

God's grace in same-sex attraction

Josh from London shares his story



My first memory of being attracted to other boys in my class was at age twelve, although it wasn't until I was about 16 that I came to the realisation that that meant I might be gay. That same year I was baptised, having attended church all my life. But instead of the freedom and joy I thought it would bring, the tension with my sexuality only brought anguish and pain.

I always longed for a relationship with a woman and had dreams of getting married one day and starting a family, but instead I was drawn towards gay culture and sought sexual encounters with men. I had a few short romances with women, but it seemed my body wouldn't respond in the 'right way' no matter how hard I forced my mind to want it.

The world I discovered was a sordid one fuelled largely by lust and selfishness. In my experience, there was no desire for a lasting relationship, nor was there any sort of activism to normalise homosexuality and give it an equal footing with God's design for sex and marriage. All I knew was a hidden world that revelled in being subversive and in the dark.

Because of the light and dark contrast between my faith and my sexual behaviour, I became depressed and suicidal, knowing that the two worlds could not exist side by side. My thoughts and behaviour did not match my professed faith – what fellowship can light have with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14)

After many dark years, I spoke to a trusted church leader, and through confession and the power of prayer, bringing my failures into the light brought healing and a peace that I had never known before. There was a breaking of chains and I was freed from the grip of pornography addiction. However, the way my mind and body had been accustomed to respond to sexual attraction remained.

I gave up my dream to one day be married and began to put my hope in the Lord alone for fulfilment and satisfaction. I would daily read a 'letter from God' that a Christian friend shared with me, where I was encouraged to be 'satisfied and fulfilled and content with living being loved by God 'alone'.

I began to believe that the Lord Jesus truly did satisfy and that he was all I needed. I found a joy in serving him and submitting to his ways and plans for my life. Taste and see that the Lord is good!

Then out of the blue I met the woman who would become my wife. One summer during her leave from nursing training we fell in love, and I knew that I would one day marry her. Right from the outset I told her about my past and my same-sex attraction and for some reason it didn't scare her off!

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On our wedding night, we did what a wise couple in our church recommended: 'Make the first thing you do together as a married couple be to pray.'

That night the Lord answered our prayers for his help and blessing in our marriage and for a closeness and intimacy that is unrivalled. My fears about how my body would respond sexually were unfounded. By God's grace we enjoyed our wedding night together and so began a marriage between an ex-gay man and a beautiful woman.

Our relationship, however, has not always been straightforward. There have been times, even on our honeymoon, where I have had difficulty in making love. The mental scars and memories of my past still linger. At these times we often turn to prayer, and it always amazes me how good God is in answering our prayers and in giving us the grace

needed to cope in what can be very awkward situations.

We've been married now for 15 years and have four children who are growing up fast. I wish I could say that my same-sex attraction has gone, but it has not. It still causes difficulty from time to time, whether it's in how my wife sometimes feels second best, or whether I get caught up in unhealthy thought patterns or fantasies.

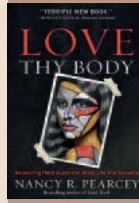
During lockdown I joined a Christian support group with others who are in a similar situation, and I've sought counselling to deal specifically with these issues. These have both been immensely helpful in being able to share honestly with those who have walked in the same shoes as I have. Therapy too has provided a safe and helpful space to unpack how and why I react like I do.

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A conversation with a counsellor challenged me on the identity labels we use and how language can be so fraught with difficulties and assumptions. Even now I struggle to find the right label or words to describe myself. I don't like the terms gay, same-sex attracted, or even ex-gay – who I am is not defined by sexual attraction. Even the notion of sexual orientation I think is unhelpful. History suggests the concept is very modern, and research reveals that sexuality is far more fluid than we ever realised. The idea that one's sexuality is fixed or hard-wired is losing traction. There is much plasticity in our minds and a weakening or strengthening of our sexual desires in any given direction is certainly possible.

I'm saddened that there are those who are seeking to ban so-called 'conversion therapy'. I have found much help and support from counselling that would almost certainly be considered illegal if current activists have their way. I find it odd that the support and help for

RESOURCES



- *Love Thy Body*
Nancy R. Pearcey
Baker Books, £10.00, 2018
9780801075728



- *A Better Story*
Glynn Harrison
IVP, £9.99, 2016
9781845501891



- *Gay Girl, Good God*
Jackie Hill Perry
B&H Publishing Group, £13.99, 2018
9781462751228

those wrestling with issues of sexuality only ever seems to go in one direction.

If you want to explore an LGBT identity you will be encouraged, supported and celebrated all the way. However, if like me, you want support to obey God's word and commit to heterosexual marriage as God designed, you might soon find yourself involved in an illegal practice. You might find yourself trapped and unable to find the support needed to live a life according to your conscience.

God has been so good to me and my wife and each day I revel in his grace. I know I have failed him many times, and I do not always think or act in line with his Word. However, I know the love of Jesus is real, and his forgiveness offered through his death on the cross is sufficient to cover every sin.

What is needed day-to-day for me, and for anyone looking to live the Kingdom life are three things: first, to walk in step with the Spirit; second to live in obedience to Scripture, and third, to find supportive fellowship with other believers who take seriously the first and second points. ■