

FINDING & LEARNING THE TRUTH

My mum was an angry and hostile woman. When I was growing up, she used to beat and cane me often. Emotionally, I was very hurt by her. Because of her constant control and verbal abuse, my self-esteem was very low. I harboured a deep resentment towards mum and felt very unsafe with women who behaved like her.

Dad was less antagonistic but was not involved in my life. He was busy with his own affairs. He did not know how to give physical affection, which is the way that I needed to experience love.

As a child, I was extremely nervous and insecure. Whenever a quarrel or fight broke out, I would have to defend myself because there was no one who could protect me. I felt vulnerably alone.

My attraction to guys began at the age of five. He was my neighbour - old enough to be my father actually. He was handsome, strong yet gentle. My family liked him too. Whenever he visited us, I would shy away from him. My attractions at this age did not make me a homosexual. I now understand that, at that time, I was unconsciously trying to meet my needs for same-sex affection and bonding, which was unavailable from dad.

At age 13, puberty brought greater confusion to my identity. I began to have sexual fantasies and desires for other men. Some friends said that every boy will experience a period of same-sex attraction; and that it is only a passing phase. I felt relieved to hear that but as the years ticked by, my desires became worse.

During an evangelistic rally in school. I became a Christian. Shortly after, I was introduced to a church in my neighbourhood. I remembered asking God to remove my homosexual desires but nothing really happened. There was no teaching on this subject except when homosexuality was singled out as an abomination to God. That only increased the guilt I already felt.

Although I did not embrace a gay identity, my conscience told me that something was wrong with me.

I started attending a charismatic church in 1991. There was much to relearn about God and it was here that I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I experienced fervour for the things of God and, for

the first time, I really felt the deep love of Father God.

I attended a seminar on recovery from homosexuality but the shame and guilt of disclosure prevented me from seeking further help. Feeling trapped and lost, I continued to shoulder my dark secret. Not knowing what else to do, I buried myself in work. The successes and significance I derived from my work apparently helped to numb my emotional pain. Unknown to me, God was preparing a solution but He had to uncover all the unfinished issues that I tried to conceal and forget. Things at work started getting out of control. I lost the favour of my superiors. Going to the office each morning became a chore.

At this time, I got to know a friend at church. (Let's just name him "Terence"). He was mature and friendly and we quickly became good friends. We started to spend more time with each other and, for a while, I thought God was finally blessing me with a 'best friend'. Little did I know that He was unravelling a "black hole" in my soul. Inevitably, I developed an emotional dependency on Terence.

Sharing activities with Terence was the highlight of my life. Terence's passion was cycling, so I bought myself a bicycle to match his interest. I recalled cycling to his house to discover that he was entertaining another friend of ours. Being unable to cope with my jealousy, I quickly excused myself from the situation. I felt stupid and angry. "Why wasn't I invited? I was his best friend!" I tried to rationalise but my heart was possessive and unreasonable. Terence became so important to me that I would feel jealous if I saw him having fun with common friends of ours. My emotions were on a roller-coaster and I hated feeling out of control. I was depressed and very vulnerable.

I realised that my problem was getting too big for me to handle. I decided to seek help. I quit my job and enrolled in a men's residential recovery programme in the States. Subsequently, I returned to Singapore and continued to receive support from the Choices ministry at Church of Our Saviour.

The journey to wholeness is not a rosy one. I had to surrender many things which I thought were essential for my well-being – Terence was one. I recounted many occasions when I felt victimised and angry, but instead of seeking vengeance, I had to practise forgiving my offenders, trusting God to restore what was

lost or taken away. Despite the tears and pain, God was always assuring me that things will work out well. I became aware of what was going on inside me and what contributed to the way I feel about myself and others. I decided to take responsibility for my life and stop blaming people and situations. I do not have to face temptations sitting down anymore. Through it all, the church has been a tremendous source of support and encouragement, without which, none of this will be possible.

God doesn't make people gay and then demand purity and obedience. It is not in line with His character. God's promise is healing when we choose to do it His way. No one says it's going to be easy but it's what we will be offering to Jesus when we meet Him.

There is no homosexual gene. What they should be looking for is the gene for sin. And if they should find it, everyone will have it in us.

Shawn Tay