

The Surprising Way This Academic Lesbian Encountered Christ

Her parents met at a gay nightclub in San Francisco. Mom was looking for a safe place to dance and dad happened to be the security guard at the club.

“He abandoned my mother and me after abusing both of us physically,” Rachel Gilson recalls, in a first-person account in *Christianity Today* (CT). “I didn’t even know he existed until I was 10, by which time my mother had remarried.

She grew up in a lax household, where she was allowed to watch horror movies as a child. “When it came to sex, nothing was hidden. There were jokes and stories and, when I was 10, I helped my mother clip images from an adult magazine for a bachelorette party,” she recalls.

At 14, she met her first boyfriend, but only a year later, became attracted to another girl in her AP European history class. “She was a senior, beautiful and popular. I was struck by her beauty. The attraction felt like what other girls described feeling for a boy.”

She wondered if it was okay to feel this way about a girl. She had a vague understanding that it was wrong, but no Christian foundation had been established in her life.

The two kissed for the first time on Rachel’s 16th birthday and developed a romantic relationship.

After graduation, Rachel felt “exhilarated” to leave for Yale University, where she entered a selective humanities program for freshmen.

She met fascinating people and “enjoyed unlimited access to alcohol. It seemed too good to be true.”

Then she discovered her girlfriend from high school was cheating on her with a semi-homeless guy in Lake Tahoe. “When Christmas vacation came, I paid her a visit, but everything felt icy, still, frozen shut. On Christmas morning, as I read *Don Quixote* on her futon (while she had sex with her boyfriend in the other room), I wondered what my life had become.”

When she returned to school, in her first philosophy class, Rachel began to wonder about the existence of God. In her room, she began furtively Googling religious terms. “When my roommate entered, I would slam down the laptop lid and pretend I was doing French homework.”

In the torrent of webpages Rachel explored, something shocking happened: she began to encounter Jesus for the first time.

But the Jesus she found when she searched the internet confounded her stereotypes. “Again and again, I saw how Jesus noticed, dignified and served people I would have thrown aside. But I was troubled by a suspicion that my life was against his.”

A Book That Drew Her Heart

One day Rachel was in the room of a lapsed Catholic friend when she noticed the book *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis. She knew nothing about the author or the book, but the title intrigued her—and she quietly slipped the book into her bag.

The more she read, Lewis’s persuasive arguments began to grip her heart. Suddenly it dawned on her: There was a God! Her heart and her head could no longer deny it.

At the same time, a spirit of repentance fell on her, and she became aware of her own sinfulness. “I had lied and cheated; I was cruel—I had even stolen that book from a sweet,

unsuspecting friend! How would I face a pure and holy God?"

"But when I considered what Jesus had done—how He endured separation from God so that I could be joined—I knew I would be a fool to reject His offer. As my heart swelled with thankfulness, I clenched my eyes and prayed, surrendering myself to Jesus."

The following Saturday, Yale Students for Christ hosted a Valentine's Day party. Rachel felt embarrassed about her newfound faith, so she arrived late and pretended she had come by accident.

She confided in someone that she had become a Christian two days earlier and was then invited to join a Bible study.

Over the course of that semester, she began to wonder how she would deal with her attraction to women. "I knew the Bible was clear: What I wanted was off-limits. But I didn't understand why. How could love, intimacy and companionship be forbidden by this loving, intimate, companion-seeking God?"

"Thus I had to learn my first lesson of the Christian life: how to obey before I understood. My whole life had taught me to master a concept before I could assent to it. How could I possibly agree to something so costly without grasping the reason?"

Ultimately, she realized the answer involved trust. "I knew Jesus was worthy of trust, because he had made a greater sacrifice. He took the pain and shame of a criminal's death and suffered the Father's rejection, all so I could be welcomed. Who could be more deserving of trust?"

But she wondered if God would remove her attraction to women. "Those first years of Christian faith included relationships with women that were spiritual, freeing, and intimate, yet non-erotic. But in other cases, personal and sexual chemistry lured me back into old patterns. Why wouldn't God just fix

me?" she wondered.

"Slowly, I came to understand that 'making me straight' wasn't the answer. There is no biblical command to be heterosexual. Through study, conversations and prayer, I eventually arrived at a crucial truth: that sex wasn't something God discovered, then fenced about with arbitrary restrictions, but something He made—to teach and to bless us. When His teachings went against my instincts, denying my desires became a profound way of saying, 'I trust you.'"

Early in her faith, Rachel stumbled when she "stupidly" went back and had sex with her high-school girlfriend.

Then something surprising happened. God brought a man into her life. "We had met the summer before on a Christian mission. We were friendly, but I was not attracted to him. He knew all about my past."

Rachel admired his goodness, warmth and their shared priorities. "Step by step, Jesus opened my eyes to a kind of human love I hadn't seen, one steeped in commitment and spiritual joy, rather than passion for passion's sake. Once again, I obeyed before I understood; I married that young man before I really fell in love with him, because I loved Jesus first."

"The truth is, even 10 years into my marriage, when I experience attraction to someone other than my spouse, that person is female.

"Still, my marriage has been a place of joy and healing. When people ask me my orientation, my most honest answer is 'married'—with the same blessings and burdens of other married believers, and with the same source of hope and power, the Holy Spirit."

"That's why this is not the story of my becoming straight, which has never truly happened and is beside the point. It is

the story of my becoming whole, which is happening every day.”
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This article originally appeared on Assist News Service.