

Free From Lesbianism

✖ It started out like any other Sunday morning. Mom was in the kitchen finishing her breakfast before heading off to the golf course.

I stopped to chat with her briefly before going to church. Only this time our conversation turned sour.

“What do you want from me?” my mom asked abruptly.

Without thinking I shot back, “I want a mom!”

“I don’t want to be a mom,” she said curtly. “I didn’t plan to have you. I didn’t plan to have any of my kids.”

Her words were like daggers to my soul. Tears came. I knew I couldn’t stop them if I tried, but I didn’t want her to see me cry.

“And don’t start crying to make me feel guilty,” she rebuked.

Her words hung in the air with the thought reeling through my head, I didn’t ask to be here. Suddenly a veil lifted as I realized, at age 22, that what my dad had been telling me for years was true: My mother didn’t love me.

I don’t know why I bothered going to church that morning. I didn’t hear a thing and couldn’t even see the pastor through my tears. I cried all morning over the stark reality that I was nothing more than an inconvenience to the one person whose affection I craved the most.

Months earlier I had become a Christian and begun my journey out of homosexuality. As a young adult I was now attempting to connect with Mom for the first time in my life.

The Wounds of Childhood

Growing up, my alcoholic father had a violent temper and would often hit my mother. I saw her as a victim and rejected anything to do with femininity, which to me represented weakness.

I looked to my older brother and decided I wanted to be just like him. I hung out with him whenever he would let me, wore his hand-me-down clothes and even copied his handwriting style. I wanted to be anything but a girl.

As early as I can remember I preferred sports to playing with dolls. I played Little League baseball when I was 10 and tackle football for years with the neighborhood boys.

I was seen as one of the guys because I was as strong and tough as they were. "Tomboy" didn't begin to describe me—I walked like a boy, talked like a boy, dressed like a boy and even played shirtless like a boy. Most adults thought I was a boy and often called me "son" or "young man."

I hated my name, Christine, because it was obviously a girl's name. I went by "Chris" instead.

My dad and brother had an obsession with sex. My dad had pornographic magazines stacked under his bed, and my brother was

preoccupied with my developing body.

My parents divorced when I was 12 and sent me away to live with relatives, where I was sexually abused by an older cousin. For years I hid my secret in my heart. Meanwhile it took its toll on my mind, shaping my beliefs about men and women. Life already had taught me that men were interested only in sex and that being a woman was a liability. Being molested reinforced my already warped view of men.

From then on I wanted to conceal whatever shred of femininity I had left, believing that if I weren't attractive then things like this wouldn't happen to me. Yet there were numerous other occasions on which men took advantage of me.

I never felt safe as a girl because every man I met treated me as the object of his desire. I resented this and desperately longed to be loved for me, not for my female body.

Feeding an Emotional Need

Though my feelings for women had not become sexualized yet, I had a deep hunger for feminine love. Throughout elementary school and junior high, I would linger in the -presence of a particularly nurturing teacher, craving her attention and seeking to obtain it whenever possible.

In high school I was still routinely mistaken for a boy because of my masculine appearance and mannerisms. Some people

assumed I was gay because I looked the part, but the thought never really occurred to me. This was the mid-80s and nobody talked about homosexuality.

One day in my sophomore year, I discovered that my best friend, a senior, was in love with me. I loved her, too, but was confused about the possibility of a sexual relationship.

Eventually I overcame my inhibitions and became lovers with Kate. I was 15 and she was 17. Our lives revolved around each other.

I became jealous and possessive of her, wanting her all to myself and viewing other friends as a threat to our relationship. These were all characteristics of emotional dependency, which was the hallmark of my six years as a lesbian.

I wanted to spend the rest of my life with Kate, even to marry her. But my mom discovered our affair and worked to put an end to it—she was embarrassed to have a gay daughter.

At 17 I began experimenting with guys sexually to find out if I really was gay. Each encounter left me feeling degraded.

In college I resumed my lesbianism and reveled in it, believing it was innate and inborn. I settled into the idea that I would be gay the rest of my life.

My junior year I fell in love with Jane, a married woman who was seven years older than I. Her husband worked long hours, leaving

Jane emotionally needy and vulnerable to looking outside her marriage
for ways to meet those needs. I was there for her.

Jane also regularly attended church. She felt guilty about our relationship because she believed homosexuality and unfaithfulness
in marriage were sins.

I struggled with guilt about being a home-wrecker, but I was powerless to stop our relationship because she satisfied my hunger
for love. Jane continued her involvement in church throughout our
18-month relationship.

Having felt judged by Christians in the past, I wanted no part of her church life. However, my love of sports motivated me to join
the church softball team. I was there for one reason only—to play ball.
But God had other ideas.

During the course of three softball seasons, I was drawn by the love my teammates had for one another and for me. It seemed so
pure and so right. I felt accepted even though they knew I was not a
Christian. My profanity and unsportsmanlike conduct made that obvious to
everyone.

The coach never once scolded me for my behavior. Instead he prayed for me and encouraged my teammates to do the same when they
complained I was ruining their Christian witness.

One teammate, Kelly, could tell I was gay, but never let on. She didn't preach to me or confront me about my lifestyle.

Instead

she reached out to me in love and friendship all the more.

I began to desire what my fellow teammates had. They were sincere, kind, loving and peaceful—different from any other Christians I

had known. I started attending church and Sunday School because I

wanted to know their God.

The Healing Begins

On a Sunday night in November 1989, Kelly led me in a prayer of salvation as I knelt beside my bed in my dorm at the University of Tampa.

I didn't feel any different, but deep down I knew something had changed. I knew I meant business with God. I wanted Him

more than my homosexuality.

Becoming a Christian didn't instantly resolve my lesbian orientation. It was only the beginning. I broke up with my lover yet

continued to suffer in silence with my homosexual desires, blaming God

for making me gay.

I didn't understand that God was not responsible. Like many lesbians, I was on this path because I was trying to protect myself from further hurt by men

and to compensate for the love I didn't receive from my mother during

childhood.

Thankfully, I found out about Exodus International, a ministry that helps people overcome homosexuality, and began attending a

local support group. That's where I discovered the root causes

of my
homosexual desires—things such as sexual abuse, breakdown in the
relationship with the same-sex parent, gender confusion,
abusive father
and peer rejection.

I met with a counselor to deal with the sexual abuse and
rejection issues. Several Christian women became my adopted
moms and
showered me with the love and affirmation every child craves
growing up.

Change happened gradually from the inside out. First, the
misguided beliefs about men and women were put to rest as I
met godly,
strong women in the church who dismantled my belief that to be
feminine
is to be weak. I also met men who treated me with dignity and
respect,
which freed me to embrace my gender.

For the first time I felt safe as a woman. I even started
going by my full name, Christine, because I no longer wanted
to hide the
fact that I was a girl.

However, I still looked very masculine. I wanted to
embrace my femininity but didn't know how. All my life I had
struggled
with intense feelings of inadequacy about being a girl.

Now for the first time since I had been sexually abused, I
wanted to look pretty. Slowly I began to outwardly identify
with women,
experimenting with makeup, clothes and purses.

Others noticed my progress and encouraged me. I'll never
forget the time Robert approached me in church and said,

smiling,

“Christine, this is the first time you don’t look like a boy in a dress.” Though it didn’t come out right, I knew he meant well, and it let me know I was making progress.

As I worked to overcome my feelings of inadequacy about being a girl, I learned that straight women struggle with insecurities as well. I used to think I had nothing in common with them, but I discovered I was more like them than I ever dreamed.

The key to my healing was developing healthy same-sex friendships. As I did this, my sexual attractions for women naturally diminished because I found what I was looking for all along—love, intimacy and connection.

With God’s help and the support of caring people, I have been walking in freedom from homosexuality for more than 12 years now.

We live in a society that says homosexuals are born gay and can’t change. But I am living proof that’s not true because I am a changed person with a changed life!

Christine Sneeringer is a conference speaker and freelance writer based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She is the executive director of Worthy Creations, which is part of the worldwide network of Exodus International.