock myself in my room. To top that, I was more and more enslaved by the sexual desires towards the same sex, that watching porn was no longer enough for me. I decided I wanted to do something about it. Although —praise God!— I never got to have penetration out of fear of contracting STDs, but I did some other things which I prefer not to specify due to their filthiness. But even after all that, I still felt like I was missing something in life. I felt lost, empty, and dry.

In mid-2010, I started to think about how my life had turned out. I was asking the big question of life: the meaning of my existence. Being 30, I realized that my life has been nothing but work, porn, masturbation, men, games, movies, hanging out with friends and a cycle that most likely would repeat until the day I die and then face oblivion. Mind you, even though I never labeled myself as an atheist, at that time I had completely forgotten (or denied) the notion of God. For me there was no god, no rules, no heaven nor hell. So I thought to myself, "Is this the life I want to have into my old age? What's the point of all this? Why risk going through whatever life throws at us, if in the end it's just oblivion? We might as well kill ourselves and save ourselves from meaningless and unnecessary pain and suffering, which it seemed most of us have to experience to some degree."

I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Ecclesiastes 1:14

### INTRODUCTION - MY TESTIMONY

The reality of suffering in this world demands the existence of God because without God our suffering is meaningless. However, with God our suffering has a purpose and meaning. And God showed this personally through the suffering of Jesus Christ. He suffered with us and His suffering was not in vain! He suffered to save the world. Hence I know that my suffering in this world is not without meaning and purpose.

### REDEMPTION

Deep down I wanted more in life and knew that there is something better but I just didn't know what. I was also shocked to realize how different I had become in just a few short years. I felt like I was a stranger to myself.

And then on one ordinary day, God spoke to me. Yes, He still speaks. He reminded me of His love and I've come to realize something that I had never realized before or perhaps something that I had long forgotten. I realized that God loves me no matter what. No matter how much porn I had watched; no matter how many times I had rejected His call to repentance during my indulgent time; no matter how sinful I was, He was always there loving me, but not my sin.

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that <u>God's kindness</u> <u>is intended to lead you to repentance?</u> Romans 2:4

Despite my rebellion, God has been nothing but kind to me. He was gradually restoring my family relationships. My parents had repented and became more loving and caring. God also blessed me with good jobs, good health, and good friends (Matthew 5:45). Basically, I came to realize God's many undeserved

blessings in my life. So I began to see this awesome unconditional love. I'd never really been loved this way before. I had never experienced someone loving me this much. Even after all the rejection I threw at God, after all the wrong I'd done, knowing that it was wrong, He showed nothing but love to me. I didn't feel condemned or anything close to it. Instead I felt loved by God. At the same time I knew I was living in sin. I knew that I was rebelling against Him.

And then I felt His love shattering my heart of stone and I was faced with two options: first, to continue living the way I had been living, leading to eternal damnation or second, to leave everything behind and follow God who invited me into eternal life (Deuteronomy 30:19). I started to consider each of these options and their consequences. I wanted to follow God, but at the same time I felt like it was hard to let go of everything, especially the 'gay' identity which I had fully embraced. I simply couldn't make the decision.

Fortunately, God knew exactly what was going on in my heart and He intervened to help me make the decision I needed to make. He spoke the truth to me. This is what I believe Jesus said to me, "Only fools would reject my perfect love over anything else." And that was a wake-up call for me. I realized that I really would have been a fool if I hadn't made the right choice; just like the fools who believe there is no God (Psalm 14:1) and the fools who despise wisdom (Proverbs 1:7). The truth stings in some ways but it is also very liberating.

So, with that incentive of truth from God, I decided to follow God at any cost, including the loss of my 'gay' identity. However, I did ask God to let me stay 'gay' if He was okay with that. And then God led me to pray a simple prayer. I prayed,

### INTRODUCTION - MY TESTIMONY

"Father in Heaven, please forgive me for my past sins. Forgive me, that I have hardened my heart towards You all this time. I am all Yours now. Make me who You want me to be. And let Your will alone be done in my life. In the name of Jesus, Amen."

After that, I felt like a burden was literally lifted from me (cliché I know, but true nonetheless). I knew I was given a new life. I was filled with something so good, so innocent, and so pure. I felt God's love overflowing in me and all the hatred and all the bad feelings disappeared within me. And the first thing I noticed, I had no desire for any of my past addictions and I had self-control and patience like I never had before. God can truly change us from the inside out.

Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men, nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Chapter 1 THE BIG PICTURE:

### GOD IS OUR TEACHER

ver looked at a massively zoomed in image and try to figure out what it is? No? Good! 'Cause it's really hard to figure out! The sad thing is we often make the same mistake when we deal with our struggles. We zoom in on the struggle so much that it is in our face and we become so confused that we totally miss the big picture.

Let's zoom out! There is a bigger picture here, bigger than sexual orientation, bigger than normality, bigger than the politics of gay marriage. We need to realize the graveness of our sins to God and the punishment awaiting all sinners regardless of their sexual orientation or sexual behaviors or even gender identity. God wants to save you from the coming wrath and make you His child. And changing our 'sexual orientation' or being 'normal' has little to do with our salvation. So let's focus on what really matters.

### REPENTANCE

For many people repentance is an offensive concept because it means that there is something **wrong** with them and hence there is a need for a change. And in our self-centered world no one wants to believe that there is something wrong with them. People tend to think highly of themselves and see nothing really wrong about them. This is nothing but pride. In reality we all have sinned or have sinful thoughts and desires whether we want to admit it or not.

For others, repentance can be a really toilsome work. They try to stop doing something and start doing something else in hope of changing their behavior. It is not altogether wrong, but it is an incomplete understanding of repentance.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be <u>transformed by the renewing of your mind</u>. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2

In my opinion the Apostle Paul described repentance the best. Repentance is the change of a person's mind from a worldly thought pattern to a godly thought pattern which leads to the transformation of the person's behavior and life. Sure we can modify our behavior, but without changing our mind, I promise you it will be an extremely harsh and weary battle. Most likely you will keep falling and failing. A true change of mind will lead to a change of life.

Repent and let your mind be renewed by this truth. Stop focusing on merely changing your behavior, but rather ask God to test your thoughts and conform them to His thoughts. Transformation starts from the mind. The battlefield is on the spiritual level, not on the behavioral level.

### **DISCIPLES**

Many Christians these days have the wrong idea of what it really means to be a Christian. Some think that it means knowing a set of doctrines. Some think a Christian is a church goer. Some think a Christian is someone who only says nice things that pleases everyone. I've even heard friends say, "Well, I'm just a normal Christian," which makes me wonder if there is an 'abnormal' Christian. The problem is Jesus never even used the term "Christian". Now I'm not saying we need to drop

that label, not at all, but rather we need to repent from false ideas and redefine that label so that it conforms to God's will.

Therefore go and <u>make disciples</u> of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and <u>teaching them to obey</u> everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28:19-20

Jesus never commanded the disciples to make 'Christians' or 'church goers' or even 'believers' and definitely not 'straight people'. He commanded them to make more disciples. So, our objective should not be to re-orient ourselves sexually, but rather to be His disciple. This is what many people miss, including me in the past. We are so focused on changing our inclinations and mannerisms without realizing that it is not exactly what God wants. When you become a disciple, everything else will then change, including your inclinations. External or behavioral changes should not be the goal but, rather the result of an internal change, a change of mind. Hence don't try to reverse the process. Be a disciple first, then you will experience the change.

During my 20 something years being a church goer, I've never heard of being a disciple of Christ and I have the feeling I'm not the only one. And so it's very important for us to understand what it means to be His disciple and fortunately to understand the kind of disciple that Jesus wants is very easy. All we have to do is just look at the relationship Jesus had with His very first disciples. And by observing the Gospel account we can see that:

- 1. His disciples accepted His word.
- 2. His disciples were intimate with Him.
- 3. His disciples learned directly from Jesus.
- 4. His disciples followed His example.

This is discipleship. It's an intense and close interaction, not a oncea-week meeting or a magical sinner's prayer that will make all your wishes come true. But it is still accessible to us in the present time through the Holy Spirit. Now you might wonder what this has to do with homosexuality. Well, this has to do with everything. Without discipleship we are bound to repeat the same old pattern over and over again. Discipleship IS the bigger picture. God has not called us to be 'straight' or 'heterosexual' or 'normal', but He has called us to be His disciples. Hence being a Christian should mean being a disciple. As we have learned that being His disciple is our real goal, let's take a closer look at the 4 points of discipleship:

### 1. His disciples accepted His Word.

From this time many of his disciples <u>turned back and no longer followed him</u>. "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God." John 6:66-68

Jesus' teachings are often hard and may be offensive to many people (John 6:60-61), especially to the carnal mind. I have to warn you, Jesus is not impressed by big numbers (John 6:66). He is not going to beg you to be His disciple. He will continue to invite you to be His disciple but keep in mind, you're the one who needs Him and as His disciples we are to take His teachings as they are and not to change (or reinterpret) them, but rather let them change us. Do we really believe His words are eternal life, like the first disciples did? If yes, then we ought to be more serious in following Him. We ought to follow His words, no matter what. His words must be our reality, not merely religious doctrines. Hence any other words or feelings that are not in line with the words of our Master MUST BE rejected. Either that or we depart from Jesus like the other 'disciples'. There is no in-between.

### 2. His disciples were intimate with Him

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. John 14:23

Unlike the modern student-teacher relationship, the first disciples of Jesus had a really close relationship with Him, to the point that they even left their fathers for Him (Matthew 4:22). They spent their days with Him and so being intimate with their teacher was rather expected. They did everything together from the mundane, every day activities such as eating and fishing, to spiritual activities such as worship, healing, preaching, and casting out demons. They went from place to place together. They didn't just meet every now and then, they

practically lived with Jesus and shared their lives with each other. John was probably the closest one to Jesus, so close that he reclined on Jesus' bosom (John 13:23). And this is still the same bond that Jesus wants from us. He wants us to be with Him all the time. He wants to make His home with us, not just weekend visitations.

Obviously we are not talking about sexual intimacy here, but rather that spiritual closeness which we gain through the presence of the Holy Spirit. We need to cultivate His presence during our prayer and worship time, be it personal or corporate, and of course throughout the day by **obeying** His teachings. Only then can we start being really close and intimate with Jesus.

### 3. His disciples learned directly from Jesus.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30

How lovely is God's promise! But how many Christians out there get to experience this promise? Even after being Christians for years they still don't find the rest they are looking for, including those Christians who struggle with SST. How come they are not finding this promise true in their life? Let's take a deeper look on the promise:

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and (then) you will find rest for your souls.

We often focus on God's promises, but totally brush away the condition that precedes it! We live in a society that is used to getting things easy and instantly. No one wants to 'take the yoke and learn', they just want the promise. Say the magic prayer and *boom*, they get their wishes. I'm sorry, but that's just not how it works with Jesus. He is not some sort of genie that you can rub with some prayers and then He grants your wishes. You want rest? Then first cast away your own yoke (your expectations, your desire, your guilt, etc.), as you can't carry two yokes, and then take His yoke instead and learn from Him. And don't add extra burdens to His yoke, things like being "straight" or "manly" or "married" etc. Just focus on His teachings first, otherwise you will only be weary and burdened again. With Jesus it's obedience first, then understanding and that's why faith is important.

You may ask yourself exactly how we can learn from Jesus. First we must realize that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8) and thus His methods as a teacher also remain the same. Throughout the entire scripture, we learn that God has used many means to communicate His message to people, including a donkey! We know that anything is possible for Him who created this magnificent world from nothing and so it's important for us not to limit God by expecting Him to teach us only with a single method. He may send us people to teach us, just like He sent His apostles or prophets. He may speak directly to us just like the apostle Paul who learnt that "His grace is enough" (2 Corinthians 12:9) or we may learn through things happening in our life just like Job did.

We have to make sure that everything we learn is in line with the words of Jesus as His words are eternal life in that way we must read them ourselves. We must verify everything for ourselves and not be lazy. So the scripture should be <u>our primary source</u> for learning. The apostle John has warned us to test every spirit (1 John 4:1) lest we are deceived. Test this book and see if it's in line with God's word or not.

### 4. His disciples followed His example.

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. John 13:15

What I really love from our great teacher is that He actually did what He preached. He set an example for us to follow, not just a bunch of rules. But before we can follow His example, we need first to know it and many times a lot of Christians don't. They only know snippets of Jesus, because they are not taught to seek God's character or nature when reading scripture. Often they just read the scripture for the sake of reading it, but they don't really see God's character from their readings which make reading the scriptures quite meaningless.

As disciples we need to know more about Jesus, His character, His words, His actions, in order that eventually we can follow the example He has set for us. And again, you can't expect others to tell you all this, you need to discover Jesus personally. It's a personal relationship you want with Him, after all.

### **HOLY BOOK**

While people, mostly women, who read the Twilight series fall in love with fictitious characters in it, especially Edward or Jacob, how many Christians out there fall in love with Jesus when they read the story of His life? A few? How can this be? Maybe we should encourage Christians to read the Bible as if they are reading some fictitious novel, at least they seem to be more engaged when they do that. (just kidding). We treat the Bible as a 'holy book', thinking that carrying the Bible will scare the Devil, and we often end up missing the main message: to learn the truth about God's love for us and to love Him in return. It's time for us to stop treating the Bible as a 'holy book' and time to see it as an actual historical account of real people involved in God's salvation plan for mankind. It's God's love story.

### THE ENEMY

The big picture is incomplete if we don't realize the presence of a real enemy against which the apostle Peter has warned us.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8

Unfortunately we are not alone in this universe and I'm not talking about aliens. I'm talking about rebellious spirits, for which hell was created (Matthew 25:41). These spirits want to drag us along to their eternal damnation and we are no match for them. They possess greater knowledge than any mere mortal. For them to mislead us is a very

easy task; not only can't we see them, but they have spiritual powers. Their main weapon is deception and their goal is to rob life from us, especially eternal life.

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. <u>He was a murderer</u> from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for <u>he is a liar and the father of lies</u>. John 8:44

The devil and his angels will always try to entice us to sin, just like he enticed Eve to disobey God. This is not to say that we can just blame the devil for our actions, like Eve tried to blame the serpent for deceiving her (Genesis 3:13). Indeed Satan was guilty, but in the end Eve was held accountable for her own actions. The point is not playing the blame game, but rather we must be AWARE and SOBER that there is an enemy lurking and waiting for the right moment to deceive us. Be on guard!

**Note:** This does not mean every person that struggles with SST is possessed by demons. If this were true then every type of people such as gossipers, liars, thieves, hypocrites, etc. suggesting that basically every human being is possessed by demons. Demons don't need to possess us in order to entice us to sin, they just need to deceive us. However there are cases of spiritual possession or oppression. Those people usually were involved in occultism or are under generational curse(s) or have ungodly soul tie(s) or other things related to dark spiritual forces. Such things will not be addressed in this

book as you can find many resources covering these topics on the internet. You may contact me personally if you want to know more about this.

As if one legion of enemies is not enough, we actually have another enemy hidden in us.

but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. James 1:14

Our evil desires must be put to death, in order for us to thrive spiritually. In the words of Jesus, we are to deny ourselves and carry the cross. It's a commitment.

### **OUR HELP**

Now you may feel discouraged realizing the plight we are all in. Fortunately, we don't have to face this fierce adversary alone. God knows that by ourselves we will stand no chance against the devil and his angels, not to mention our old self, and that's why He has promised His Holy Spirit to us.

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 1 John 4:4

Yes, there are rebellious spirits out there, but the Holy Spirit in us is greater than all of them put together. Hence we don't need to fear, but rather be bold in facing them, yet also stay humble in God. Through the Holy Spirit, we are given the power to cast out demons in the name of

Jesus (Mark 16:17) and we should exercise this authority as the Holy Spirit leads us.

Remember, the main weapon that demons use to tempt us is deception. Hence the only way to fight it is to counter it with truth which is why we need the Holy Spirit to lead us to all truth (John 16:13).

### TRUTH

Jesus promised that the truth will set us free, but again, so many Christians are still entangled by the enemy's lies. Why is this happening? Aren't they supposed to know that the truth sets them free? Once more, we need to pay closer attention to the much misquoted verse:

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "<u>If you hold to my teaching</u>, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32

There is a prerequisite condition to this promise and that is to hold on to the teaching of Christ. 'Knowing truth' is not merely knowing the correct information. It's not enough to just understand intellectually the proper doctrines. You need to actually hold on to it, to the point it shapes your heart and mind. I will give you an example. Most people believe that the world is round, but this truth does not affect our life, not in a slightest way. It doesn't affect how we interact with other people or how we view life. That is not 'knowing truth' that Jesus has spoken of. What Jesus meant was knowing truth to the extent that it affects

our entire life. If we really believe that Jesus was indeed resurrected and ascended to heaven, then that means His words are true. And if His words are true, then hell is real. If hell is real, can we really be so lax about knowing that people are going to eternal damnation, without reaching out to them with the Gospel? No. No one in their right mind would just watch someone on fire die so painfully. They will try to do something. If we truly believe Jesus' words, we would do what we can do to reach out as many people as possible. Now that's holding on to His teaching.

### **CLOSURE**

Now that we have set the proper foundations and see the big picture, we can start addressing the issues that people who struggle with SST may often experience. What we are going to learn is merely the rule of the thumb and let the Holy Spirit teach us directly, as each one has different personalities and may be tempted in a slightly, if not vastly, different way. I want to emphasize once more that this book is not meant to make people 'straight', but rather to help people to think more like Christ and eventually live more like Him. That's discipleship.

### Discipleship:

- Repent from false ideas and allow your mind to be changed by God's truth. Don't hold on to ideas that are not aligned with the words of our Lord. It will only make things harder.
- ▶ Jesus warned us to first consider the costs (Luke 14:28-33) before making any commitment. Ask yourself why you want

to follow Jesus. Are you only following Him to get what you want from Him? Or is it just a religion that was passed down to you? Have you really considered seriously, the price Jesus paid for you? What is the price you are willing to pay to follow Him, who has already paid the price for your sins? Jesus said, if we don't deny ourselves, we are not worthy of Him (Matthew 10:38). How much are we willing to give up for Him? Are we willing to give up our friends, our job, our stability, our comforts, or whatever it costs to follow Him? If you find it hard to let go of something, meditate on what Christ has done for you, what He has let go of in order to save you. Once you make the decision seal it with a prayer. Commit yourself to be a disciple of Jesus, don't settle for less! You can be a protestant, catholic, orthodox, messianic, etc. and still not be a disciple of Jesus. Make sure that you aim to be His disciple above all else. I personally have stopped calling myself a protestant, because I find that limiting and unscriptural.

- ► If you can't make this decision right now, that's okay. Continue reading and ask God to reveal to you the beauty of Jesus and you will see that even though you have to give up many things, you will receive even more (Mark 10:29-30).
- Examine the yoke that you are carrying. Are you carrying your own yoke or His yoke? Write the things that you desire and the things that are weighing you down and compare them with Jesus' teachings. Are they from Jesus, yourself, or maybe even from the enemy?

- After repentance, ask for the Holy Spirit to dwell in you (Luke 11:13) if you haven't already. Without Him you cannot do anything (John 15:5). It's the power of Holy Spirit that will change you from inside out. The Holy Spirit will give you a new nature. You will be drawn to holiness and become disgusted by sin. If your life is not showing any real change of nature, then you should question whether the Holy Spirit is at work within you or not. Perhaps you have been quenching the Holy Spirit? If you have, then stop grieving the Holy Spirit and start obeying Him again.
- ▶ If you find the teachings in this book to be in line with the truth (after you test it yourself), then read it again and again until you affirm the things you have learned and hold on to them (Deuteronomy 6:7).

Chapter 2 SHAME & GULT:

### GOD IS OUR REDEEMAR

### **CHAPTER 2 - GOD IS OUR REDEEMER**

hildhood is what I call the formation period of my life. So many things, both good and bad, happened during that time that really shaped my thinking and perception about a lot of things. As a child I was able to enjoy my childhood like most children by studying and playing, but at the same time I also experienced physical abuse. Anyone who has been abused will most likely know the deep shame that comes out of it. As an abused child, I grew up with a deep sense of shame about myself. The shame was so great that it became self-loathing. I couldn't see anything good in myself. I didn't believe that anyone could love me, because I thought I was just ugly, inside and out. My perception about myself was so broken that whenever someone complimented me for anything, I assumed that person was lying and just being condescending to me. I remember once a lady told me what a good looking boy I was and I got mad at her because I thought she was patronizing me. I simply couldn't believe that I could amount to anything good. That's how badly deceived I was!

### DEPRESSION

Even though at times I was a quite happy boy, at other times I was really gloomy. It was so bizarre. I can't say my life was completely terrible. Yes, I was abused physically, but I had friends and family who cared about me at the same time. Most of the time I felt gloomy when I was all alone. I internalized a lot of things from shame to sexual desire. Even though in the beginning the sexual desire towards men didn't bother me so much, but it was still troubling, as I was already dealing with so many other things. I thought it was too much for a child of that age. I often asked myself why I was feeling all of these emotions that I didn't

understand. I felt like there was a big turbulence inside me, but I was very good at hiding my feelings and not letting anyone know what was really going on. Because I kept everything to myself, I began to feel depressed which eventually led me to suicidal thoughts. I really needed to reach out, especially to God! (1 Peter 5:7)

The reason why I wanted to commit suicide was not necessarily because I wanted to end my misery, that too, but it was more because I wanted to get revenge with my parents. I wanted to make them feel as miserable as I was feeling. I remember trying to kill myself several times, but a small quiet voice always stopped me. One time I was about to cut my wrist and I heard a whisper saying, "Don't let them win." At that time I thought the voice was telling me not to let my parents win, because I perceived them as enemies back then. Little did I know my enemies were not flesh and blood.

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. Ephesians 6:12

Looking back, I believe that this small quiet voice was the Holy Spirit helping me to overcome the suicidal thoughts which the enemy had sown in my mind. O how faithful God is to us! It makes me wonder how many times I have missed realizing His presence in my life, probably countless times. He is always there guarding us, guiding us, but most of the time we just don't realize it.

### **CHAPTER 2 - GOD IS OUR REDEEMER**

Even though I had stopped considering the idea of killing myself, I was still depressed because I still harbored a lot of hatred in me, against myself and my parents as well. And I closed myself off more and more from the outside world. That's when I began to draw more and spend more time on the computer. That was my primary outlet for expressing myself. I must say that even though it was a very good outlet and it helped me a lot at that time, it never really healed me. It only helped me to channel my feelings in an acceptable manner. It never really helped me to deal with the root of the problem. I still experienced a deep sense of shame within myself and anger towards my parents.

### **SHAME**

I realize now that what I was experiencing was false shame. It was not my fault that I was abused physically. It was not because I was ugly or evil. This was nothing but lies perpetuated by the enemy and made convincing by the abuse. This is exactly how the enemy works. Sometimes sowing seeds of lies or doubts in our heart is not enough, sometimes the enemy needs to use external things to make his lies more convincing. He can use other people to say certain things to us. He can also use events happening in our life to make his lies seem true. That's why it's important for us not only to know God's word, but also to abide in it, no matter what happens, no matter what other people say.

Here's a very common method the enemy uses. First the enemy will put seeds of deception in our minds, such as "you're different" or "you're not manly like the others" then he might use other people to speak lies such as "you're gay" or "you're a sissy", which will make the

initial lie look even more convincing. So many people have fallen in the past because of this method, including myself. We begin to think to ourselves, "Maybe, I am what they say." And once you start believing those lies, the next thing you know you accept yourself in terms of that label. At first you feel ashamed because people make you feel that way, but after a while you get tired of those encounters. To cope with the resentment from other people for the identity given to you, you hardened your heart with pride. And we all know that pride goes before destruction (Proverbs 16:18). It's true when they say "give the devil an inch, he will take a mile." All this because of 'one small lie': "you're not a man, not like them".

Yes, the devil will use false shame to bind us, but true shame is also necessary. True shame helps us to discern between what is moral and what is immoral. Nowadays we see people in gay pride parades identifying publically with sexual immorality, sporting their nudity and immoral sexual acts without feeling any apparent sense of shame or perhaps suppressing the shame they may be feeling. It's one thing to sin and feel shame, it's another thing to sin and to be prideful about it. Lord have mercy on them!

### **GUILT**

Once a person wrote to me and said that he was now free from all the guilt that religion has imposed on him. But the reality is that guilt itself can be a good thing. Just like pain is an indication that something is wrong, guilt is the indication that we have done something morally wrong. And this indication serves as a warning to us to take some

### **CHAPTER 2 - GOD IS OUR REDEEMER**

action before it gets worse. But the question is: what is right and what is wrong. It's important for us to know the answer because ...

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. Revelation 12:10

Our enemy, the accuser, will try to make us feel guilty for things we don't need to feel guilty over. For example, some people will feel guilty because they are still tempted with sexual thoughts or have sexual dreams involving members of the same gender. But we don't have to feel guilty about that, because we didn't choose to have that experience, just like Eve didn't choose to be tempted by the serpent. However, we should feel guilty if we start to entertain those thoughts and let them linger in our minds because then that means we have sinned. We have committed adultery in our heart. So there is true guilt and false guilt. True guilt will help us to go in the right direction and bring us closer to God, but false guilt will only drag us down. If we don't do anything, we will fall into a downward spiral of depression. A very common false guilt is when you continue to feel guilty even after you have confessed your sin or you start to fear that you have committed the unpardonable sin. Don't let feelings dictate your decisions, let God's word transform your feelings.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Have faith that He has forgiven you! There is no need to beat yourself up. You don't try to fast or do something to make up for your sin. God has already accomplished that for you. Don't try to do what only Christ can do for you. Only He can make up for our sin by having paid the price on the cross. What you can actually do is repent from this sin and the false guilt, letting your mind be renewed by God's truth. The enemy will always try to stop you from coming to God, but please know that God always wants you to come to Him. He would rather have you come to Him with filth, so He can clean you up rather than have you run away from Him. Remember the parable of the prodigal son? What did the son need to do to be accepted by his father? Did he need to clean up? Did he need to do anything for his father? Not at all, in fact the father came running to his son the moment he saw him. All God wants is for us to leave all the sin behind (repent) and come to Him, just like the prodigal son left his old life after hitting rock bottom. Sadly, this is true for most of us. We often have to hit rock bottom before we actually come to our Father.

On the other hand some people feel guilty about their sin but they are not willing to give it up. Rather than allowing God's grace to transform them, they end up abusing God's grace, using it as a license to sin or by twisting God's word. Someone in a lesbian relationship told me that she 'knew' she was 'saved' so it didn't matter what she did. While another one said that it's okay to be 'gay' and that King David and Jonathan

#### **CHAPTER 2 - GOD IS OUR REDEEMER**

were a gay couple, just like Ruth and Naomi were lesbians. This type of thought is dangerous, because it shows an unrepentant hardened heart. This shows that the person has no love for Jesus at all. The Gospel does save, but the Gospel also commands us to love God (Matthew 22:37), not to use God as a means of salvation and later dispose of Him. So it's not about 'knowing' you're 'saved', it's about loving God. Don't get confused. We don't love Him in order to be saved —that's religion—we love Him because He has saved us. Religious people try to make God love them with their good deeds, but disciples do good deeds because they love Him and they love Him because He has first loved them (1 John 4:19).

# **FAILURE**

My first exposure to pornography was when I was only 9 or 10 years old, but I didn't get really addicted to porn until my second year of university. Growing up with Christian values, I knew that pornography and masturbation were wrong, but I was really powerless to stop my addiction. I felt really bad after every time I finished masturbating while watching porn. I felt a mixture of feelings ranging from guilt, shame, disgust, etc. But I had faith that one day God will free me from all this and I really tried to do everything in MY power to stop myself from doing it. I tried praying about it, I tried reading the Bible, I tried making myself busy with other things, I even tried to put the Bible next to my computer, hoping if I saw it, I would stop myself from watching porn and masturbating. But alas, all that to no avail! Because I was only trying to change my behavior while my mind remained the same. The longest I was able to stay 'clean' was only about six months (and those

six months were not easy). All too soon I fell again. Every day I had to battle against the temptation to commit the sin that I still enjoyed. And every time I fell into the same sin, the bad feelings grew worse. I remember I used to count how many 'clean' days I had and when I fell again, I felt like it was just another disappointment for me and for God. I had to start from day one again. But by God's grace I have been free from all that since 2010 and I no longer count how many days because every day is supposed to be a new day in Christ. Day one begins again and falling in love with Christ starts all over again.

Because of the cycle of trying and failing, I grew weary and tired and started to question if there was any hope for me. Falling again after six months when I thought I was doing 'great' was quite devastating. I began to lose faith that one day I would be free from all this. Finally, I decided to just say good bye to God because I felt tired of disappointing Him, I felt tired of repeating the same cycle again and again. I felt tired of feeling like a failure. But the truth is, I didn't know God properly. I thought I needed to appease Him with my good behavior. I felt like I needed to fix myself before I could come to Him. I realize now that my perception of God was so distorted, I was not able to see that He loved me, even when I was still 'His enemy' (Romans 5:10). In reality, I didn't need to fix myself before I could come to Him. Instead, all He wanted was for me just to come to Him as I am and let Him do the restoration.

# **DELIVERANCE**

It's crucial to have the proper expectation of what true deliverance is in terms of SST, lest we get disappointed or feel guilty for things we don't need to feel guilty about and then fall again.

#### **CHAPTER 2 - GOD IS OUR REDEEMER**

Deliverance doesn't mean that you won't be tempted, because Jesus never promised that. If our Master was tempted, what makes you think you won't be? We are delivered from sin, not from temptation. They are two different things. Deliverance is not about the absence of temptation, deliverance is about the presence of God's grace in our life. It's the grace that teaches us to say no to all ungodliness (Titus 2:12). That's what deliverance is. So we will be tempted whether through people, thoughts, dreams, conversations, images, etc. but as long as you stay in God's grace, you can say no to all that. I've been tempted in so many different ways and the enemy has tried to make me feel guilty about it, but understanding the truth about deliverance and the nature of temptation has kept me from being deceived into depression again from unnecessary guilt because I know that being tempted is not a sin. Temptation only gives birth to sin when I fall into it. The Holy Spirit has kept me walking victoriously in God's grace. Bottom line: we need God's grace like we need oxygen. We need it when we stand strong. We need it when we stumble. We need it every day. That's our deliverance. Feast on it.

## REDEMPTION

The biggest difference in terms of salvation between the way of Jesus and the way of religion concerns redemption. According to any religion we need to perform a set of rituals and follow a set of rules to redeem ourselves, but according to Jesus we need only to trust Him. He will redeem us. We sin because we have become slaves of sin (John 8:34) and for us to be free from that slavery, there's a price to pay. As slaves we cannot pay our own ransom and that's exactly why Jesus came to the earth.

just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Matthew 20:28

It's not that God will torture us if we don't worship Him. That's religion. But we will be tortured because of our wrongdoing and that's justice. Jesus didn't come to demand worship. Why would He? He is already worshiped by angels and the universe! He's the King of kings for crying out loud. Jesus came to save us and set us free from the slavery of sin! He came to lift our guilt and shame which was caused by our sin. And all He asks from us is to trust Him. Once we truly believe that we have been set free, we will automatically worship Him —not out of fear nor because we want to escape hell. No. We worship Him because we are thankful to Him who has saved us from hell. We worship Him because He first loved us. This is the beauty of the Messiah. We are not our own redeemer. He is! And our redeemer lives. He didn't just die on the cross. He was also risen and conquered death to redeem us!

So don't let any guilt and shame stop you from coming to the Lord. Know that your shame and guilt just indicates your need for Christ. Let your shame and guilt die and be buried along with your sins and let God raise you up to a new life. As Jesus paid our ransom, we become His. No longer do we live for ourselves, for our lusts, or fleshly desires. We live for Him who gave His life for us. We become slaves of righteousness in Christ, not out of force, but out of gratitude. No longer do we want to do the former things. Rather the good works that God has prepared (Ephesians 2:10). We may still get tempted every now and then, but we don't want it anymore. Why would we? What we have

#### **CHAPTER 2 - GOD IS OUR REDEEMER**

in Christ is so much better. We have been set free! We should proclaim it with joy and live out our freedom. This is redemption.

# Discipleship:

- Study the word of God and ask the Holy Spirit for discernment so that you can distinguish between what is false and what is true. Discernment is a mark of a mature Christian which is acquired through spiritual training (Hebrews 5:14). Since it's a training, it doesn't happen subconsciously. You actually must pursue this.
- Always measure everything according to God's word. People will always have opinions and we can't change that. We surely can't stop them from expressing their opinion, but we can definitely ignore them, or we can forgive them if we're hurt, once it's been proven that their opinion is not true according to God's word. For example, some people who identify as gay have called me all sorts of derogatory names because of my testimony. In the past being called a sissy or queer or queen would have really bothered me. Now, I couldn't care less because I know it's just lies. I'm not going to waste my time dwelling on lies. I'm more concerned with God's truth.
- ▶ Pour out your heart out to God (Psalm 62:8). Prayer is more than just a request. Yes, God knows everything, but pouring your heart out is not about letting Him know things, as if He doesn't know already. It's about trusting Him with your burden. Learn to cast everything on the Lord first and don't pick up what you have already

cast on Him. Relax. He's got it covered. After you pour out your heart to Him, then you may reach out to a trust-worthy human being. This may be helpful, but be very careful when you do this. It could make things worse. Ask God for His counsel on who would be a godly friend.

# Chapter 3 INSECURITY& REJECTION:

# GOD IS OUR FATHER

used to really love art. *Well,* I still do to an extent, but not as much as I used to because now I love Jesus more. And so I used to spend a lot of time drawing because it was an outlet for me to channel my feelings that were stirred inside. But unfortunately my dad was not happy with this. I remember him saying that what I was doing, drawing, was useless and that I could better spend my time doing other things. I was really hurt and set out to prove my dad wrong. And I actually managed to do that, but that still didn't heal me from the pain of rejection.

# REJECTION

Instead of affirmation, I got rejection for the very thing that I was passionate about. I remember one time I played in a theatre and all my family was there except for my dad. But because I was very used to (what I perceived as) rejection, when he was not there, it was sort of expected and it didn't consciously bother me as much. I just remember wondering where he was when everyone else was there. And so there was some sort of disconnection between my father and me. I am sure that he didn't mean it that way, but it didn't really look that way to me back then. So, not only was I still carrying hurt and shame from the abuse that I received from my mom, I also felt rejected by my dad. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying my dad is some evil monster, but like any other human being, he is prone to make mistakes. I'm not blaming him for anything, but not having that affirmation from my dad led me to look for affirmation elsewhere and not in very good places. That's just how it happened.

However, later in life my mom gave her life to Christ and she changed significantly and tried to be close to me. My dad actually gave his life to Christ first and he began showing us more attention, but I still felt disconnected. The funny thing is my dad and I are in so many ways the same and yet different. My dad doesn't talk much and I was sort of like that. As a result, neither of us tried to talk to each other and we ended up not talking to each other. I think the only communication that I had with my dad back then was mostly in anger. I was really longing for a connection to a father figure.

Aside from feeling rejected by my dad, I also felt rejected by my male peers. Even though I managed to make friends with the kids at school, mostly girls, some of the boys were calling me names like sissy. And I remember wondering if I was really one, a sissy, but I never really took that to the heart. This just created a bigger schism between me and other boys. Manhood, or at least what I perceived to be manhood back then, became something that was inaccessible for me and because of this, men became something mysterious to me. Like a puzzle to solve, men were very interesting to me. Girls on the other hand were not. I understood them and they seemed to flock around me. So they were not interesting at all to me back then.

# BEING DIFFERENT

As I grew older, I had more male friends and they didn't make fun of me. But because I already felt disconnected from the 'men's world', I was not really sure what to do with my male peers. That's why most of the time I withdrew internally and preferred to avoid them. It was

easier that way, because I didn't have to deal with the feelings of being different (which I had since I was little) from the rest of the group and feeling less of a man. We had different interests and I remember I didn't like the way they talked about women, because it was degrading and even back then, I knew it was a false form of masculinity. I knew for sure that it was not at all manly to talk about women in a degrading manner. I thought that my peers were being childish and needed to grow up. That made me all the more reluctant to be around them or be open with them. The only thing that we had in common was our interest in games and gadgets. I don't think you can have a deep meaningful friendship over that. For me the friendship was rather superficial. I had no problem with it, other than the fact that I was not interested in it. I still felt disconnected from my own manhood despite having more male acquaintances. This disconnection is most likely caused by a heart wound that has not been dealt with.

On the other hand, I realize that for some people it is quite the opposite. They don't feel comfortable with members of opposite sex and feel more comfortable with members of the same sex. Usually this is caused by unhealthy experience they had involving members of the opposite sex which led them to finding comfort in members of the same sex. It's clear that in both cases there's a heart wound that needs to be healed through forgiveness and God's love. As God's creations who have fallen in sin, we all need forgiveness.

## **BODY IMAGE**

One of the most prominent things that I most hated about myself was my body. Being very skinny, I used to get a lot of remarks which made me think that there is something wrong with being skinny. That made me feel insecure and uncomfortable in my own skin. I hated my body. I wanted to gain more weight and more muscle mass. But it was really hard for me to gain weight, even though I ate more than what most people. I guess my body is just not wired that way. And so I became even more insecure and feeling even less manly for not having that "male physique". I felt like I could never measure up to that standard of "a manly man", i.e. a robust body, muscular, etc. I was constantly comparing myself to other men thinking, "Look at that guy, look at his big arms" or "That guy has pecs, not like you Sihol," etc.

And because of this, I began to believe that a 'real' man or a manly man is someone who is not skinny or at least not as skinny as I had been. As a result, I was always very attracted to guys who were (much) 'thicker' than me. I realize now that I was not really in love with them. I was more in love with the fantasy of the ideal man that I wanted to be. And so being intimate with them would be the closest thing I could get toward being the man I wished to be. This is how it works more or less: In reality one is only using the other to fulfill that fantasy. This is not love at all. This is more like a form of 'vampirism' where one is trying to absorb a portion of "manliness" from the other to make oneself feel manlier or to affirm one's manhood. Most likely the other person is trying to do the same. Such a sad interaction between two people! No wonder those who identify as gay often focus so

much on the appearance and hence the relationship is often unstable. According to a research study in which Colleen Hoff was the principal investigator, 50% of same sex couples involved in the study were in open relationships and infidelity seems to be part of the 'gay culture' as admitted by some people who identified as gay. Sadly I must admit that even though I wanted to stay faithful, I just couldn't for some reason. I suppose you can only fantasize about one person for so long before you move on to the next fantasy. The 'gay' life style is definitely unhealthy in so many different aspects.

# **CAMP**

Another thing that bothered me about myself was the way I looked, talked and walked. I hated my looks to the extent that I did not like looking at myself in the mirror or getting my picture taken. I remember one time I had to take a photo for school and when I printed the photo (back then there were no digital cameras), I did not like what I saw and so I burned the photo.

I also thought the way I talked and walked were considered feminine by society, at least that's what I perceived. And I was so scared that people would know that I was (what I thought I was) gay at that time, that I tried to change my mannerism, hoping that people would perceive me as being manly. Honestly, I ended up feeling awkward with the way I walked and talked. You can only pretend for so long, at least in my case. I also tried to 'force' myself to like girls as well. But it was tiring, because let's face it, the truth is I was just faking it. I was not being authentic with myself or with God.

I became anxious all the time around other people and always wondered if this person or that person knew that I was 'gay'. It got to the point that when I heard other people laughing, I thought that they were laughing at me. That really made me angry and more insecure. I often thought to myself, "Why are they laughing at me? What's wrong with me?" In reality it was all just in my mind because I was so focused on myself. Those people didn't even know me. I was trapped in a delusion.

I really thought if I could change my behavior, things would be better, at least I would feel better. I was so focused on trying to be what I thought a man should be, that in the end I felt even more ashamed of myself for falling so short. I did not realize back then that my problem was not on the exterior, but rather on the interior. My insecurity was only a fruit of something much deeper inside me, my self-hatred. Hence, trying to change my exterior in the hope of permanently fixing the problem was like trying to pluck the fruits, hoping that they wouldn't ever grow back without actually cutting the root. It was indeed foolish.

# **AFFIRMATION**

I think my desire for other men was just my way of trying to get affirmation as a man in the wrong place from the wrong source. Feeling rejected by my father (not necessarily saying he really did reject me) and by my male peers, feeling different from the rest of the men I knew and thinking that I didn't have the so-called ideal male physique or attributes convinced me that I could never be a real man. I felt like I didn't even know how to become one. I was quite lost until God came into my life and rearranged everything. He gave me direction. He spoke order into my life.

Though my father and mother forsake me, <u>the LORD will</u> receive me. Psalm 27:10

One of the things that really amazed me about God was that even though I knowingly sinned He didn't reject me, He didn't even condemn me. On the contrary, He was drawing me to Him. He didn't want me to die in my sins, He wanted me to have eternal life in Him. For the first time in my life I was accepted for who I was, even with all my brokenness and sin, and not just by anyone, but by the Creator, the Holy God Himself. That's something! Imagine being accepted by the most important person in the universe. While some people feel very proud when given the chance to meet the President, I feel very honored to be loved by the Creator of the universe. The moment I realized fully His acceptance for me, was the moment my search for affirmation ended. I didn't have to look elsewhere to be affirmed as a man. I was no longer clueless of what it means to be a man. I was no longer concerned about my body (as long as it's healthy) because I realized this is the body my Creator had given to me and it's good. He said so (Genesis 1:31). The best part is God didn't just accept me for who I was, He fathered me, He guided me and He showed me the man of God that He intended me to become. Yes, God accepts us for who we are with all our brokenness and sin. Thankfully He doesn't leave us broken and hurt. He washes away our sin, heals our hurt, puts our pieces back together and He restores us to His original plan!

As mentioned before, my relationship with my earthly father has not been the best father-son relationship. And even though our relationship

has gotten much better but it still may not be the exemplary father-son relationship for some people.

But it's not a problem because that's not the condition for complete healing. God heals us in many different ways. Just like Jesus didn't heal the sick with just one method. One time He just spoke, another time He touched the sick, one time the sickness was gone instantly, other time the sick was healed gradually, etc. In some cases God heals us through other people but in other cases, like mine, He heals without human agent. How God heals us, it's up to Him, not us. Much like it's not the patient that decides how the doctor should do his job but the doctor. And the patient needs to surrender to the doctor. If not, he can find another doctor. We cannot focus on the method of healing but rather on the Healer Himself. So, what's important is to know God personally as our Father and surrender to Him. He is the Father of spirits and we are spirits. My earthly father is a human being prone to making mistakes just like me. That's exactly why he can't possibly replace my Father in heaven and I don't expect him to.

Whether you are really rejected or simply feel rejected and long for a connection with a fatherly figure, know that God can and wants to father you. He is the best Father you can get and He is more than enough! I know the idea may seem abstract to you now, but once you start trusting God as your Father, you will see Him guiding you every step of the way. Walk by faith, not by sight, and you will actually see.

God has fathered me and given me the affirmation that I needed as a man and I have learned so much about being a real man by modeling

after Jesus. What about the women? Jesus should be their model as well. After all Jesus is the embodiment of the perfect human. He is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) which humans are supposed to have initially. Hence even women should model after Jesus to be a godly woman. Indeed, Jesus is the perfect example for anyone.

# **SURRENDER**

Surrender is such a simple concept and yet a very hard thing to do, because when we surrender, we are giving our complete trust. Have you played the game where you let yourself fall and you have to trust your friends to catch you? That's what surrender is. You let yourself fall and you trust that God will catch you. Most of us were too afraid to fall and let Him catch us. We prefer to make everything feel safe and secure, when in the end nothing is really safe and secure, because we are simply not in control, which is a good thing because God is. That's why we should just trust Him. All we have to do is come to Him with all our insecurities and learn to make Him our security by trusting Him. Will we come to Him with our brokenness all exposed? It's not that God doesn't know, He knows already. He just wants us to learn to trust Him with everything, including our own brokenness. So the first step to surrender is actually being authentic. Don't try to muster your courage up or think you can do this by yourself. Just be authentic to Him, tell Him exactly what you feel and think. Then surrender all that to Him.

> "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." Luke 22:42

Again Jesus Christ leads us not just with words, but with examples, the perfect example of surrender. He was being authentic with the Father. He was in anguish and He did not hide His distress. He certainly did not hide His preference for the cup to pass, but eventually He surrendered to the will of the Father. He trusted the Father to the extent that He trusted His own life to His Father (Luke 23:46). And through that the Father was glorified. Had Jesus not went through this, we would have never known the joy of salvation, we would have never known just how much God loves us.

So what do we learn from this? I didn't ask God to make me straight or pray the gay away, I simply asked God to make me who He wants me to be (His will and not mine). In fact, I told God that if He is OKAY with homosexuality, please just let me 'stay gay'. But once I surrendered everything such as my insecurity, anxiety, self-loathing, hatred against my parents, etc. to God, everything else started to change supernaturally.

The problem is a lot of people don't want to let go of their own will. I often hear people tell me, "I just want to live a normal life and be a straight guy. I just want to have my own family. I wish God would just take this away from me." Notice it's MY will and not God's will. They want God to do something that THEY want. What if God doesn't want you to have a 'normal' life? Or what if His normal is different from yours? What if God doesn't want you to be married? You're still not surrendering to God. I'm not saying you can't desire those things, but this is NOT about your will, it's about His. We are quick to call something a blessing when it accords our will but what about when it

doesn't? Going to a prison can actually be a blessing especially when it's in that place we finally stop playing God and start surrendering to Him.

Before I surrendered my life to Jesus, I didn't know what to expect from following Jesus. I even thought to myself, "Oh my goodness following Jesus would be ever so boring, I will have to give up so many (carnal) pleasures and I will be stuck with just singing hymns and praying. Oh my gosh, it's gonna be so boring! Not fun at all!"

I actually expected the worst from following Jesus. Nonetheless, I just knew that I wanted to follow Him at any cost because He loves me way too much for me to ignore Him. How can I not follow someone who loves me enough to die on the cross? Fortunately, it turned out that following Jesus has been the best decision I ever made in my entire life. I still have problems and get tempted in life every now and then, but I have peace because I know I can trust my Savior in any situation. I have a shepherd who guides me to the green pastures even though sometimes I may have to go through the valley of death, but I don't have to worry because He is with me. I have gained so much more in this life and will gain even more in heaven! (Matthew 19:29)

So, will you say to God, "Lord, I'm in a big mess right now? I need your help. I would like for this mess to go away, but most importantly I would like to surrender myself to You in this mess and let Your will be done in my life, whatever that is even if it means something that I may not like or understand now."

#### **STEREOTYPE**

Once I surrendered myself to God, I was no longer concerned about attaining that 'manly man' image, or about being straight. I just wanted to be what God wants me to be. And I realize now that the image of man that I had been pursuing previously was just a false image. I was confusing between God's truth and social stereotypes. Now I realize that being a man does not equal to being Hercules nor a woman a girly princess.

Should a woman be wearing girly dresses and accessories? If we actually follow Peter's advice for women, they are not supposed to adorn themselves! (1 Peter 3:3) Does being a man mean we can't cry at all? If that was true, then was Jesus not a man for weeping? (John 11:35). It's time we question the things we have been taught and test them with God's word. Remember, we are not to conform to the pattern of this world, but rather to God's word. What truly makes a man (or woman) of God is Christ-likeness. The only stereotype we need to embrace is the godly stereotype.

All this time I had been fixating on a false manhood and feeling ashamed for something I didn't need to feel ashamed about in the first place! That's false shame. I don't need to be like most men, because I am called to be like Christ, not like most other men. Other men cannot possibly be like me and I can never be like them, because God has created me uniquely, wonderfully, and fearfully. I no longer need to compete with other men because I know who I am in Christ. And I don't think I'm fearfully wonderfully made because I have what every man wants, not at all. That would be putting my worth back in the

game with other men, and not in God. But I believe I am fearfully and wonderfully made because God made me for a purpose. I'm not some cosmic accidental junk. I may not be perfect for everything, but I know I am perfect for His purpose in my life. And so are you!

And because of that I've stopped comparing myself to other men (for the record, comparing is a sign of envy; it's sin). I'm becoming the man that God intended me to be... not what people expect me to be. And if ever I am tempted to compare myself again to another man, I will instead give thanks to God. Giving thanks may seem like a small thing but if done obediently you will be surprised at how it can renew your mind and hence transform your life. I practice giving thanks for the body He has given me. It's a healthy body used for His glory, not mine. Sure I can work out if I want to be bigger and more muscular, but at this time I find that trivial. I don't see the need and I don't really desire it. However, I do try to stay healthy so I can keep serving God with this body. My only pursuit is to be more like Christ.

The Son is the image of the invisible God... Colossians 1:15

Every day we are bombarded with myriads of images. The world is trying to tell us what we should buy, how we should look like, what we should be, and a million other things. In time we get really confused and start to pursue these images rather than the one image we should follow, Jesus Christ. Why do we work so hard to attain these false images when we can just follow the true image of God? Why do we want to be like this celebrity or that celebrity? Why do only a few want

to be more like Jesus? Why are we not looking up to God through Christ?

Once I've forsaken those false images, I've become more comfortable in my own skin. I don't care if I twist when I walk or if my voice is not deep enough. I don't really care if people think I'm still gay. I don't need to conform to people's expectation, I just need to conform to God's will. Such freedom is only found in Christ!

# **FACES OF MAN**

A lot of us second guess our (wo)manhood because of the stereotypes imposed on us. A lot of us feel inadequate as men and that could be because of our physique, our voice, our mannerism, our preference, or even a job that doesn't live up to the stereotypes. We have our own opinion, people have their own opinion, but in the end what matters is what God says:

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27

God didn't create a ¼ man or a ¾ man or ½ man or somewhere in between man and woman or the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> gender. He created (fully) man and (fully) woman. It's not our attributes that define our manhood. It's actually quite the opposite. It's our manhood that defines our attributes. Whether you talk with a higher pitch or with a deep voice, that's the voice of a man, because you are a man. Whether you are skinny or stocky, that's the physique of a man, because you are

a man. Whether you have a rough or graceful mannerism, that's the mannerism of a man, because you are a man. Whether you like sports or art, that's what men like, because you are a man. Whether you work as a mechanic or a nurse, that's what men do, because you are a man.

The world is telling us the lie that there is only one type of man and that we all need to conform to this image. In reality there are different types and we don't need to conform to anything but God's image in which we were created. Believe it when God said that He created you as a complete man and give thanks to God for making you the (wo)man He wants you to be, not who you want to be. We don't need anything to prove our (wo)manhood. It is given by God. We need to simply accept it!

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Psalm 118:1

Once we have truly embraced this revelation, we will be free from unnecessary anxiety and stress. No longer will we have to worry about how we look, how we sound, what we do, which label we belong to, and all other things, because we will be too busy giving thanks to God.

#### BELIEVE IN YOURSELF NOT!

Let me just be totally blunt: confidence is a deception. I've heard people try to boost their confidence by telling themselves that they are successful, good looking, smart, etc. It's a lie. Really. You don't want to put your self-worth on temporal things that will pass. Our value is found in Jesus, in the shedding of His precious blood, which

means that we are precious and nothing can change this fact. The only thing that will remain true is the word of God and that's why He is our Rock. Hence the 'secret' is to know who we are in Christ, not to have confidence in ourselves or believe in ourselves. Put your worth in Jesus. Only then will you be free from all sorts of insecurities because you will be putting your security in the God who is always in control. You don't need confidence. You need faith in God. So the next time God calls on you to do something don't be afraid, don't be confident, but simply believe in Him and marvel at His work through you.

This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the LORD. Jeremiah 17:5

# Discipleship:

Jesus warned us that following Him does not mean we will not have trouble. In fact, we may very well be hated and get into trouble, but don't be discouraged! Jesus has overcome! Our reward is beyond your wildest imagination (1 Corinthians 2:9). Paul called our troubles *light and momentary* and they are nothing compared to the glory the Father reserves for us (2 Corinthians 4:17). We will gain far more than what we lose by following Him. But don't take my word, take Jesus' word instead and read Mark 10:29-30. It is really worth it! Meditate on God's promises. Imagine the glory you will receive in Heaven and set your eyes on the prize! Keep looking at things from an eternal perspective so that you won't get distracted easily by earthly things.

Acknowledge God's acceptance and affirmation of you in prayer and thanksgiving, daily if needed. For example, "Lord, thank you for accepting me when everyone else rejected me. I know I am secure in you." Once we have firmly received this affirmation in our heart, the threat of rejection won't be so fear provoking, because we no longer seek acceptance or affirmation from other people, be it from the opposite sex, same sex, parents, peers, etc. as we are secured in Christ.

Chapter 4 SINGLEHOOD:

# GOD IS OUR HUSBAND

# "Have you met anyone yet?"

think almost all —if not all— single people suffer with this question, including myself. This kind of question used to vex me a lot, then I realize that people are probably concerned when they ask that question. And so I learned to bear with it and answer it like I would answer any other question. Personally my problem is not so much with the question itself, but rather with the thinking underlying it. It seems to put single people in this category of incompletion, making them look like sad human beings who need to attain the supreme goal of every human being, to get married. Where did we learn this? Certainly not from the word of God!

# WHOLENESS

As society we are under the assumption that unless we have a "significant other" then we will be 'forever lonely' (I am tempted to put the meme here) or miserable or incomplete. I wonder if this is all because of the stories we see on books, movies, and songs; how they just revolve around romantic couples. I can't remember any movie that portrays a satisfied single. Even if there's an unmarried character, usually in the story that character is looking for someone or bound to find "someone special" or worse, they are simply promiscuous. Perhaps we do have an intrinsic longing for someone.

I personally believe the latter, but I also believe that the world has once again corrupted what is really natural. In our pursuit for wholeness we are often diverted and end up looking for things that make us happy but don't make us whole. We have confused wholeness with happiness; we

#### CHAPTER 4 - GOD IS OUR HUSBAND

have exchanged something lasting with something fleeting. Happiness alone doesn't last forever and it will make you crave for more. Wholeness will free you from any craving. Hence it's very important not to settle for mere happiness but rather to seek wholeness.

We have been so betrayed by the concept of "soul mate" and often waste our time looking for "the one". There is no scripture that teaches this. Two incomplete human beings cannot possibly complete each other. They are simply each a separate and different puzzle which needs to be completed individually. God is not some cosmic matchmaker, He is the Groom of His church.

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. Colossians 1:16

You were created FOR CHRIST, not for some guy or girl. I will say this again: you were created for Christ. That's why another created being can never fully complete you because you were not meant for that in the first place. It's really important to repent and realize this truth, that God created us first and foremost for Himself. And this is actually a beautiful thing. This doesn't mean that God is some egomaniac (which some people accuse Him of), not at all. This means that you are wanted, loved, cherished, and pursued by God. This means that only Christ can truly complete you. Only God can give you everlasting pleasure (Psalm 16:11). No wonder Jesus said this,

If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:26

We need to love Him to the extent that our love for other people, even ourselves, seems like hatred. This means that our love for the person that we love the most is nothing compared to our love for Jesus. This means that Jesus dwells in the Holy of holies (a very special place) in our heart where no one can't even come close to, much less enter it. Shocking? Not at all! It makes total sense IF we believe only Jesus can truly satisfy us and bring pleasure to our life. Why do we easily accept and romanticize the idea that couples were made for each other? Couples blush just thinking they were made for each other but do we blush realizing that God made us for Himself? Why do we find the idea we were created for our Creator as less exciting? Isn't that the most romantic thing you can ever experience? That the Creator made us especially for Himself? Do you know why? It is because carnal minds seek carnal things. That's what the world wants us to think. Thus we need to repent from seeking completion in other people —that's idolatry by the way— and start realizing that only Christ can make us complete. You CAN be single and complete. You don't need another human being to complete you as a person. Once we are made complete in Christ, then we can have a committed relationship that is not about finding "the one", but about being "the one" and making the other party "the one." It's actually beautiful. It's pure love. I love you without expecting anything in return. I love you because of love. Isn't that what

#### CHAPTER 4 - GOD IS OUR HUSBAND

I means to "love your neighbor as yourself"? We love ourselves without expectation and that's how we should love others as well. Isn't that how God is with us?

Surely I'm not putting marriage down. Whether we like it or not, Christ is our real spouse and our highest devotion is to Him alone. The good news is Christ has called us to love one another the way He loves us. So it actually works for everyone and that's why a Christ-centered relationship will stand through anything because we have two whole people giving love to each other without needing anything back. It's better than two incomplete people trying to make each other feel complete. One makes the other the center of his/her life hoping that the other will make him/her the center of his/her life. Not only is it emotionally exhausting, it's a form of idolatry.

And you are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power. Colossians 2:10

# **FELLOWSHIP**

Being complete in God does not mean that we don't need to be in relationships with other people. That is two different things. We are relational beings because God is relational. He made us in His image because we are supposed to be in a relationship, first with Him and then with other people.

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a <u>helper</u> suitable for him." Genesis 2:18

Some people think that this verse shows that God is not enough for us. In reality it's a mistake that one commits for thinking carnally. David clearly said that, "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1). God has never said, not even once, that He is not enough. Over and over again He declared that He is all that we need. He is our savior. On the contrary, God reprimanded those who depended on mere flesh and blood. There is no doubt that God is everything that we need. He is sufficient, even more than sufficient for us. This verse (Genesis 2:18) is not a declaration of God's insufficiency but rather His plan for humankind. The keyword here is "a helper". A helper in what way? Bear in mind that we are here for a purpose to which God has assigned us. Our life is not about ourselves. I need to remind you again that we are created for Christ.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Genesis 1:28

This was God's mission for both Adam and Eve: subdue the earth by multiplying, not to merely grow old together or have that white picket fence family while the rest of the world out there are dying in sin. No! God wants us to subdue the earth! It's an adventure. Eve could not have done that by herself, nor could Adam have done it with 'Steve', *cliché* I know. God created Eve for Adam so that TOGETHER they could fulfill their God-given mission. They were supposed to raise up godly children that will do the work of God and their children were supposed to raise up godly children to do the work of God and so on. That's

#### **CHAPTER 4 - GOD IS OUR HUSBAND**

how we are supposed to subdue the earth. Sadly many of us prefer to live in our safe zone rather than taking part in the adventure that God is preparing. We have reduced marriage into our own mere pursuit of happiness and romance and completely ignored God's original intent for marriage.

Have you seen the movie The Fellowship of The Ring? Do you know how Frodo and the gang worked hand in hand to achieve one purpose? Marriage is supposed to be like that; it's not a cure to loneliness nor the purpose of life. God designed marriage to be a form of fellowship where the couple works hand in hand to complete God's mission in their life. This is what marriage was initially all about, not about growing old with "the one" or having someone to take care of us, etc. Don't get me wrong; those are marital blessings that you can receive (but not always) through your obedience. And you should enjoy them, but they're not the focus. Marriage is not so much about the celebration of a relationship between two people, or about being part of the natural course of life (implying that celibacy as advised by Paul is unnatural), but rather about God's plan for mankind to flourish, not just in quantity, but also in quality (every parent wants his/her child to have a better life than theirs and we know that there is no better life other than the one in Christ for He is life). Marriage was meant to help us in the adventure that God has prepared for us, the adventure of subduing the earth! Hence it's very important to get married with the correct mindset, which is to stay faithful to God's mission. And only through obedience to His plan do we receive our highest pleasure in life.

Of course the mission we receive now is no longer to merely multiply physically. That was for the first Adam and Eve. We —the church—as the second Eve are commanded to multiply spiritually —to make disciples—by Jesus, our second Adam. This is the mystery Paul talked about in Ephesians 5. So for those who are physically barren, rejoice! God wants us to be spiritually fruitful above all else. The absence of physical descendant simply means that you have more time and energy for God's kingdom. God still wants and can use you.

And for this mission, we need an even greater helper namely the Holy Spirit (John 14:16). Imagine that, God Himself becomes our HELPER! I guess being a helper is not at all an inferior or degrading position. And now it's very clear why we should be married only to someone who is equally yoked (2 Corinthians 6:14). It's not merely so that we can have a "good happy marriage". How can someone who is living outside of Christ help us to obey Him? It's the same reason why there cannot be "gay" marriage in Christianity, because the purpose of marriage is to help us to obey God, while "gay" marriage is a blatant disobedience to God's plan. That's why a great marriage is the union of two people who love the Lord Jesus more than they love each other, because they will continue to help each other to obey the Lord (John 14:15).

As always, the enemy tries to confuse us by offering a cheap version of marriage based on nothing but feelings and godlessness. And the end result? High divorce rate. Surely if there is no sense of godly love and fellowship in a marriage, we know feelings are fleeting, people can just leave anytime. After all, if they were married only for the feelings, once

#### **CHAPTER 4 - GOD IS OUR HUSBAND**

the feelings are gone, what's the point of staying, right? And this is the so-called "love marriage". Sadly many Christians have bought this false idea of marriage. We make marriage about ourselves and not Christ. We need to repent! Stop thinking like the world! We need to see marriage not as a way to please ourselves, but rather to please God. Yes, we need other people, not only to make us feel better about ourselves, but to help each other complete God's mission in our life.

## FELLOWSHIP OF THE SAINTS

The problem that we now have is not only do we have the wrong idea of marriage where it's all about us rather than God, but we also put marriage on a pedestal and totally set aside other types of fellowship and perhaps even consider them of lesser value. We are often so hung up with the idea that "being in a relationship" must mean marriage. What about brotherhood or fellowship of the saints?

Marriage is surely a form of fellowship, but it is by no means the only form of fellowship that we must or can have with other saints, because obviously throughout the scriptures we see so many single people who devoted themselves to God's ministry in their life. Even Jesus spoke clearly about eunuchs (whether by birth, made by other people, or by one's own choice, Matthew 19:12) —meaning "alone in bed"— who live for the sake of God's Kingdom. And these people live in fellowship with other people. They may sleep alone but they don't live alone. Take Jesus for example. He was in a relationship with His disciples. He practically lived with them before He sent them out.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42

The first century church had one thing that a lot of "churches" nowadays don't have and that is real fellowship. By fellowship it's not just a once a week meeting, but daily meetings with glad and sincere hearts (Acts 2:46). They also stayed together and shared with each other (Acts 2:44). Their fellowship was not merely fun and social, but their fellowship was formed for one purpose: to fulfill God's mission -making disciples. I suppose this is why as they shared the gospel, their numbers were increased (Acts 2:47). This makes me wonder; maybe evangelism will be more effective and convincing if we actually have a real fellowship of the saints, those who have been born again in Christ. What better way is there to convince people of God's love other than showing it through the fellowship of the saints? Maybe it's time for us to give fellowship among the saints more serious consideration. A fellowship where saints can actually know each other more (perhaps in a smaller number), care for each other, share with each other, keep each other focused on God, teach each other to obey God and basically just be one body, the body of Christ, working for one purpose: making disciples. How can the body function properly if we are so disintegrated, thinking only about our own life and not about other saints and God's mission?

Just like marriage, through the fellowship of the saints we can also be fulfilled as relational beings, without loss of focus, the purpose is still to

#### **CHAPTER 4 - GOD IS OUR HUSBAND**

fulfill God's mission in our life. Meaningful relationships are simply the reward we get as we do that, they should not be the goal.

In reality, the nuclear family is not given an emphasis in the New Testament, it has always been about fellowship of the saints. Jesus sent out His disciples in pairs, but not married couples. What is one of the marks of a disciple? It's that we, His disciples, love each other the way Jesus has loved us (John 13:34-35). How did Jesus love us? He sacrificed everything for us. Jesus even went as far as saying that His family are those who obey Him (Matthew 12:50). What a radical view of family! I'm not saying we should forsake our physical family, but the question we have to really consider is accepting other saints as real family, as a part of our physical family?

Do remember that marriage is NOT eternal. We will ALL be single when we are in heaven (Matthew 22:30) and the only form of relationship that we have for eternity, other than with the King Himself, is the fellowship of the saints. So why not start now?

# **LONELINESS**

As you can see being single is NOT the same as being alone or lonely. Jesus was single, but He was neither alone nor lonely. Paul was single, but he was neither alone nor lonely. I'm single and I'm not lonely. Normally people think that only single people suffer loneliness. This is not true. Loneliness is a state of mind and not a state of being. We can be surrounded by people and still feel lonely or alone. Even a married person can still feel lonely while lying beside their spouse. And yet we can be alone, but not lonely. So, why do we feel lonely?

Personally I believe we feel lonely because we feel disconnected or isolated inside and maybe we are. And as stated earlier, God is what makes us complete. So, when we feel lonely, it really means that we are disconnected from God. Hence, whenever loneliness starts to flood our hearts, our reaction should not be looking for another human being, but rather seeking God.

But the world doesn't want you to do that. The world wants to divert our attention from our creator to His creation by bombarding us with images and messages telling us that we are lonely and unhappy because we don't have a significant other. We are told that happily ever after only comes with marriage, while single people are mostly portrayed as being either sad or lonely. But if you read the scriptures, this is not true at all! Singles can live a fulfilled life according to the scriptures. Why are we listening more to the world than to God? We are being sold out to the false idea that there is someone who can truly understand us and connect with us, someone who can make us happy. The truth is there is no one who can understand us better than the one who created our innermost being (Psalm 139:13) and only God can give us the utmost pleasure.

Because of the constant bombardment of this "find the one" message, we develop an expectation or a desire to actually "find the one". That's how advertisements work. They create a need or want, if there isn't one already. That's how vendors entice people to buy their products. And when you don't have someone, you feel like you have failed and you become discontent with your singleness. This perpetuates the

### CHAPTER 4 - GOD IS OUR HUSBAND

loneliness. Not to mention that you may start envying others who have a partner. That's sin by the way. This is truly a vicious cycle. We need to break free from this thinking. We need to realize that there's nowhere in the scriptures that tells us to "find the one". If anything, the scriptures are all about being found by the one who created us and our faithfully seeking His face.

Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' Luke 15:6

We need to repent from this carnal thinking and start thinking spiritually. Our primary focus in life is Christ. Learn to be content with what God has given you. Learn to be content with what you don't have. Give thanks in all circumstances because this is the will of God (1 Thessalonians 5:18). This does not mean you will remain single forever, nor does this mean you will get married in a heartbeat. This only means that you learn to surrender and acknowledge that God's will is always good for you, whatever it may be.

I now personally prefer to stay single because I feel like I can be more effective in serving God that way, but I always tell God, "Lord I want to remain single but not my will, Your will be done. If you see me fit to be married, then so be it." I really can't see myself being married. But then again 4 years ago, I didn't see myself writing this. God sure can do some amazing things if we surrender ourselves to Him. His plan is so much better than ours.

### LIVING FOR CHRIST

One thing we must keep in mind, whatever we do in life, we must do it for Christ (Colossian 3:17). Some people prefer to be single because that allows them to do things that they probably couldn't do for their own pleasure if they were married or perhaps they have previously been hurt. That should never be our motive for staying single. Rather when we are single, we should be single for Christ. And when we are married, we should be married for Christ. This is the calling of every believer, regardless of their marital status. This is about living for Christ and loving others with the love of Christ, a genuine love without expecting anything in return. It's no longer about satisfying our own desires because Christ has already satisfied us. The purpose of our life is to serve Christ and others. It's only when we live for Christ that death becomes a gain for us (Philippians 1:21). So rather than merely seeking a spouse, it's better to seek opportunities to serve the Lord. It's better to ask people about their walk with Christ (and encourage them), rather than focus upon their marital status. It's better to pray for people to draw closer to Jesus, rather than praying for a spouse for them.

I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— and his interests are divided. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord. (1 Corinthians 7:32-33,35)

### **CHAPTER 4 - GOD IS OUR HUSBAND**

### Discipleship:

- ► We all need rest. That's why we need to spend time with God, especially when we start to feel lonely. Jesus took His rest from ministry and spent time with the Father. We should do the same.
- Make special time with God. We can spend hours watching TV, but why is it so hard to set a special time for God? And I'm not talking about fitting God into our busy schedules. I'm talking about making Him so important that we will sacrifice even the one thing we love the most for quiet time with Him.
- Learn to give thanks to God for the things that you don't particularly like. At times when I have lacked income I have learned to simply give thanks because without it I could never know what it means to trust Him completely (Mark 12:44). Giving thanks is a bigger deal than most people think. People who are bitter will complain a lot, but people who are obedient in giving thanks will find peace in the midst of any situation.
- For more insight into marriage, I highly recommend reading the book entitled **YOU AND ME FOREVER** by Francis Chan. It's a must read for married couples or singles seeking God's will for their lives. You can download it for free (go to the FAQ section in this website). But if you can pay for it, please do. The money will go to various ministry projects (i.e. in Africa). www. youandmeforever.org

### Chapitre 5 IDENTITY:

## GOD IS OUR CREATOR

ne of the most frequently asked questions that I get from people after giving my testimony is, "So what are you now? Are you straight or bi or what?" I would just lightly say, "I'm neither. I'm just a child of God." This usually leaves people confused because they expected me to put myself in one of the boxes that society has created to categorize each individual. But since society did not create the world, I don't have to follow that pattern of thinking. God is the only one who gets to define who we are because He is the One who created us. He knows exactly who we are supposed to be. He is the one who formed our beings and knit our parts together.

For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. Psalm 139:13

### BY GRACE ALONE

There is so much to salvation than just escaping hell and going to heaven. Yes, it starts with the forgiveness of our sins but that's just the beginning. Yes, we receive the promise of heaven but God's salvation is so much more exhaustive than that. And if we don't understand the full extent of His salvation, we are missing so many things.

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." John 3:3

Whether someone was born gay or not, it's really not important because in the end we all need to be born again. Being born again into God's Kingdom means we are given a whole new identity and it's not something earned by good works but rather given by God's grace and

received through faith. However just like being a citizen of any country, we are expected to follow the rules and regulations of that country or kingdom.

I was born and bred in Indonesia and because of that being Indonesian has become a nature for me. I don't try to be Indonesian, I am Indonesian. It's the same thing with being born in God's Kingdom. When we're born again in His Kingdom, we're not born as sinners, that's our old identity. We're born again as saints. We are born of His Spirit (John 3:5-6) and God's Spirit is Holy Spirit, not sinful spirit. So when we start realizing ourselves as saints, holiness becomes a nature for us, not a task. And when we do sin, we don't take it lightly. We don't like it because we know it's against our very nature. Just like when I went to visit my cousin who has been living in the states for quite a few years, I felt a bit weird because we kept talking in English. It was weird because Indonesian is our mother tongue, why were we then speaking English to each other? So I just decided to start speaking Indonesian to her because I felt that it was more natural for both of us. Perhaps she was speaking English because she has a new identity, now being an American. Besides I suppose she speaks English most of the time now and is trying to embrace her new identity. But my point is our identity determines our nature and our nature dictates our behavior. So when we realize we're saints and we keep sinning, we will feel uncomfortable because we know that's not right. That's not our nature.

The danger of seeing ourselves as merely forgiven sinners is that when we actually sin, we don't take it seriously because after all, *hey* we are sinners. That's what sinners do. That's our nature, isn't it? That's why so

many "Christians" sin so easily and think that they can just later confess and be forgiven. This is WRONG. God is not interested in having merely forgiven sinners. He wants holy people (saints) because He is holy (1 Peter 1:16). The whole point of being born again is for us to start anew, including a new identity which we need to believe, embrace, and eventually live out. What's the point of being born again as sinners, that's not born again! Might as well call it born the same again.

The world wants us to think that in order to be something, we need to achieve certain things. Take men who believe they're actually women for example, they think in order to be a woman they need to get breast implants, nice long hair, and soft mannerisms with dainty accessories, etc. But we know that has nothing to do with being a woman. That's just social construct of a woman, not God's. Being a woman is something that is given by God's grace, not achieved through surgery or make up. You simply can't take that away or earn it. And apparently it's not just men who want to be women who need to meet certain requirements, men who want to be 'men' seem to have their own set of standards to attain. It's like we need to prove our 'manhood' first but God doesn't work that way. He works by grace alone. Manhood or womanhood is something that is given by grace, not something that we receive by merit. All we have to do is receive it. We don't try to become a man or woman, we were born (again) as one. We just don't realize it because we have been fed with lies by the enemy through society. I used to feel less of a man because I feel like I was not meeting the requirements to be a man set by this world. But once I received that God-given identity and realized that I'm a man's man in God's eye, I started to just naturally act like one. I don't need to fake it because it's just who I am. It's in me,

it's my nature. I'm a man. I exude manliness. It's as simple as that. And I'm not talking about being a man as expected by society, I couldn't care less about that. I have no interest in conforming to man-made conventions or societal expectations. I'm talking about being a man of God. So, I'm not boasting my achievements as a man because they don't make me a man. I'm simply boasting God's grace who made me the man that I am today.

So in short this is how it works: He gives us a new identity by grace and once we receive it through faith, a new nature and new behaviors conforming to that new identity will spring forth. Doing good deed is no longer a requirement for our salvation but rather it's the fruit of our salvation. That's why it's very important to know who we are in Christ and repent from any work-based identity that the world imposes on us! Start receiving God-given identity that no one can take away or diminish. Receive God's grace. Stop trying to work for your identity. That's idolatry.

### **TEMPTATION**

Words are not just words. Words are very powerful tools that we can use either for good or bad. It is so powerful that it is said that death and life are in the power of the tongue according to Proverbs 18:21. Words are not just a means of communication. They shape our very foundation of thinking. This is why we should be careful with the words we use. The world wants to shape and change our thinking pattern to conform to the pattern of this world by changing the very words we use. For example, the word 'feelings'. It's such an innocent little word,

right? It is and I'm not arguing whether there is such a thing as feelings or not. I'm quite sure there is. However, when we start using the word 'feelings' for something that is clearly more than just feelings then we have been somewhat deceived.

People talk about having gay feelings. Is it just a feeling? Or could it be more than a feeling? Could it be that it's actually a temptation? What about a man who FEELS an attraction to multiple women? Are we going to settle the question by saying that he is only having 'polyamorous' feelings? Apparently that's what the world is trying to push now. More and more we see polyamorous "couples" in the media. There is no more discernment regarding whether the feelings are right or wrong. This kind of labeling is nothing but an attempt from the enemy to confuse us and to blur the truth. When a man is feeling (sexually) attracted to another woman other than his wife, for Christians, it doesn't mean he is just having polyamorous feelings and somehow that justifies him to act on them. What he is experiencing is not merely a feeling or an attraction, but more specifically and clearly a temptation to commit adultery/fornicate, to be unfaithful. Polyamorous is just another word that means adultery or fornication.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. Genesis 3:6

She saw that that tree was good. In modern terms, Eve became "attracted" to the tree after believing the serpent's deception. To make my point even clearer let's just replace the word "she" and "tree" with

other words. That married man saw that the other woman was good and pleasant to his eyes, desirable, and he took her and consumed her. That man saw that the other man was good, pleasant to his eyes, desirable, and consumed him. The possibilities are endless! So what we perceive as a feeling of attraction in this case is actually nothing more than a temptation. Again we must repent from our old thinking that it's only 'feeling' or 'attraction' or 'sexual orientation'. These concepts exclude the threat of any real enemy we might have. These concepts themselves are void of any direct sense of sin and holiness. It totally robs us from seeing the big picture and when we can't see the big picture, we are easily confused. That is why, if you noticed, I have been using the term same sex temptation (SST) rather than same sex attraction (SSA). I want to differentiate between temptation and attraction. When we are attracted to things that do not violate God's word, then it's not a temptation. It's only a temptation when the attraction gravitates towards things that take us out of God's plan.

Some people try to justify their wrong doing by saying they didn't choose to have these feelings. That is true, but don't be foolish! There are so many things that happen outside of our control and yet we still try to control it. For example, no one chooses to have cancer, people don't just give in to that sickness. No one chooses to be 'attracted' to their own family member, multiple people or children, but should we act on every feeling that we have simply because we didn't choose to have that feeling? Or have we become foolish in our attempt to indulge our sinful and fleshly desires? No, we don't choose to be tempted, but we can choose whether to act on it or not. And it is by God's grace

alone that we can say no to sin. That's why we need Him because we can't do this on our own.

The enemy tempts us with so many different things. And feeling is quite a powerful tool that the enemy uses to lure us. Our feelings are definitely real, but what we feel is not always true or good. For example, there are actual people who feel like they should be disabled, they feel fat when they are dangerously thin, or someone might feel they are in the wrong body, be it the wrong gender or the wrong race. But is the feeling true? The problem is not the situation or the body, but rather the feeling. When our perception does not match up with reality, we should change our perception rather than reality. Any attempt to change reality is futile, you can try to make it look real, but honestly... it's just a lie. Remember our problem is always in how we think. Everything else is the result of that process. If we think right, we feel right and then we do right. Eve was starting to think wrong because she believed in the lie that the tree was good for her. Then she started to desire the wrong thing and eventually did the wrong thing based on Satan's lie.

Realizing this, we should never let ourselves be defined by what tempts us. Should a former alcoholic identify as an alcoholic simply because he/she is still tempted every now and then to drink? Not at all. But rather he should identify as a free person and embrace that belief. Hence, we should not feel guilty if we are still tempted. We should only feel guilty if we give in to that temptation. Another thing you need to know about SST is that...

No temptation has overtaken you except what is <u>common</u> to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13

SST is COMMON. We like to think it's special or different or worse than any other temptation but it's actually not true. People may not realize this, but other people struggle as much, except in a different way. We do not need to fear or worry when facing this kind of temptation because this is something common. So don't let yourself be a victim. Yes, I was a victim of physical abuse but I refuse to remain as one and to have a victim mentality. What we experienced may not be easy but it doesn't mean that other people doesn't struggle as much or even more. We need to stop the pity party. One of the reasons why Jesus commanded us to love and pray for those who hurt us is so that we stop being a victim and start being a victor. Stop looking at yourself and look at Jesus. It's time we put our hope in God alone. Give God 'some' credit, He is bigger than any temptation! Be a victor in Christ!

### SELF-CONTROL

What about self-control? Well, guess what? The world has a different word for that and it's called "suppression". Nowadays self-control is despised and treated with contempt, it's seen as suppression or being fake, no thanks to the egocentric culture, just as holiness is relabeled as self-righteousness and legalism. It seems like we value our own wants and pleasures over anything or anyone else. They say, "Follow

your dream!" or "Follow your heart!" But what about following God? No, don't follow Him because following Him means denying oneself (Matthew 16:24). And when we want to justify following our dreams/ feelings, we would say, "God put this dream/feeling in me so that I can be happy." You can say whatever you want, but keep in mind that God knows the truth. I would just say that there is more to life than happiness and pleasure. Happiness is actually not the goal of life. We can be happy doing all the wrong things and it's still wrong.

Please don't get me wrong. I don't have a problem with happiness. I must say I have been very happy ever since I committed my life to Jesus, but the problem arises when happiness becomes the goal of life rather than the byproduct of doing the right thing. Look at where this selfish culture has led us: abortion, sexual immorality, divorce, etc. All these things were done mostly in the name of our own happiness. One thing that Jesus taught about the cross is that it's God first, others second, then lastly ourselves. That must be a staggering thing for our generation to hear. I must admit it has not always been easy for me, but if we keep justifying our sin then we're not really advancing spiritually.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23

So think about this: if a married woman for whatever reason, becomes tempted by a man who's not her husband and she chooses to ignore that feeling out of love and respect for her husband, will you commend

her for her self-control or would you scorn her for "being fake" and "suppressing" her sexuality? And if I tell her to reject that temptation, am I helping her to do the right thing or am I oppressing her? Let's be honest here. If we act on every feeling that we have, eventually it will be a disaster for everyone. We really need to discern what it is we are feeling; which one is right and which one is wrong. Surely we should never act on wrong feelings. And our primary resource of discernment is obviously the word of God, an objective morality, otherwise it's just our personal preference and anything goes.

### REJECTING HETEROSEXUALITY

No, I'm not promoting homosexuality by denouncing heterosexuality. I am simply denying the concept of immutable 'predestined' sexual orientation that seems to be imbedded in those labels. When we reject heterosexuality, automatically we reject homosexuality and other kinds of 'sexuality'. In reality God never created heterosexuals or homosexuals or asexuals or whatever sexual predisposition you can come up with.

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27

As you can see God only created man and woman in His image. There's no mention of sexual orientation. Is God heterosexual or homosexual or asexual? There's no mention of gender identity either, other than male or female according to their own body. Once we enter the realm of sexual orientation and gender identity, we are assuming that a person

must be either one of the given immutable orientations and gender identities. The problem with this concept is that there is no scientific evidence for this (no gay or transgender gene has ever been found). Also note that empirically speaking, people do change in regard of their sexual activities and gender identity. Hence to say someone is hetero or homo would be wrong. If anything, hetero and homo should refer only to the sexual activity and not sexual identity, no such thing exists in the Christian worldview. God is not concerned about sexual orientation; He talks about sin and holiness. He doesn't see people as hetero, homo, bi, or any other label you can think of. That's just not God's vocabulary. The only division He sees in mankind is between the lambs and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46). That's it. There is no straight lamb or gay goat. There are just lambs and goats. Lambs are those who follow Christ (and His teachings, of course) and goats are those who reject Him. We also can conclude that no one goes to hell for "being gay", because there is no such thing as that concept in the Christian worldview, it's just a societal construct. People go to hell for being sinful. The bad news is we are all sinful in different ways. The good news is Christ and Christ alone can make us holy by His blood. This is why there cannot possibly be a gay/lesbian/transgender Christian, because when you become a Christian, you adopt a Christian worldview and in that viewpoint there is no such thing as straight, gay, lesbian, transgender, etc. In the Christian worldview we are only defined by Christ, hence the name CHRIST-ian. And that is enough. Christ is all we need and His teachings are our only guide for living.

You then may ask, what about the term homosexual in the Bible? Well, in the New Testament the original word for homosexuality literally

translates as "man-bedder", a man who sleeps with another man. There is NO hint of sexual orientation there, it is simply referring to the action of sinning itself. The point is that for a man to indulge his lust over another man, is sinful, regardless of the relationship. And that's the perspective we need to use.

This is why it's important for us to repent from this faulty way of thinking. The battle here is not for heterosexuality or normality, the battle here is for holiness. And holiness is a calling for <u>every</u> follower of Christ, not just those who struggle with SST. It may seem to be an arduous task for so many people especially in a world where carnality seems so rampant, but nothing should make us waver, for we are not trying to overcome this by our own strength, but rather by the Spirit of God sent by Jesus to those who believe in His name.

I can't stress enough that; God desires holiness, not heterosexuality nor normality. As a matter of fact, a person who is considered very much heterosexual can be very much a sinner. And a person who lives a 'normal' life can still live an unholy life. God doesn't expect us to be normal. On the contrary, He has called us to be set apart and different from this fallen world. Once we start adopting the wrong thinking behind these worldly terms, we will start becoming conflicted about our faith, because we are trying to combine God's concept of holiness with the world's obscure concept of sexual orientation and normality. If we want to come to God, then we must come on His terms (pun intended). We need to change our minds and the words we use and start seeing things from God's perspective.

Before my repentance, I was not a broken heterosexual, I was a sinner. And now I'm not a restored heterosexual, rather I'm a child of God. My goal has never been to be straight, my goal has been and always will be Jesus, the Holy One. And as I pursue Jesus, my life will supernaturally conform to His will in every area. As for sexual relationships, God has only two options for me: to be married (with a woman, of course) or to stay single. Should I be married, then God will naturally give me the attraction to the right woman and so I do not need to develop those feelings myself, because my identity is found in Christ, not in what I feel towards a certain gender.

### **MORE THAN EX-GAY**

To be honest I don't really like to use the label ex-gay, because people seem to have different ideas about what ex-gay means. The only reason I still use the term ex-gay is because I believe that's the term that quickly communicates to the world the general idea that I am no longer interested in sexual engagement with men. So for me personally, an exgay is someone who has been set free from the sinful bondage of lust towards the same gender or someone who is FREE from any worldly label. At the end of the day, I fully realize that I am more than an ex-gay I am a child of God. I have been set free and redeemed not just from one type of sin, but from many other sins. And I encourage all saints to simply adhere to this label when it comes to their relationship with God, because Jesus didn't die so we could be merely ex-gay or ex-this or ex-that, He died so that we could be God's children and that's more magnificent than anything else, to be the children of the Holy God!

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-John 1:12

### MAN OF GOD

Once I stopped thinking about myself as being gay or homosexual and just started to think of myself as a man of God, which is my identity, things began to unfold supernaturally. Since I was not constraining myself to a certain disposition other than Christ's, I was being open to any possibility that God may bring into my life, including a wife. And one day I just started looking at girls in a different way that I don't think I've ever experienced before. And so, it's really important to remove anything that may constrain us from experiencing what God can do in our lives. However, this is NOT the goal, it's a byproduct and sometimes you get it and sometimes you don't, depending on God's will.

Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that moment. Matthew 8:13

People who experienced healing at the time when Jesus walked on earth had one thing in common: they believed. This is why it's dangerous for a person to identify as 'gay' because you are basically saying you don't believe God can actually change you. However, once you start to have an open mind about this and surrender to God, He will do what He usually does —a miracle. You will see a miracle. And again don't expect

God to make you heterosexual, because as explained earlier, sexual orientation is non-existent in God's eyes. Hence, to expect God to do that would be to expect something that God never promised and that's just unreasonable. Expect that God will make you the man or woman of God He intended you to be originally before sin corrupted you. And that man or woman of God can be either married or single. Expect that God will equip you with what you need while walking with Him on the narrow path, which is not always easy. God didn't promise to remove every difficulty in our lives, He promised to help us get through the difficulty. Don't expect what God has never promised or you will be disappointed.

Once we have the proper expectations and really believe in God's promises, we should also express it externally. Whether you realize it or not, coming out is a big deal. Keep in mind that the tongue has the power of life and death.

External expression coming from a sincere faith is very important. I remember the first time I said, "I'm not gay." It felt weird because at that time I had already embraced that identity for sometimes. But at the same time it felt good to proclaim my freedom from that label. I was no longer confined in that false identity and I embraced the person that God made me to be. So go ahead, believe in your heart what God has promised you and declare that fact wholeheartedly to God, not necessarily to people. Know that you are not just a man or a woman, but you are a new person born of His Spirit. Don't settle for less!

### FILTER

It's hard for our mind to be renewed if we let the world influence us daily. It's like trying to put both clean and dirty water in a glass while hoping that you will end up with clean water only. Let's be rational here, that's just never going to happen. So if we really want to be renewed daily, we need to remove anything that serves as a hindrance to that reality. I gradually stopped watching secular movies and listening to secular music. I chose to be filled more with things that are in line with God's word. And the result is walking with Jesus has been so natural, because my mind is less filled with ungodly concepts. I see now how a lot of things I used to hold on to in the past are just wrong. But I didn't see that back then because I unknowingly adopted worldly thinking. So it might be hard for you to grasp some of the concepts presented here because it's in direct opposition to what you have been fed all along. That's exactly what repentance is all about.

In the previous two chapters we have learned that the world is trying to persuade us to believe a false concept of marriage, manhood, identity, soul mate, singlehood, etc. The world is doing it through the media, because what we see and hear will eventually shape our perception. That is why you are seeing more and more gay characters on TV shows. The world wants to indoctrinate us into believing that it's okay. Are you going to allow yourself to be influenced even more? Nowadays I still watch some secular movies, but rarely. When I do watch secular movie, I'm always careful with what I see (and hear). I just don't accept everything that is being presented to me in the film. I always check which idea is in line with God's word and which idea is not. And if

the film is utterly against God's agenda, I will not watch it at all. For example I will not watch any show that encourages homosexuality in the slightest way or are filled with tempting scenes.

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Proverbs 4:23

We always try to protect our possessions, our house, our cars, our cell phones, but sadly we often let the enemy spoil our heart. One thing is for sure, the more we are exposed to something, be it good or bad, the more it becomes 'normal' for us and the more we are inclined to that something. This is why it's important to keep our guard up. We are after all soldiers in a battle against the devil. Our enemy is prowling and looking to devour anyone who is not on their guard. So, if you want to have a more consistent walk, then yes there are things you need to give up, but trust Jesus when you give up things, He will bring new things even better than what you think. You just need to trust Him and seek Him.

### Discipleship:

Unnecessary labels result in unnecessary division. In reality, outside Christ we are all sinners in need of Jesus Christ. If we learn to see from this perspective, it will be so much easier for us to reach out to anyone because that way we don't feel like they are so different from us. Practice thinking outside of the box of carnal labels (like gay, lesbian, transgender). Learn to see

people as people who need Christ. I've had two Christians who told me they are bothered by people who identify as LGBT. Why? Are they not just people who need Christ the same as the rest of the world? Why are we so bothered by them, but not by liars or blasphemers, or thieves?

- ▶ Earnestly ask God if there is anything that you need to filter in your life. I watched a documentary where even secular people felt so much better about themselves once they stop reading certain magazines they used to read, because the magazines contain fabricated images that make us seem so insecure and buy the product that is supposed to make us look like the models. It's hard to look at a well prepared image and then look at ourselves in the mirror and feel content.
- Surround yourself with things that glorify God and remind yourself of His goodness constantly.
- Whenever the enemy challenges your identity, whether through thoughts or people, remember Matthew 4:1-11. Twice Satan tempted Jesus by challenging His identity. "If you're the Son of God, do this..." Satan wanted Jesus to question His identity but our Great Teacher knew better. He didn't need to prove anything to anyone because He knew who He was. That's why Jesus didn't bother turning stone to bread or jumping off the temple. Hold fast to this truth. I have been challenged before by some people who doubted my repentance. They asked me, "If you're no longer gay, then why don't

you get a girlfriend?" Sounds familiar? Yes, that's the enemy speaking. But just like my Teacher, I don't need to prove anything to anyone. I know, God knows, and that's enough. I don't need people's seal of approval. We're all going to be judged by God. The only approval we need is His. Other people's approval means nothing!

# Chapter 6 STRANGE LOVE: GOD IS OUR LOVER

### **CHAPTER 6 - GOD IS OUR LOVER**

e often hear things like "we don't choose who we fall in love with" or "homosexuality is the same love". But the problem with these statements is that it's suggesting we get to define what love is when in reality we don't have that privilege.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 1 John 4:8

People say because God is love and homosexuality is love, then God must be okay with homosexuality. Unfortunately the fact that God is love, means that it's God who gets to define what love is, not us. Hence, whether homosexuality is love or not is up to God, not us. So whatever ideas or presuppositions that we might have about love should be measured by God's definition of love because then again **HE IS LOVE**.

### SEX

Many people believe, including Christians, that sex is an expression of love and that it is a gift from God. This, however, is something that God has never taught us directly. If sex is indeed a 'gift' from God, then breathing, eating and drinking are definitely much greater gifts that we should cherish even more, because without them we simply cannot survive, while we can still live without sex. So why don't we hear people say eating, breathing and drinking are gifts? Why the emphasis on sex?

I'm not saying that sex is totally unimportant into our lives. It is, but maybe not in a way we thought it is. As an individual, we CAN survive without sex and still live a fulfilled life. Jesus did it, Paul did it, and many other people have done it before. Individually speaking, sex may

not be as important as breathing, eating and drinking, but collectively speaking sex is quite important, because it is only through sex that we as the human race can multiply and survive. There's no other <u>natural</u> way to do this. And so from this we learn that the main purpose of sex is actually more procreative (Genesis 9:7) than recreational or even romantic. But the problem that we have nowadays is that many people want to abuse the recreational part without the procreative consequences and we end up confusing the purpose with the process. Yes, sex can be made romantic, but then again eating can be made romantic as well and yet the main purpose remains: eating is nutritive and sex is procreative. The process should not define or change the purpose.

Once we start stepping out of God's protective plan for sex, expect to reap unpleasant consequences. This goes both for fornicators of same gender or opposite genders. According to a CDC report in America, men who identify as gay make up only 2% of the total population and yet they accounted for 63% of all newly diagnosed HIV/AIDS cases in 2010. More than half of all AIDS-sufferers in the U.S. are homosexual, and most of them contracted it by engaging in anal sex. This should underscore the idea of how unhealthy this life style is. There is no such thing as 'safe sex' (a subtle term for fornication), other than sex within the safe boundary of marriage. It's only in a faithful marriage we can satisfy our sexual desire in a healthy and godly way.

Sex does feel good and is enjoyable, as God made procreation that way, but it doesn't necessarily mean it's an expression of love. Sex can be good for the relationship, just like spending quality time in any other

### **CHAPTER 6 - GOD IS OUR LOVER**

way can be good for the relationship. Sex can be 'fun', but it's definitely NOT for fun. But to say that sex is an expression of love is undermining love itself. If anything, God taught us that the expression of love is...

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13

Love is expressed at the utmost through sacrifice. And so for us to love someone we don't show it by merely having sex with them, but rather we can express it by the things we are willing to sacrifice for the other person. It can be our time, our attention, our pleasure (on the contrary sex, generally is supposed to generate <u>pleasure for us</u>), our comfort zone, and maybe even ourselves. Love is measured by sacrifice, not sex. You can have sex without love, but you cannot truly sacrifice without love.

Once we put sex in its proper place, we realize that the world has put way too much emphasis on sex, under the pretext of love. Sex will not and cannot fulfill us, because it was never intended to serve that function. It only gives us certain, if not great, temporal pleasure, but it certainly does not define our lives. It's time for us to take sex down from the pedestal and replace it with what love is really all about, sacrifice. Let's repent from that carnal thinking.

Most importantly under the procreative purpose, it's clear that the only proper place for sex is in the confinement of a life-time covenant between a man and woman (Mark 10:8) who will serve as the father and mother to their child(ren) for the child(ren)'s best interest. It's only

in this scope that we can say that sex is an act of love. For that reason we should never intentionally deprive a child's need for a mother and father over our own selfish desires. That is unfair to the children. If we really love these children, we will sacrifice our desires and give them what's best: a father and mother. That's love. It may not be 'fair' for the parents, but then again it was not fair for Jesus to die in our place, but He did it anyway out of love. And it was worth it.

### **FORGIVENESS**

Love has been so shrouded with so many things that we forget the essence of what love actually is. We often equate love with this bubbly feeling or like having butterflies in our stomach. Love has been mistaken for romance. Romance is easy, but love is not always easy.

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Matthew 5:43-47

Still think love is that bubbly 'fluttery' feeling? I don't think so. Loving those who are nice to you is easy, even sinners do that, but Jesus is challenging us to love those who are not merely different from us, but different in direct opposition to us. Now that's divine. This is how Jesus

### **CHAPTER 6 - GOD IS OUR LOVER**

defines love and as His disciple we have to embrace this definition and forsake our old perceptions of what love is. So based on the teaching of Jesus we know when we love someone is when A. We are willing to sacrifice for them, B. We forgive and love them even when they hurt us. Not so easy, *huh*?

So how do we exactly love our enemy? There is not much to say about how to love and forgive someone. There is no 12 step program for forgiving someone. There is only one step and it's called repentance. Although it doesn't always happen overnight, it can, depending on the condition of our hearts; the softer it is, the easier it becomes. But let's not excuse our tardiness, rather fervently pray for a softer heart.

Bear in mind, repentance is when you have a change of mind, not merely when you do something wrong and you stop doing it. Even if we do the nicest things for a person, but if we don't have love, we have gained nothing (1 Corinthians 13:3). Not being forgiving may not be an action, but it is a wrong state of mind, an attitude that we need to forgo. To forgive means to change how we think of our offenders. When a person offends us, we tend to focus on the hurt done to us and the punishment that person deserves for hurting us. Sometimes people actually act on these thoughts and that's what we call revenge or retribution. That's wrong (Romans 12:19). And at other times for some reason they don't act on those thoughts and feelings, but keep them in their heart, that's called a grudge and that's wrong as well (Ephesians 4:31).

Now forgiveness does not mean we pretend the person didn't do anything wrong and everything is nice and peachy. In fact, to forgive means to acknowledge first the offense. This is why it's important to NOT excuse someone's wrong doing, but rather to acknowledge it in order to forgive afterward. Sometimes the victim, a child, of sexual molestation thinks that it happened because of him/her or even thinks that it was not really a molestation because his/her body got aroused during the molestation and enjoyed it. This is an erroneous thinking! When our innocence is snatched from us, it's a crime. We need to call what is evil: evil. However, we should not hold any bitterness but rather forgive. This of course means we need to change the way we think about it. No longer do we persist in focusing on the hurt done to us and the punishment the offender deserves, but instead we focus on God's grace. No longer do we hold that person accountable, but we release that person from any condemnation. Just like God no longer hold us accountable once we are in Christ, we are to show the same grace God has shown us to anyone who offends us (Matthew 18:32-35). If you are still holding grudges against anyone, don't be surprised if deliverance seems so far away or the battle seems exasperating. Forgive! Not only because it will free and heal yourself, but most importantly because that is what God wants you to do and what He has done for you.

Don't get God wrong when He commands you to forgive. It's not that He does not understand your pain. Far from it. On the contrary it's because He does and He wants you to be more like Him. If anyone understands pain, it's God. We serve the God who is familiar with our mortal lives filled with struggles and temptations (Hebrews 4:15) not simply because He is omniscient, but because He has experienced it

### **CHAPTER 6 - GOD IS OUR LOVER**

first-hand. Jesus was rejected by the very people He created and whom He came to rescue. He was abused, slandered, sexually humiliated (the Romans crucified people in total nudity), and to top that, He was betrayed by His own disciple, Judas, and was deserted by most of His disciples during the crucifixion. Yes, God is very familiar with the pain of rejection, pain of betrayal, and any other kind of pain you can imagine. And you know what else He is familiar with? Forgiveness. Even after all that, Jesus was still able to say, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

We have all sinned against the Holy God, so holy that even a single sin that Adam and Eve committed has broken their communion with God. And yet He chose to forgive us. Not just that... He chose to provide us the way to bring us back into a relationship with Him once again. So, how can sinful people choose not to forgive others? Are we claiming to be holier than God?

For I will <u>forgive</u> their wickedness and will <u>remember</u> their sins no more. Hebrews 8:12

If anything, we learn from God that when He forgives, He forgets, meaning He doesn't dwell on the sin. We don't always forget the transgression, I doubt I will ever forget the abuse I experienced, but when we truly forgive, we no longer feel the hurt, even though every now and then the memory of the transgression may come to our mind. And most likely the enemy will try to attack by reminding us of the hurt, which is why sometimes you need to "forgive" over and over again, to keep that forgiving mindset. I remember one time this

person lightly said that I deserved the beating and that it should have been my dad doing it, because apparently he said that women don't beat children as hard as men. That really hurt my feelings and coming from someone who claimed to be a fellow saint, it hurt even more. I was really infuriated by his statement! Who wouldn't?

Thank God I was already in Christ, so I knew that it was nothing but a lie from the pit of hell! But still... in all honesty, suddenly my mind was filled with violent thoughts of beating him. Was I being fake for not yielding to these thoughts that I didn't choose to have? Does having these thoughts make me a violent person? Fortunately the Holy Spirit helped me to do the right thing, to forgive, and I did. That night I was able to sleep after I wrestled with the ungodly violent thoughts. I thought it was all over, but I was wrong. The next morning I was still attacked by those violent thoughts. But I didn't give up, every time the ungodly thoughts popped into my mind I confronted them with God's truth and grace. I refused to succumb to those ungodly thoughts. And as I submitted myself to God and resisted the thoughts, finally the attack stopped. Now, I can tell this story and I don't feel the hurt anymore. Stay in that 'grace zone' and RESIST the enemy (don't just ignore him! Counter attack him!) until God delivers us!

<u>Submit</u> yourselves, then, to God. <u>Resist</u> the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

### **CHAPTER 6 - GOD IS OUR LOVER**

### TRUTH

Here is another unpopular expression of love: doing the right thing—not doing what *feels* right. Nowadays people talk a lot about tolerance and acceptance, but apparently the one thing that they cannot accept and tolerate is the truth. The moment we say 'unpopular truth', they will accuse us of being unloving and bigoted. I guess people forget that tolerance goes both ways.

What would be the most loving thing to do to a boy who wants nothing to eat but candy? Should we just comply 'out of love'? Or should we tell him the dire consequence that awaits him if he persists on doing this? He cannot foresee the damage, because he is just a child, but as an adult we know this and that's why we must warn him. Of course, he may not be willing to listen, because all he cares about is satisfying his desires, but it doesn't change the fact that the most loving thing to do is to let the boy know of the danger.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

1 Corinthians 13:6

We cannot really love someone without the truth. True love will always do the right thing. True love will not compromise the truth. So to love someone means to do what is right even though it may spark controversy. After all, Jesus is the embodiment of love and yet controversies followed Him. Over and over Jesus caused commotions because of His statements (John 10:30-33). Now, I'm not saying we should be looking for trouble or that we can justify being a total jerk or that we always have to debate, not at all. What I am saying is that

there will be a moment when the most loving thing to do may not be the most pleasant thing to do for us and for other people, but we still have to do it anyway if we truly love.

Hence, another way to know that someone really loves us is to see if that someone is encouraging us to do the right thing, even if we don't like it. If a person is making you do the wrong thing, then definitely that person does not love you or at least he/she doesn't really know what love is.

I bet this brand of love feels so foreign to most of us. Don't be surprised! The enemy will always try to trick us into believing the cheap version of love, the kind of love that never says "no", that always gives in, even if it's bad, that always accepts even if it's wrong. This really is not love at all. At least not love as defined by God. And that's exactly why we need the renewal of our minds. We need to be free from carnal thoughts and start thinking spiritually. We need to love the way God wants us to, not the way our flesh wants to or what the world is telling us to.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.So then, those that are carnal cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if it is so that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Romans 8:7-9

### LOVING OUR LOVER

A lot of people have this false idea about God that if we don't make Him 'happy', He will send us to hell. But the truth is God doesn't send

### CHAPTER 6 - GOD IS OUR LOVER

anyone to hell, because they don't make Him happy just like a judge doesn't send a criminal to prison, because the criminal doesn't make the judge happy. Even though yes, when we break His law, we also break His heart but we go to hell for our trespasses and that's called justice. And we should love justice. Hence, the accusation that God is some sort of a maniac who demands us to make Him happy under the threat of hell is simply untrue. This is what happens when people don't know God properly. They come up with these false ideas about God and reject or are angry at the god they falsely created. That's why it's important to know Jesus, because He is God revealed in flesh (Colossians 1:15). Thus don't look on other believers, pastors, David, Moses, Paul, etc. They are all men of God, but they are not the Godman. Look on Christ and marvel at the beauty of the Father.

If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him. John 14:7

Once you realize how beautiful Jesus is, you will want to fall in love with Him and that's exactly what God wants from you. He doesn't need you to make Him 'happy'. His happiness is not dependent on you, but He does want you to love Him. God's first commandment is not to make Him happy. His first and great commandment is to love Him (Matthew 22:37), but He will not force you. Love cannot be forced.

If you love me, keep my commands. John 14:15

When you try to obey God without loving Him, I guarantee you that it will be very grueling. But when you love Him, things may still be hard, but you will have the strength to obey Him. I remember when I was still very passionate about art I was doing a lot of things from drawing, acting, playing organ, and singing. I would spend hours and hours practicing to be better at it and it was not always easy. There were times that I got tired and frustrated, but I didn't give up because I loved what I was doing. Sometimes I wonder how in the world I was able to invest so much effort in that pursuit. And it's the same thing with God. When we are passionate about Him, our obedience comes supernaturally and even though at times it's hard to obey Him, He becomes our strength. It's no longer based on fear or trying to get to heaven, but it's based on our love for the One who has saved us from sin.

### PERVERTED LOVE

Some people say that sex with the same gender is okay as long as it's between consensual adults and it doesn't hurt anyone. The problem with this kind of reasoning is that it makes morality relative and pretty much loose and misguided. It implies that a father and his son (who's considered mature enough) can consensually have sex and that's ok, or telling a lie is considered morally correct as long as the person being lied to does not know and hence remains unhurt. This cannot be! Morality should be absolute and objective. Hence morality must come from an external source. God is the law giver, not us. He is the designer; He gets to decide how things operate, not us.

The reason why same gender sex is wrong is simply because that's not how God designed sex. Can we love members of the same sex? Yes, in fact we should love members of the same sex in ways ordained by God, which is through fellowship. What the so-called 'homosexuality' does in fact is perverting that godly same sex love.

If we want to know love then we must learn to obey God who is love. To know God is to know love. To obey Him is to love.

### **UNCONDITIONAL LOVE**

The odd thing about my testimony is that I had lost the desire or hope to be 'straight'. I was not looking for a change. I never went to a certain therapy or counseling, not that I'm against therapy or counseling, especially not against the Christ-centered ones. But I was just not pursuing any shift in terms of how I perceived my sexual attractions at that time. And people often tell me that I changed because of my will power or that the human mind can do anything. But that is simply not true, at least not in my case. I did not have the will power or the mind to change who I was. I was already comfortable being 'gay'. Why change? I had no reason to.

### So, what changed?

The moment I came to the full realization of my own sinfulness and my need for God's grace was the moment I realized that Jesus is the one I had been looking for all my life. His love is what I had been searching for in other men. How could He still love me despite my sins? How could the Holy One see my sins, which I committed knowingly, and yet

love me still? This kind of love is divine. I did not want to be straight, I just wanted... Jesus. My desire changed. I started <u>desiring God</u> and not sin. What changed me, you ask? It's His unconditional love. His love changed the way I see everything, including the way I see myself. I used to hate myself, the very being of myself, my body and everything. But once I realize that my creator loves me, I no longer have any reason to hate myself. How can I hate myself when He lavishes His love on me?

Just think about what He has done for us on the cross. It's on the cross that He paid the price, so that we can be free from the curse of our sins. Think about the resurrection, His victory over death, that He is offering to us and all He asks from us is that we repent and trust Him. His love is truly unconditional; He is offering it to anyone who is willing to receive it, but salvation is conditional upon your choice; whether you receive it through faith or not (John 3:16). This is the kind of love He is offering you. It is greater than anything you can dream about. We don't need to fix ourselves before we can come to Him. No, it's quite the opposite. He comes to the broken so He can restore them. He calls the hurt, so they will be healed. Come just as you are and let Him cleanse you, restore you, heal you, and most importantly let Him love you.

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Psalm 34:18

### **REAL LOVE**

I have heard some people say that what happened was 2000 years ago and hence it's not really relevant for us now or in other words, His love

is not very real now, not pertinent to our times. But consider if 20 years ago an actual person died to save your life, would you be able to say, "Well, that was 20 years ago, I don't see how that is relevant to my life anymore." Really? If that person hadn't died for you, you wouldn't have been alive in the first place. That's how relevant it is! If Jesus had not died for your sin, you would have had no choice, but to reap the terrible consequences of your sins for ETERNITY in hell, which would render anything you did in your earthly life quite meaningless. Even if you had the best life here on earth, what's the point if you go to hell at the end? But no matter what challenges we may face in this life, it will be worth it once we're in heaven. Try to see this from an eternal point of view and you will realize just how relevant His love is. Don't be distracted by the fleeting things of the present times. Our time here on earth is nothing compared to what awaits us in eternity.

Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little. Luke 7:47

The problem is that we often take issues like sins and redemption way too lightly or we don't really believe that these concepts apply to us. We've turned them into sheer religious doctrines that we ascribe to as believers of a particular religion, rather than treating them as the primary reality of our lives. This is why so many people can't feel the love of God, because they don't fully realize the severity of their transgressions and their desperate need for redemption. They don't realize how much they have been forgiven. They think they only have sinned a little and that's why they only love a little. But if only they

really realize what they have been saved from, they would live their lives for the One who saved them from such a terrible fate.

### **BROTHERLY LOVE**

Once I saw a photo from a gay pride parade and I saw two women holding hands and I thought to myself, "So what? There is nothing gay about it." See, in my culture two women can hold hands and it doesn't mean anything, other than they are close friends. It's a shame really that in some societies affection between members of the same gender (especially between men) is often considered a "queer" thing; reserved only for 'homosexuals'. That attitude often scares men from having a deeper relationship with other men and limits them to having only a superficial friendship in order to keep their "masculine" appearance. Because of that, the common friendship known two men these days is either to be competitive with each other or to stay on the surface without any level of caring or commitment. The idea that two men can be affectionate is unthinkable in so many cultures, yet it is very much accepted and considered normal in other cultures.



Look at the image to the left. If you're not careful, you may think it's an inappropriate image. In reality, it's only a photo of a lamp. Often times our mind are filled with presupposed ideas that change

how we see things. A mind filled with sexual thoughts will see things more sexually.

There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. John 13:23

As I was reading interpretations on this verse, I saw on one side of the pendulum you have people saying that John was simply sitting next to Jesus because for them it's queer and disrespectful for a disciple, a man doing this to another man, his teacher. While the other side of the pendulum says that this shows that Jesus had a "special" relationship with the disciple, that this was a show case of homoerotic affection. It's so sad that we are often so wrapped up in our own thinking that we twist everything to fit our opinion. The reality is in many other cultures this is considered a brotherly affection there is nothing sensual, sexual, or erotic about this. In other cultures two men can hold hands and that is not a "gay" thing, it's just a friendship thing. Honestly, when I started to learn about this, I felt uneasy. I came from a rather rigid culture where even hugging or any kind of intimacy is not something that you show or do.

After the boy had gone David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together--but David wept the most.

1 Samuel 20:41

Again this will make some of the self-proclaimed straight folks feel very uncomfortable. Two guys kissing each other and weeping together? How 'gay'! And then there are those who want to justify acting on their lust for the same gender by saying that this just shows that

'homosexuality' is perfectly biblical. Again, the reality is that two men kissing in this setting has nothing to do with lust. In a sex crazed society where everything seems to revolve around sex, where friendship is taken for granted, gestures like this are often taken wrong. Even being nice is often mistaken as flirting these days! Now I'm not saying that men should start kissing other men, not at all. I'm just saying let's be open minded here, in some cultural setting two men kissing doesn't necessarily mean they are in a sexual relationship. Certain kissing is not sexual. Kissing is basically a display of affection, just like you can kiss your family without turning that into something sexual or erotic.

I grieve for you, Jonathan <u>my brother</u>; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women. 2 Samuel 1:26

O wow! This would make most "masculine" men of today cringe. To be able to show such emotion to another man, a brother is considered 'gay'. There is nothing homoerotic or effeminate about this kind of affection. Why are men taught to be detached from their emotions? Having emotions and showing emotions are part of the human experience, it's neither masculine nor feminine. Mind you King David had led battles and had hundreds of women (not that it's a good example to follow because God actually desires monogamy for His people: Deuteronomy 17:17) and yet he was a very sensitive man. He wrote poems for crying out loud! The faulty thinking that men must be emotionally closed with each other is what caused so much confusion and isolation for many men, including myself in the past. I thought if I had a strong liking towards a guy then I must be 'gay'.

Jonathan gave up his right as a successor for David. Not only that, Jonathan was willing to do anything for David (1 Samuel 20:4) and had saved David's life twice. Of course his love was better than that of the women around David. I don't recall any woman who had sacrificed as much for David. So, in this case Jonathan's love does exceed that of the women around David. But it does not mean that they were having sex or married. Remember sex and love are two different things! This is just a godly portrayal of a real friendship or brotherhood. It's not something that is built on superficial things like sports, games, gadgets, etc. It's built on a real connection between two people, regardless of their gender.

But why do we think that this kind of love and affection are only available between sexual couples? Let's face it, the media plays a great role in our life in shaping our perspective and ideals. In most movies (or music) 'love' and affection are only shown between sexual couples. "I love you" is almost certainly followed by an erotic or romantic scene. That's the world's portrayal of love and again we fell for this stereotype. Rarely do we see love as portrayed in the scripture, where sacrificial love is not reserved only between a husband and wife, but also available between friends, family, and even for enemies:

For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Romans 5:10

Jesus was willing to give up His life even while we were still His enemies. Try to understand the severity of being God's enemy. This is something that is very frightful but because of His love He has given you the opportunity to be His child! Wow! This is real love, nothing sensual or erotic about it. How love has been perverted! We need to be free from this false concept of love and learn that a close connection of two human beings is not accessed through sex, as a matter of fact people can have sex and they still don't have a true connection. Real connections are based on selfless love.

After discovering God's selfless love, I began to see things in a different perspective. My views on men began to change. I see them no longer as some sort of sexual beings, but rather as my brother or friend whom I love. And because of this I have stopped desiring to have sex with them. Not just that, I can seem to relate to them better, where as in the past I just didn't know how to express those feelings. Before, I hardly had any meaningful relationships with the same gender, but now I can safely say I have a lot of more male friends on personal levels. These are men with whom I can talk and share just about anything, their emotions, my emotions, their life, my life, their problems, my problems, etc. This is not a feminine thing. Don't confuse social construct with God's truth. Nowhere does God say that two men can't connect deeply. As a matter of fact, in the case of Jonathan and David they became one in spirit and Jonathan loved David as he loved himself! (1 Samuel 18:1)

Someone told me once that his father said that if two men talk more than five minutes, there must be something "more". Faulty thinking like this is exactly what perpetuates the confusion among men who struggle

with SST. This causes them to resort to thinking that if they enjoy the company of other men for more than five minutes, they must be 'gay'. What a lie from the enemy! Yes, as a man you can actually talk to another man for hours and no, it doesn't make you less manly or more feminine or 'gay', it just makes you human. You can even miss other men. Again it doesn't make you 'gay', it just makes you a human being. I have said it and I will keep saying it, homosexuality is actually the perversion of true same sex love. What we do learn is that close non-sexual relationships among the same gender are perfectly acceptable for God, not just acceptable, it is even encouraged:

Love one another with <u>brotherly affection</u>. Outdo one another in showing honor. Romans 12:10

Remember when Peter said that he would die for Jesus? Of course we all know later he denied Him three times. The point is that desire to protect is not only to protect your wife, but also anyone around you including your friends. It's really sad that we have celebrated the love between husband and wife (which is very beautiful) at the expense of the love between friends (whatever gender involved). It's actually very odd because Jesus and His apostles talked more about brotherly love, than the love between husband and wife. Do you still remember what the greatest love is?

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13

No, it's not when one lays down their life for their spouse, but for their FRIENDS. Of course, our spouse should be our friend, but our friend doesn't have to be our spouse. This shows that the greatest love can also be found between friends and not only between husband and wife. This is the love of Christ, a love that is not defined by sex.

I'm not saying that we should adopt the culture which Jesus and David had and men should start being so physically affectionate to each other, not at all. That is not the point here. I'm also not saying that we should have a non-sexual spouse as suggested and done by some "gay" Christians. The idea is not found in the Scripture. The point is we do not distort the stories in the Bible to justify our worldview, but rather we should let God's word change us. Secondly, love and (non-erotic) affection are not limited between husband and wife. Saints should show brotherly love. And this is not something to be afraid of, but rather to be embraced. In fact, by doing this we are showing to the world the real same sex love which David and Jonathan shared.

### **JONATHAN**

For every David out there, I know you are looking for your Jonathan. I know because I was looking for mine. I prayed about it. The friendship that David and Jonathan modeled is indeed desirable. Who doesn't want someone who is willing to be there through thick and thin, to put other's interest before his own, and to protect? Even an 'evil' person would want that.

However in my own pursuit for Jonathan, God has revealed to me that Jesus is my Jonathan. He left His throne for me, He clothed Himself

with humanity and He gave His life for me. I mean, isn't that a lot more than what Jonathan ever did for David? So now I realize that I don't need to look for Jonathan, I already have had one all this time. What I need is to be Jonathan to others, just like Jesus has been Jonathan to me. And the result of this type of thinking is that my happiness and existence is not defined by another person because by being Jonathan, I'm merely paying it forward without expecting anything in return. No longer am I seeking love and attention from other people as I am already loved by Christ, but rather I am offering a love that is Christlike, a selfless love, that we can only give once we have received the same love from Christ. So, I would just say it's time to stop the search for Jonathan and simply find rest in Jesus because He is our Jonathan. Start being Jonathan to others the way Jesus has been Jonathan for us. If we embrace this thinking, we will have a healthy relationship out of purity and selflessness, rather than being exhausted and disappointed all the time for giving, but not receiving what you expect. Be Jonathan!

### Discipleship:

Learn to express your love to Jesus. First ask the Holy Spirit to give you the words to express your love. Then you can look to psalms for expressions of love. You can also find songs or hymns that praise Him. Make sure the words are in line with the truth of God's word. We are free to worship Him, there is no fixed liturgy or order, but there are still boundaries. God is truth and so we must worship Him in truth.

- If you are unable to 'feel' God's love, start by meditating on the things God has done for you starting from the creation, crucifixion, resurrection, all the way to how He has preserved you until this very day. Acknowledge His love through prayer. Ask Him to reveal His love to you, not just as truth that you know intellectually, but as truth planted deep in your heart. Meditate on God's character, how patient He is to us who are often stubborn, how loving and forgiving He is, etc. And finally, don't let your feelings change your mind, but rather let your mind be renewed, so you will feel differently. I'm not saying feelings are not important, but they are fleeting and we simply cannot base our faith on mere feelings.
- Ask God to help you renew your mind and to unlearn old perceptions about other men by replacing them with brotherly love. Ask Him to help you to love them as your own brothers.
- Always stay alert! Be very careful in relating with those of the same gender. Don't turn your friendship into an emotional codependency. Make sure that your friendship is Christ-centered and inclusive. If the relationship is becoming more and more exclusive, then it's a very good sign that it's turning into an unhealthy relationship.
- A lot of people don't realize that prayer is not just a petition, but also a manifestation of love. Notice that Jesus commanded us to love our enemy and to pray for them at the same time. Why? Because we cannot genuinely pray for someone we hate. So pray for those who hurt you and show some love!

## Conclusion JESUS IS MY ORIENTATION

bviously reading this book alone is not enough. It will practically do nothing without further action. You must respond to the truth that has been presented in this book by making a decision that leads to an action. If we only hear and not do anything, then we are like the foolish man who built his house on sand (Matthew 7:24-27). There are several decisions for you to make and unless you make one and commit yourself, nothing will ever change.

There is a change of orientation that needs to take place and it's not a sexual orientation. You don't need to start pursuing the opposite sex. Remember God created you for Himself. So your orientation should be toward Jesus. You should be pursuing Jesus. Will you make the decision to change your life's orientation from now on? No longer are you going to live for your desires, your dreams, but you are going to live for Him who loves you like no one else. This is not a one-time decision, but a decision that you will have to make every day for the rest of your life (Luke 9:23).

There is an enemy that needs to be dealt with and it's not the people who hurt you, it's Satan and his angels. We have been given the authority to rebuke demons in the name of Jesus, use that authority and fight demons that try to tempt you. Sometimes it will take more than one time because the enemy is persistent and that is why we must be resistant (James 4:7).

There are doors in our life that need to be closed. It's quite ironic if we try to resist the enemy at the same time we fraternize with evil by allowing certain things or people

### **CONCLUSION - JESUS IS MY ORIENTATION**

to influence our life negatively (1 Corinthians 15:33). Maybe there are friends or media or other things that we need to avoid until we are stronger spiritually. Ask God to show which doors that we have to close.

There are spiritual needs to be met and only God can meet those needs. This is why it's important to spend time with God, to praise Him, to meditate on His word and His love. If you are not doing this, then you are not getting your needs met and when your needs are not met, you will start looking elsewhere and that's when you will get in a deeper mess. Put God first; He is more than worthy for this honor, because He has put us first.

My testimony didn't end with "happily ever after doing whatever I want to do." My testimony actually continues up to now by doing God's will in my life. I remember not long after my repentance, I asked God, "What now God? What do I do now after I'm redeemed?" This is a question that every believer must ask. We should not be complacent with our salvation and faith. God didn't save us so that we can just do whatever WE want or plan our next vacation. He didn't create us without purpose. We actually have a mission here. And if we don't know the direction of our life, we will be easily lost and back slide. I believe that's why so many Christians are still struggling, because they are too busy thinking about what THEY want to do and how to achieve that. They have become spiritually weak because they lack spiritual food —doing the Father's will (John 4:34).

You can call it marriage. You can call it civil unions. You can call it partners. You can call it longtime companions or significant others. You can describe yourself as boyfriends and girlfriends. You can call it "shacking up." You can even call it love but it is not the perfect love that God promised you. Love outside of God's plan is simply NOT THE SAME LOVE.

### Discipleship:

- Christ must increase, I must decrease. We should always consider the things we do. Will they bring glory to Jesus? Will they defame Him? The more we do for His glory, the less likely we will be living for ourselves. Christ becomes more important for us, not out of religious duties, but out of love.
- When faced with temptation, it's always important to remind yourself of who God is, what He has done for you, and the joy when you overcame temptation by His grace. Rather than being overwhelmed by temptation, start praying, deal with the enemy by rebuking that spirit in the name of Jesus and speak truth against any lies presented to you. For example, when you start getting thoughts like, "Look at that guy, he is better than you. You are nothing. Look at his body, look at his face. He's a real man. You're not." Don't just listen, be aggressive with the enemy! We are worthy soldiers of Christ. When the enemy attacks, we NEED to counter! Jesus didn't keep silent when the devil tried to tempt Him. He silenced the devil's lies with truth (Matthew 4:1-11). Follow His example. You don't have to speak it out loud, but you need to respond to it by confronting it

### **CONCLUSION - JESUS IS MY ORIENTATION**

with the truth, for example "God created me a complete man, just like that man. He made me different for a different purpose. I will not compare myself with another person! Be gone in the name of Jesus!" or you can also say, "He is my brother. I will not commit sexual immorality against him." Ask God for wisdom on what to say to resist every lie from the enemy.

The great commission is not just for 'special' Christians, it is for every disciple. Hence you must be active in making disciples. You can start by praying and asking God to reveal which is the best way for you to start getting involved in discipleship. Obviously we first need to be a disciple before we can start making disciples. Seek and seize every opportunity. If doubt ever creeps in your mind, just remember you can't actually yield to temptation. You can only do it in Christ. So, it's not a matter of your capability, it's a matter of Christ in you. Depend on Christ!

# Extra FOR PARENTS, FRIENDS, AND FAMILY

s someone who never struggled with SST, you may find it difficult to deal with a loved one with SST. But I assure you it is not that difficult. I pray that the following advice will help you in handling this better:

Those who struggle with this particular temptation are like any other people dealing with any other temptation. And just like any other people, they want to be loved. Let's start with that. Let's love them. Love them the way Jesus has loved you. You can give the best counsel or even speak in tongues, but without love, your words will be empty. Love them where they're at. Don't make them feel any more different than they already do. Let them know that you are in this together with them. Keep in mind that in the bigger picture outside Christ we are all sinners like everyone else.

Praying is definitely what we must do in every situation, including situations like this. Pray for the person to draw closer to Jesus, don't pray so that he or she will become straight. That is NOT the goal. Change should be the result of drawing near to Jesus, NOT the goal. It is not necessary for people to be attracted to the opposite sex. It is however necessary for every person to submit to Jesus.

Please stop propagating false ideas about manhood and womanhood. Don't say things like, "I knew you were gay because you were always liked this or that." Those seeking understanding do not need you to impose cultural stereotypes, we have the whole world imposing these pressures. They need you to point them to Christ. Don't make them feel like they have to attain the cultural stereotype, but rather help them to know who they are in Christ, not in society. And just remember, maybe you

yourself need to find who you are in Christ first. Maybe all this time you have only been following society and not Christ.

We need to speak truth to them, not mockery. Don't compromise the truth, but speak it with compassion. The truth about sin, but also don't forget the truth about hope and redemption of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11). You can do that by telling them about testimonies of God's changing grace or giving them resources like books and videos, but do not force these items upon them. On the internet, there are already tons of testimonies of people being freed from this particular sin.

There is so much we can do, but deliverance is between that person and God. Have faith in God. Keep your hope in Him, not in a book or therapy, etc. Those are just means to an end. God is the deliverer.

## Love is free but it's not cheap.

There is something about love that attracts us. Just look at how many movies, books, songs that have been made to celebrate love. So many things have been done in the name of love from war, charity, even to gay marriage. But what is love exactly?

Just like most people, I was looking for love and to my surprise in 2010 love actually found me. That encounter with love has changed the very essence of my being and that is what this book is all about: Love but **not the same love** that you see in the world. It's a strange love out of this world. It is a love that redeems and restores anyone, including those who struggle with same sex temptation (SST).



Sihol Gianito Situmorang is a man who has been redeemed by the blood of Jesus. He never went through any reparative therapy or theological training. His desire is to share the gospel of Jesus to the whole world, much like the simple fishermen whom Jesus called to be His disciples and to go forth to make of all nations His disciples.

This version of book is distributed freely. If you believe that you have been blessed by it and you wish to endorse God's ministry through donation, you may send your donation via PayPal to c2moranx@yahoo.com

