

Overcoming Sexual Brokenness and Healing My Shame

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My Background

My story of recovery involves a soul that was born again, a soul that required human intervention to bring about the needed psychological healing from past emotional trauma, degradation, shame, and pain, all of which were caused by human interactions.

I discovered that true life changing transformation happened to me first by becoming a believer who was spiritually reborn. Then with the assistance of counseling, I could dig deeply within myself to cleanse the emotional wounds that were caused by mankind. I believe that only through God's ability to purify us, thereby recreating us as an innocent new-born, are we then capable of digging deeply into our souls in order to find the emotional and psychological factors that leads us astray. From a person who as a teenager was sexually abused, addicted to pornography and masturbation, heterosexually promiscuous and subsequently drifted into a homosexual lifestyle, I am now a person who seeks to live her life as a righteous daughter of God Almighty and as a person who has been fortunate enough to overcome the wounds that caused me to initially lead a life inconsistent with God's plan of creation.

Born in Decatur, GA, in 1966, I am the oldest of three children. My father was a passive person, who although a faithful provider for the family, brought pornographic magazines into our home. His passivity allowed my mom to control things and distorted my view of what healthy family life should be like. I always felt loved by my mother, a stay-at-home mom, but she was a strong, controlling woman who was highly judgmental of others, including me. My maternal grandmother was also very outspoken, critical and judgmental so I was heavily influenced by two strong women in my life. With help, I was able to recognize that I had defensively detached from Mom because of her outspoken words of judgment both of me and others. To compensate for the put-downs I felt as a child, I became very active in sports, graduated from high school, and spent two years in college. Superficially we appeared as a typical southern family that went to the local Presbyterian Church on holidays and occasionally on Sunday, but we clearly lacked a personal relationship with our Lord.

Molested at 14: Dealing with the pent-up emotions caused by abuse

My journey into sexual degradation began at the age of 14 when I was molested by a male neighbor. Unfortunately, during my teenage years, I never really processed the emotional travail I experienced from this abuse and I have little doubt that the inability to process this trauma led to my subsequent irrational sexual behaviors.

It was only years later that I was able to “confess” what the man did to me and to release the pent-up emotions I had blocked and buried within me for so many years. This subsequent confession brought up many emotions such as deep sadness, anger at losing my innocence, and fear that it would happen again. The confession permitted me to *begin to feel* the emotions I never processed and should have experienced when I was 14. An important lesson I learned is the difficulty of healing traumatic experiences when a young person is not helped to express the deep anger, sadness, and fear which usually follows being sexually and emotionally abused.

Subsequently, perhaps a year after this initial emotional release, I addressed the abuse again, this time in a small group session of a Living Waters discipleship group (Desert Stream Ministries.)

Much healing came as I cried and re-felt the pain and shame of the initial abuse. This time I found myself in a fetal position on the floor and cried deeply as I relived the violation of my body and innocence. Through this experience I learned that any emotion deeply felt will inevitably lead to another emotion. Thus, after releasing my sadness, I next felt enormous feelings of anger toward the abuser. I expressed the anger verbally and through the physical emotions I felt raging within my body. Then the leader of the small support group led me through a process of forgiveness toward my abuser.

This entire process led to a significantly deeper level of healing than I had ever previously felt or even thought possible. Others within the group prayed over me. I felt the presence of the Spirit of The Lord. He brought me supernatural comfort. At the same time, by sharing my truth with others, I was finally able to release the deep shame that I carried within me for so many years. By finding a safe place to “confess” a hidden part of myself and by shining a light into a very dark and vulnerable place within me, I found a renewed sense of purpose within me which in turn provided me with the capacity to grow.

My Teenage Years: Sexual Promiscuity and Abortion

Returning back to my teenage years, the molestation at age 14 led me to engage in behavior that added to my sexual brokenness and led me to descend into a proverbial hell. The first step down this path began with reading my father’s Playboy magazines: I became addicted to pornography. The sexual molestation released upon me an evil spirit of sexual perversion. By reading vivid descriptions of pornographic stories, I felt sexual arousals within me which heightened my emotions and created desires for a physical release. I initially sought to release these “tingling” feelings through masturbating. Thus began a vicious cycle of pornography, sexual arousal and

masturbation. Feeling low, I sought a high. After the high, I again felt a low and sought another high. However, after a while, the masturbatory conduct was insufficient to overcome my lows and thus I sought even greater stimulation. This desire in turn led me to begin engaging in sexually promiscuous heterosexual relationships.

Within the destructive cycle described above, when I was 15 my maternal grandmother, who was a dominant influence in my life, suggested I rejoin the Church and become baptized, perhaps thinking I could regain my innocence that way. However, because I had not truly heard nor internalized the gospel of repentance, I didn't experience any significant changes in my life. In fact, my sexual promiscuity became worse. By the time I was 19, I became pregnant and decided to abort the child. I lived with the shame and pain of that sin for many years. It was not until 27 years after the abortion that I was able to go through an amazing process, including healing prayer that permitted me to deeply reflect on the shame and pain that resulted from the abortion.

I was finally able to experience deep sadness and found myself wailing and crying with uncontrollable grief on the floor for at least an hour as I wept over the sin of killing my child. A counselor led me through prayer -- asking God to be present with me as I confessed. I verbally cried out how I felt, releasing years of pent-up guilt which morphed into deep shame. This experience was similar to the experience I had in releasing the shame I previously felt about the sexual abuse I had encountered at fourteen. I found myself once again comforted by His Holy Spirit and was able to internalize God's forgiveness as I was able to release the incredible shame I had carried with me for so many years.

Guilt vs. Shame

Before continuing my life story, I believe it is instructive to distinguish between guilt and shame and to speak further about the shame I experienced (both the initial molestation and the subsequent sinful behavior) and the importance of releasing such shame.

Guilt is simply a feeling that I've done something wrong; something that can be corrected. Guilt does not permeate one's soul as shame does.

Shame, on other hand, tells me untrue stories that I internalize such as "I'm bad," or "I am not worthy." It infects every part of my consciousness and subconscious. Shame lies by telling me, "if others knew about my behaviors, they would reject me and I'll be alone." In response, I sought to avoid being seen by others, thus trapping myself in a box that was hard to get out of.

Descent into Homosexuality

Returning once again to my early years and to my descent into sexual degradation, at the age of 21, I became involved in my first lesbian relationship. It began innocently enough as I became emotionally dependent upon a married woman who had two young children. My deep unmet emotional needs — the intimacy I missed from my Mom and the huge void I felt for nurture and affirmation -- became satisfied through a deep emotional connection with my lesbian lover. Through subsequent counseling, I recognized how detached I was from my Mom. However, unlike healthy mother-daughter relationships, the emotional connection between this woman and myself turned sexual. Neither one of us had ever had a homosexual experience before. After two years, that particular relationship ended but because the relationship felt "so right" at that point, I convinced myself to begin to embrace a "gay/lesbian" identity. The power of engaging in immoral habits that are sinful is such that the activity in which we engage tends to convince us that change is impossible. So, at that point, I began to embrace the homosexual lifestyle and frequently attended gay bars; I did so for an additional few years.

Understanding God's Truth and Repentance

Finally, at the age of 26, after being introduced to the truth of God in Romans 1, I began to experience conviction concerning my lifestyle. I cried out to God for help and contacted Resurrection Life Ministries in Atlanta where I received the psychological counseling that enabled me both to begin the psychological process of healing and to pray with an open heart. However, as indicated above, although there was no "silver bullet" of healing that occurred, this was the time in my life when I was able to begin my journey of healing. This process involves emotionally and intellectually understanding the past and how it affects our feelings and behavior.

However, simply because I was born again and could also recognize the psychological process involved in healing my emotional wounds, this did not mean my struggle was over. While my soul was born again, I still had not received the needed healing from the past issues. As stated above, healing is a journey - a process - not an instantaneous happening. I was still a deeply wounded person and had not undergone the process of "transformation". Rather, I had tried to simply repress my feelings and behaviors, which, frankly, I found to be insufficient for authentic healing.

Initially, I believed that by beginning a discipleship within the church I could repress my feelings and behavior and I feared telling anyone of my homosexual past. Being born again was an absolutely life-transforming experience for me! As a Christian, being born again--birthed from above-- is the foundation of the gospel that Jesus preached. Without it, I believe that no "real" life-changing transformation can happen within the believer. Through genuine repentance from the heart, as described above, the seed of God is planted by the Holy Spirit in the believer of

Jesus Christ. Through this discipleship walk, we begin to receive healing for the wounded places in our soul that cause us to have broken relationships with others.

Additional Healing

After my first year as a new Christian, God showed me that much additional healing was still needed. Recognizing how the process of change worked and my need to deal with the past, the present, and the future pushed me to begin more in-depth counseling with Resurrection Life Ministries during the years 1993 and 1994 (I was now in my late 20s). At this time, I was able to confess the sins that I committed, including the sexual unions I had entered into with both heterosexual and homosexual partners, and also the sins done against me, including the hurtful words spoken to me. I was able to take responsibility for my actions and for the part I played. I understood how my perceptions of people and of situations influenced my actions. I was finally able to bring past issues of pain and shame into the light and to process the pain they had caused by speaking of them in the safety of counseling.

In 1994, at the age of 28, I married a wonderful Christian man who had full knowledge of my past before we married. Perhaps he was one of the first people I could trust and thus in my relationship with him I escaped the shame that haunted me. As part of my healing, I learned that just as authenticity in our heavenly relationships was essential, so too was the importance of authenticity in human relationships. Thus, I fully divulged my past mistakes to my husband and we have been able to build a relationship of trust and authenticity between us, two of the most critical elements of a healthy marriage.

It was in 1996 that I began the discipleship program mentioned earlier. I joined Living Waters by Desert Stream Ministries where I received additional psychological, intellectual, and spiritual healing in the many areas that had previously kept me from enjoying good relationships with others. I continued with Desert Stream as an assistant small group leader and then as a small group leader. I attended two Living Waters week-long leadership trainings and served as Group Coordinator for Living Waters during 2003-2005. God used this discipleship program in a mighty way to create a “safe” place for me to be real with my past and to continue to receive healing. I continued my healing journey as well as continuing to pray and to disciple others. I taught at local Living Waters and Cross Current programs in the Atlanta area. In 2007, I taught on sexuality in the Discipleship Training School for Youth with a mission in Kona, Hawaii. In 2008, I became the Ministry Director of His Wonderful Works, Inc. where I currently serve.

Conclusion

My husband and I have been married for 20 years and have three wonderful children, ages 19,16, and 14. We have been attending the Christ Fellowship Church of Stone Mountain for the past 16 years. My husband and I currently serve on the Church Leadership Team.

I believe that in addition to counseling and healing ministry programs, involvement in church fellowship/community is crucial to walking away from negative behaviors, including sexual promiscuity and homosexuality. But this happy ending could not have happened without entering into a personal relationship with my Lord Jesus Christ and at the same time engaging in the psychological work absolutely necessary to heal my emotional wounds.