

# **BUGGIN' OUT!**

## **Newsletter**

Applying Biblical Truth and Humor to the Struggle.

### Abstinence Abstinence Rah! Rah! Rah!

In 2000, I was invited to share my testimony at a church in Long Island, New York. I spoke of the sexual abuse at age 12 when I was attending a military school, the death of my father that same year, the secret homosexual lust and the loneliness. I talked about the joy of finding a first boyfriend at age 29, the decision to leave him to be an obedient Christian, and the three years of abstinence which followed.

I was proud of the abstinence part. Abstinence had been for me neither easy nor the least bit joyful, so I saw it as a personal triumph.

After my testimony, a woman from the audience came up to me and said, “Robert, your story was very interesting, but you never mentioned anything about healing. I’m curious, where did you find your healing?”

“God”, I responded.

She smiled so I smiled too. We both knew my answer was generic and empty. But she was a more-mature Christian and she suspected that my story was one of pride and self-effort. She was also a gracious woman and didn’t challenge me.

Her question bothered me. Had there been no healing in my life? Was my testimony just one of my own efforts? The church that had invited me to speak had placed my *Buggin’ Outs 1* and *2* on the resource table. I grabbed one of each to read through them, pretty sure I could find a few paragraphs on healing. In them, I found some scripture references, confessions of promiscuity, a few clever one-liners, and evidence of deliberate, will-power-induced abstinence. There was little mention of healing.

The man who spoke after me was named Bill. Bill used to be a drag queen in New York City, accepted Christ, and later went on to marry and make two babies. Bill stated that the men in his church who had reached out and included him in “guy stuff” had been invaluable to his healing process, and I

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wondered if that would have been a better response to her than simply “God”.

However, there was something else was nagging at me. While I was up at the podium sharing my testimony, I noticed something about the family men in the audience. They weren't moved. It was frustratingly humbling to see that a journey as difficult as ours was powerless to inspire them. What were we bragging about that they didn't already have? These Christian men had already tasted abstinence, marriage, raising a family and wearing flannel, and they were searching for more.

Bill and I spent some time discussing this and discovered something disappointing about ourselves. At the early onset of our repentance, we had put before ourselves the short-term goal of “abandoning gay living”. However, upon nearing that goal, we settled comfortably into our new identity of being “like other men”. Instead of using our achievement of being “like other men” as a spring board to the next goal of being “like Jesus”, we embraced it as a final destination.

I had no healing to report, merely a story of abstinence to share. That's like an infomercial selling flu...no one wants what you have.

Soon after, my friend Kevin presented me with the biography of Mother Teresa on my birthday. Mother Teresa had a testimony of abstinence as well, but who cared? Her life contained much richer testimonies and she didn't receive the Nobel Peace Prize for being chaste...she received it for her unselfish pursuit of Christ, which resulted in her outreach to the poor, sick, dying and homeless.

(Besides, I thought back to my own times of abstinence...they weren't all glorifying to God. As a young child, I was abstinent because I didn't know what sex was, I was again abstinent when I gained weight in the early 90's because I was too embarrassed to expose my belly, and then there was a period in the late 90's when I was going through a very sarcastic phase and I was abstinent for the simple reason no one wanted to spend time with me. My abstinence had not always been the result of healing...sometimes it was just the result of some obscure little nook of my brokenness which I had not yet identified or addressed.)

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I grew to respect and admire Mother Theresa and I wanted for myself that same intense intimacy with Jesus that she had. I just had no clue how to get it. So, at a friend's very radical suggestion, I prayed and I asked God to show me how.

Ask and ye shall receive. Reading the Bible one day, I wrote down two random verses in my journal, which individually I had read many times before, but when I got to see them written down next to each other...shazam! Answered prayer. They were Luke 8:46 and Matthew 25:40:

***But Jesus told him, "No, someone deliberately touched me, for I felt healing power go out from me." Luke 8:46***

***And the King will tell them, 'I assure you, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'***

Mathew 25:40

I now understood why I had no healing to report while Mother Teresa was spreading healing like it was airborne.

I, Robert, made a decision to obey the rules and be abstinent, making a point to not touch anyone. I was powerless and lived in mediocrity as a result. Mother Teresa made a choice to reach out with every breath and deliberately touch Jesus in "the least of these", and His healing power left Him and entered into her. This was why she was able to love the people no one else wanted to love...she carried Jesus' healing power and deliberately touched Him incessantly to refuel. She stumbled upon the secret of His healing touch. The proof is in the millions she blessed abundantly in lands where abundant blessings had never before flowed. It was something divinely special.

And I've learned that something divinely special happens to the repentant homosexual when he deliberately seeks out and touches Jesus by bending down in love and touching "the least of these". Like Mother Teresa, he gets a dose of Jesus' healing power. It heals his mood, it heals his vision, and it heals his goals. By deliberately touching Jesus, he begins to see the world

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and people as God sees them. And, more interestingly, he starts to see **himself** as God sees him. It is here that a change of identity is born, drawing the once active and promiscuous homosexual to walk away from sinful relationships and toward a more intimate relationship with Jesus. He learns that the love he chronically pursued but never found in homosexuality is found tangibly and in spades at the feet of Christ.

Mother Teresa touched “the least of these” by touching the sick and poor, but as the Body of Christ, our arms must touch others too. Jesus taught us by example that “the least of these” is whomever needs Him the most at that moment... a man with leprosy, a woman seeking love through promiscuity, or our brothers and sisters lonely and forgotten in prison.

If I have gained any insight on healing, it is this:

Stop pursuing heterosexual relationships. Stop pursuing time-consuming responsibilities. Stop pursuing distractions that medicate the pain of reality. Just reach out and touch Christ, who readily tells us that He can be found and touched in “the least of these”. Your healing and your healing power will be granted here. The man you have been craving all these years will soon be found less in other men and more in yourself. The needy gay boy will grow up and a newborn man of purpose and courage will step forth. He will be a man after God’s own heart, secure in his masculinity and focused in his calling. He will confidently move to the front lines of Christ’s army and bear fruit for the Kingdom.

And it will be this man, the one who deliberately and incessantly touches Jesus, whose testimony may ultimately be able to light a fire under the family man, impassioning him to more-aggressively pursue his own calling in the Kingdom. And instead of hearing an audience full of them unemotionally remark to themselves:

*“Hmm, that gay guy is becoming more like me. God has changed a lot for him.”*

We just might inspire them to pray out:

*“Father, I want what that man has.”*

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