



...AND A NEW SEED WAS PLANTED

by Melissa Fryrear



I am the second and last child my parents adopted in the mid-60s. I grew up in a nice, upper middle-class subdivision in Louisville, Kentucky. A large wooden storage cabinet in the garage—thirty-eight years later—still bears the pencil markings where, on our birthdays, my dad measured how much taller my older brother and I had grown from the previous year.

I grew up attending a Presbyterian church. It was there that I was baptized as a baby, went to summer Vacation Bible School and, although rhythmically challenged, played in the children's hand-bell choir—much to the musical chagrin of the pastor's wife! While church was a regular part of my childhood, it seemed like something my family did because "it was the right thing to do." Although I heard dozens of stories about Jesus and others in the Bible, I did not yet realize I was a sinner in need of a Savior and I had not personally accepted Jesus into my heart.

EXPERIENCING CONFUSION

At age thirteen—barely a teenager—I was already confused about my sexuality. I remember sitting in the sanctuary with my parents one Sunday morning waiting for the service to begin. I casually picked up a Bible and began to randomly flip through the pages. Significantly, the Bible fell open to Leviticus 18. My eyes fell upon verse 22: "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable." Upon reading this verse, it seemed as if everything in the sanctuary suddenly fell still and silent. My eyes darted back to the beginning of the verse and I began to read it again, this time more slowly. "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman..." Here, my eyes hung on the semicolon and then swung to the words that followed: "that...is...detestable." Without looking around nor saying a word to my parents, I closed the Bible and made a conscious decision to close my heart to God as well. In short, when I read that verse, I thought the words after the semicolon said: "*Melissa* is detestable."

As my adolescent years unfolded, I became increasingly aware that I was not like the other girls. My mind was filled with an endless barrage of screaming questions: What is wrong with me? Why don't I act like the other girls? Why don't I like boys? Why do I hate being a girl? One day, in an attempt to answer these tormenting questions, I turned to the dictionary and found the definitions of such words as *homosexual*, *lesbian*, and *gay*. After reading the definitions, *a false seed began to take root in my heart*. I must be a lesbian.

With no interest in boys, I was sixteen when I became involved in my first lesbian relationship—the beginning of the next ten years of my life. Unable and unwilling to resist the draw toward women any longer, I wholeheartedly embraced my new lesbian identity. When I left home at age eighteen to attend college, I immersed myself in the gay community. My whole world revolved around being gay. *And the seed flourished*.

ENCOUNTERING CHRIST

The Bible says the Lord does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). In the late-80s, I worked for an advertising agency as a retail television commercial producer. The agency was owned by three men—one of which was a Christian named Bill. In the context of our professional relationship, I worked closely with Bill. He knew I was a lesbian and I knew he was a Christian. I expected him to treat me coldly and impersonally. Instead, Bill always treated me with kindness, respect, and dignity. In time, I began to ask him questions about his Christian faith. While he always answered my questions with enthusiasm and zeal, Bill did not force his faith upon me nor mention my homosexuality.

Something spiritually began to stir within me. One Saturday night, I unexpectedly asked my partner if she wanted to go to church the next morning. Amazingly, she agreed. Because of my religious background, we decided to look in the *Yellow Pages* for a Presbyterian church. However, in the small community where we lived, there was only one option listed.

Undaunted, the next morning my partner and I headed to church. Dressed in our "Sunday Best", we entered the sanctuary and quickly realized it was a small congregation comprised primarily of older couples. As such, it was abundantly obvious to all that my partner and I were somehow very "different." The men and women of this church, however, received us with warmth and without condemnation.

Overwhelmed by their kindness, I soon found myself involved in everything the church offered: Wednesday night potlucks, an adult Bible study and, although I remained rhythmically challenged, the hand-bell choir—much to the musical chagrin of yet another pastor's wife!

A couple in their seventies, L. J. and Doris, took me under their wings and into their hearts. L. J. was a kind and intelligent man who served in a leadership capacity and led Bible studies. Doris was a spirited and fiery woman who truly loved the Lord.



Bill, L. J., and Doris were discerning people and knew about the life I was living. Even though I very much looked like a gay woman at the time, they met me where I was, accepted me with grace, loved me unconditionally and prayed for me fervently. It was through my relationships with them that I was led to make

the most important decision of my life: one rainy afternoon, sitting alone in my bedroom, I quietly prayed in my heart, "Jesus, please come and be the Savior of my soul and the Lord of my life." He did, *and a new seed was planted.*

WRESTLING WITH GOD

Interestingly, my partner gave me my first Bible—the *New International Version Study Bible* with the words of Jesus in red. I began to read it and soon stumbled upon the concordance. Here, I discovered that there are a number of verses addressing homosexuality. I read the passage from Leviticus 18 that I had read so many years before. I also found verses in Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Timothy. And this is when my "wrestling with God" commenced.

For months I went in circles with the Lord. I argued with Him, begged Him, ignored Him, fled from Him, and rebelled against Him. One night with tears streaming down my face, I cried out, "God, being gay is all I've ever known. I feel like I've been born this way; it feels normal to me. But You say it's wrong—that it is sin. I don't understand! Help me!"

Scripture teaches that God's Word is "living and active, sharper than a double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Moreover, the prophet Isaiah promises that God's Word will not return empty, but will accomplish what God desires and achieve the purposes for which He sends it (Isa. 55:11). While my faith was still new and there was much I did not understand, over the next year the Holy Spirit worked these truths deep into my heart until I came to that point of convicting revelation where "I knew that I knew" what I was doing was wrong. "But God demonstrated His love for me in this, while I was still a sinner, Christ died for me" (Rom. 5:8). Even in those months of confusion, anger, and rebellion, God showered me with His kindness, which ultimately led to repentance. In 1992, by His grace, I repented of my years of sexual sin. *The new seed had sprouted.*

GROWING IN THE WORD

The Bible says we plan our course but God determines our steps (Prov. 16:9). One Sunday morning when I was watching Dr. James Kennedy on television, I learned about Exodus International. Exodus is an inter-denominational Christian organization promoting the message of "freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ." I watched in utter amazement as men and women shared how they had overcome homosexuality

through their relationship with Jesus. Until then, I had no idea anybody else beside me had made the decision to walk away from homosexuality.

In time, I connected with a local Exodus ministry in Kentucky and soon became involved with everything the ministry offered—attending weekly support group meetings, receiving one-on-one counseling, reading books and attending conferences. With God's illumination, I began to uncover the various roots that contributed to my same-gender attractions: dynamics in the relationships with my mother and father in our home environment; sexual molestation by a man; sexual experimentation during my pre-teen years; and feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem as a woman. I also came to understand more clearly the schemes and lies of the evil one, and the impact of his deceptions across the span of my life.

I also began to take responsibility for my own sinful beliefs and behaviors. I discovered that while homosexuality clearly is not genetic, neither is it a "choice" in the conventional sense. Instead, attractions to my same gender resulted from a combination of many factors. And in understanding God's truth regarding homosexuality, I had to take responsibility for my sin. In confessing my sin, I was showered in God's forgiving grace and washed clean by the blood of the Lamb. The 17th-century pietist, Jakob Spener, says it well: "...we must call to memory that it was our sins, that is, mine and yours, which brought such great suffering to the Lord. Our sins were the whips, the thorns, the fists, the nails, which wounded the Lord and mistreated Him in His suffering."

Most importantly, I began to learn about the Holy Trinity and to form an intimate relationship with each Person—the Heavenly Father as my Papa; the Holy Spirit as my Counselor, Enabler, and Comforter; and Jesus as my Savior, Lord, and Majestic King.

Interestingly, as part of my journey out of a lesbian identity, I began to learn about the mystery of womanhood. Who knew there was so much to learn?! Simultaneously, I began to discover the opposite sex. While I am not yet married, I am keeping my eyes open for a tall, red-headed man, in his early forties, who loves football, and would look great in a Scottish kilt! *And the seed flowers.*

JOURNEYING TOWARD HOLINESS

Ultimately, however, I do not think the journey out of homosexuality is about arriving at marriage (as nice as that might be). Instead, I believe it is about repentance, obedience and holiness. "But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy' " (1 Pet. 1:16).

I also believe this journey is about worship. William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury said, "Worship is the submission of our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by his holiness, nourishment of mind by his truth, purifying of imagination by his beauty, opening of the heart to his love, and submission of will to his purpose. All this gathered up in adoration is the greatest of all expressions of which we are capable."

Furthermore, the journey into sexual wholeness is about redemption—being used by God to help others as they learn to walk in Christ. Finally, I think it is about love. I desire to yield my life to my King because I love Him, and I love Him only because He first loved me and gave His life for me (1 Jn. 4:19).

My journey out of homosexuality has been a long and, at times, arduous process. One of my favorite movie quotes comes from *The Judas Project*, "When you're climbing a mountain, keep your eyes focused on the summit instead of how far you have to go." I am also inspired by the third stanza of Charles Wesley's marvelous hymn, *And Can It Be That I Should Gain*: "Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night. Thine eye diffused a quickening ray. I woke, the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose went forth and followed thee."

The seeds planted in my life prior to knowing Christ ultimately produced only thorns and thistles—a life of confusion, heartache and bondage to my flesh. Thankfully, the roots of those seeds have been pulled from my heart and the subsequent poisonous fruit has withered and died. In exchange, my Heavenly Father has planted seeds that, through Christ's love and the power of the Holy Spirit, have blossomed into a harvest of abundant fruit—a life of peace, joy and freedom. ♦

Melissa Fryrear serves as the Gender Issues Analyst for Focus on the Family. With over two decades of experience with gender issues, she is actively involved in public speaking, writing and educating the church and society on a wide range of subjects related to homosexuality. During the last twelve years, Melissa has had the opportunity to share her overcoming testimony with thousands, including national and international audiences. She is also a keynote speaker at Focus on the Family's Love Won Out conference, which offers accurate information on the causes and prevention of homosexuality. In addition, Melissa is frequently invited to speak to churches, Christian organizations, colleges, public schools and youth groups. She is committed to proclaiming biblical truth with regard to the issue of homosexuality, complemented with grace and compassion. She is passionate about testifying to the transforming love and power of her Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Prior to joining Focus on the Family, Melissa served as Executive Director of an Exodus ministry in Kentucky. She continues to serve as a Regional Representative for Exodus and holds a Master of Divinity degree from Asbury Theological Seminary.



Focus on the Family
Homosexuality & Gender Issues Department
8655 Explorer Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80995
719/531-3400
www.family.org