

How God Conquered One Lesbian's Heart

It took me a couple of years before I could work up the courage to go back home for a visit. I wouldn't go alone and took my girlfriend, Ann, and her daughter, with me. My mom was very warm and welcoming, even loving toward all three of us. I thought perhaps things had changed in the nearly seven years I'd been gone.

She pulled me aside and said, "Michelle, I love you, and you are all welcome to stay here tonight, but you'll have to sleep in separate rooms."

I was mad, but I understood and appreciated the forewarning. We went to a hotel.

Mom continued to love on us by sending cards and money on birthdays and holidays. I joked it wasn't fair Ann got the same amount of money on her birthday as I did from my parents.

I was beginning to calm down, to live a more stable life, one that wouldn't cause the neighbors to blush. Normal. I thought perhaps I should also pursue a more normal religious identity. I was still seeking God. I knew I couldn't return to mainstream Christianity, just the thought of it still gave me the heebie-jeebies, but I had a deep longing I couldn't satisfy. I was still writing, reading and viewing porn.

I began studying Kabbalah and the Zohar (both Jewish mysticism), and I decided I needed to talk to a rabbi, to learn as much about the foundational aspects of Judaism as possible before I could truly attain proficiency in Jewish mysticism. At the time, this seemed to fall within the realm of "normal" for me. I met with a rabbi in the Reformed tradition, one who assured me it was OK to continue my life as a practicing lesbian.

Although the thought of entering a Christian church or speaking to any of my former mentors and friends who were Christians almost sickened me, I could read the Bible if I was doing it to pursue Jewish knowledge. I stuck to the Old Testament, which kept me safe from the pesky and disturbing writings of Paul. I couldn't deal with Jesus either, but that was OK for now. He seemed safely ensconced in the New Testament.

What I didn't intend during my course of study was to have feelings about God emerge. I began to sense an awareness of Him again. My previous experiences into other forms of spirituality (or non-spirituality) had always been to soothe an ache, but had always been unsuccessful. They were fun, scary, encouraging or wishful, but never fulfilling. I began to pray the serenity prayer and the 23rd Psalm.

More than a year passed as I met with the rabbi once a week, alone and in a small group. I rarely went to synagogue. I am an introvert by nature, and couldn't seem to break into this Jewish family in any meaningful way. Finally, Rabbi M. told me it was time to pick a date for my official conversion ceremony.

Within days of the announcement, I received devastating news. Aunt Jan, dearly beloved and only 11 years older than me, had died unexpectedly. My entire family felt this loss deeply. I drove with my girlfriend to Oklahoma to the funeral.

As I sat in the funeral home chapel, listening to a sermon by a very inexperienced friend of my uncle's, I heard a voice say to me, "You can't give up Jesus."

I turned my head to the left and to the right, but no one was looking at me.

"You can't give up Jesus."

Again, I looked around and no one was paying any attention to

me. It repeated again, and perhaps one more time.

I found myself saying, "I can't give up Jesus. I can't give up Jesus."

The voice of the minister had faded. I wasn't aware of anything except that thought. I knew to convert to Judaism was to deny Jesus. It turned out I wasn't prepared to do that.

Strangely, even in spite of hearing an audible voice inside my head, I continued to be lost. I searched on the internet for an acceptable church. When I would find a local church that accepted and endorsed the gay lifestyle, I would get excited and go try it out. However, I never went back to any of those churches. It was as if there was a heavy cloud over every single one of them. It was like a giant room lit with only a few 25-watt bulbs. Any church that would accept me as a practicing lesbian lacked all credibility with me. I knew it was wrong, and having someone tell me it was right made me lose all respect for their authority.

I began reading theologians in what is called Progressive Christianity such as Marcus Borg and John Shelby Spong. While their theology was appealing to someone who wanted Jesus without sacrifice, Christ without obedience, I was still hungry. The intellectual spin was interesting, but didn't sound the bell of truth in my spirit. I had experienced a relationship with God when I was a child. I longed to be deeply loved and cherished by Him.

*Excerpt from Prodigal Pursued by **Michelle D. Smith**. Former Assistant District Attorney, Michelle spent nearly 25 years as an out, loud, and proud lesbian. A feminist, separatist and anarchist, she wandered through New Age beliefs, witchcraft, Buddhism, agnosticism and all the other "isms" available to explore. At last she encountered the undeniable, indescribable love of Jesus, and everything changed. Today Michelle not only reaches out to touch the LGBT community with the love of God,*

but also speaks to the church, sharing a message of hope to those who feel they have lost a loved one to the LGBT lifestyle.