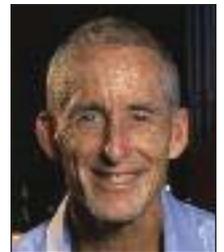


Change:

How Jesus Heals Us



BY ANDREW COMISKEY

'Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you might know the good and perfect will of God.' (Romans 12: 2)

Real change in our lives usually begins with a crisis. Light breaks into our otherwise dull sensibility and pains us. Exposed, our disorder wounds us. It might be a spouse's discovery of the other's affair or porn use; it may simply be one's revulsion at his or her sin. We the beautiful have broken ourselves and loved ones. The Spirit impales our false peace and we cry out for mercy.

All this hinges on the fact that there is one morally beautiful will—the will of God—to which each human being must give an account. His beautiful Spirit roams the earth and looks for hearts that are searching for Him, hearts pierced by the broken edges of moral compromise.

We want the good! Yet that good eludes us and creates conflict. In the fight between the beautiful God and the broken images that captivate us, Jesus reveals His Cross.

Never more beautiful than in His suffering, the broken God sheds light upon our predicament. God's appalling humility reveals our pride, His generosity our self-concern. We know somehow that His Cross is our only way out: the essential point of transformation where we face our brokenness in the light of His and are slowly, painfully, and mercifully transformed into His beautiful image.

Practically, that must involve a community of the Cross—

skilled and consistent walking partners we enlist who believe for our best and who help us exchange our rags for His riches. But the choice is always ours. We cannot make our change dependent upon how good our recovery team is. No, the key to our transformation is our will surrendered and united to Christ Jesus.

We choose to follow Him because He alone has the keys to Life; we learn to say 'yes' to His will in season and out and refuse to compromise the truth because the journey is hard. He is gracious to persons who do not alter the track of traditional morality (chastity for all, gender clarity as male and

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**We were created
for hope...**

Our initial goal of overcoming sin has evolved into a desire to love like Jesus. That is complete wholeness. Our hope is perfect love, in Him and in the full maturation of our lives.





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female, sex only for marrieds) because they feel otherwise. He gives moral courage to us weak ones who say 'yes' to what may seem impossible. Faith working in love, we know we can walk His way only because He is the Way. One greater walks with us and clarifies the path for us. We are never alone.

Along the way, Jesus grants healing gifts to His pilgrim people. These are treasures that help us to make huge leaps forward by empowering our commitment to purity and self-giving. Jesus always sends His Word: sometimes challenging, at times confirming, always miraculous. He does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. That interplay of our will to follow Him and His

commitment to healing us along the way is the rhythm of our transformation.

We learn to accept both hardship and His healing love. The Spirit always comes through Calvary. We are neither exempt from His call to carry our little crosses nor from opening our hearts to the Spirit's longing to heal us. Moral beauty requires human effort; our efforts are ever graced by gifts from heaven.

We stop 'playing' residual struggles against healing, as if the former cancels out the latter. We are whole, and we are becoming whole. In fact, becoming a fruitful, chaste gift to others is a lifetime path, made walkable through the miracle of His radiant Presence in our lives. At times He allows us to walk at night; then we can entrust ourselves solely to Him in the darkness. In that

way, we become like Him even when it seems that He is not there. He is. He is simply granting us a new way to deepen our reliance upon Himself.

Hope that is seen is not hope. We can expect substantial movement in our whole gift-giving and also expect familiar conflicts. Why? We were created for hope—to aspire on earth to what will only be ours wholly in heaven. It may help to note how our aspirations have changed. Our initial goal of overcoming sin has evolved into a desire to love like Jesus. That is complete wholeness. Our hope is perfect love, in Him and in the full maturation of our lives. Both will be ours fully and only when we see Him face-to-face.

Rejoice in how you are changing. Embrace Him in the struggle. You are becoming like Him as you head home. 

Along the way,
Jesus grants healing gifts to His pilgrim people.



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Hope for a Whole Marriage

Living Waters has provided a context for healing in my life. Bearing witness to the true masculine and true feminine, it has created a safe place for me to encounter my true masculine self. In calling me to open, learn and lead, it has shown the way from lonely isolation to honest, loving community.

I had a violent, alcoholic father, a glamorous, aloof, alcoholic mother and a wayward, alcoholic brother. I became an over-achiever who would forge the path to my own resurrection from the pain and suffering around me. I vowed to protect women because he (my father) had beaten my mother black and blue.

I acquired a fine education and a professional degree. Reward was always out ahead: when I get my degree; when I get married; when I own my own home; when. . .when. . .when. . .

And then there came a day when I ran out of illusions. In a desperate effort to correct all that had gone wrong in my broken marriage and wayward life, my wife and I abandoned all and moved to a Christian community at great hope and cost to ourselves and our five children who accompanied us.

I had been unfaithful and medicated the deepening, painful hollow inside with sexual arousal. The child who had been poorly nurtured knew only that it was starved and fed off inherent sexual desire. My empty interior cried out, "Feed me! Know me! Love me!" I did not have Moses's "I AM" to be able to offer my ordained sexual being to another as gift.

I'd been in therapy for 40 years but was too clever, too persuasive or too closed and afraid to be seen clearly, and wrestled to the bottom of my evasions. My wife listened in love to endless tales from my wounded heart but her willingness to mother me was doomed. Doomed also was my fruitless quest to fill my hollow manhood with female contact, real, virtual or fanciful.

I could be reduced to nothing by a chance encounter with the feminine. For me, God's masterpiece was literally an instant black hole that could whoosh my spirit back to the beginning of time. There was no sense of self to anchor me in the practical now. The very one who deprived me of authentic being could eviscerate me in my adulthood.

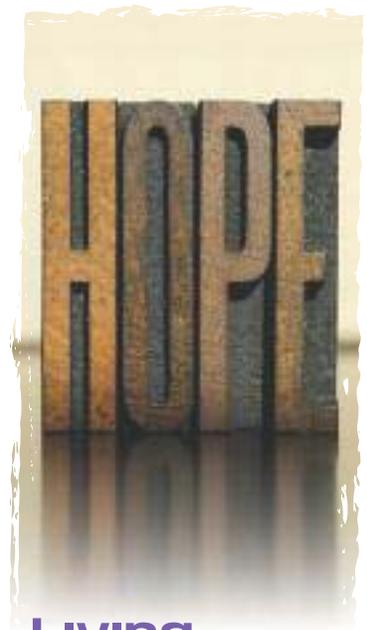
I lived in a confusion of love, hate, anger, attraction and non-being. My empty self and empty vows were destroying me and my marriage. Dear God! Bring me home to myself! Show me the real me and help me survive as I really am! Recently the daughter most wounded by our move to the community, now in her early 40s, erupted in rage at my wife and I for our differences. She challenged all that we were and all that we had held together by personal sacrifice, for the sake of commitment to our marriage and family.

She felt all the hollowness and striving and called us to see the truth she saw. Her most violent rage was directed at her mother for not "getting" me and for her taking sanctuary in the "religion" she felt led us to the community that shattered her world.

When she came by the next day to apologize, by the grace of God, something changed in me. I saw that I could not allow that kind of violence to be directed at my wife ever again. I told my daughter she could pound on my chest with her fists all she needed to but she could NOT attack her mother as she had.

In that moment, I saw and accepted the feminine as something other than my mother could express in her glamorous, tough exterior. God's masterpiece was open, receptive, accepting and vulnerable. She needed to be guarded and protected, to flourish in what she could not change—her genuine nature.

Feminine warmth and creativity was to be nurtured in a protected space. I needed to be the man to allow that to happen for my wife. I needed to echo Christ and His Church to her, to drink of living waters and, with her, be the Image of God we were created to be. 



Living Waters has provided a context for healing in my life. In calling me to open, learn and lead, it has shown the way from lonely isolation to honest, loving community.

Hope for the Other

I am currently an intern at Desert Stream Ministries, having walked out of the homosexual lifestyle and much unhealthy same sex attraction.

I've been on an intense healing journey for about three years now, so I didn't really know what God had for me during the Living Waters training. Boy did He surprise me!

Growing up I was in a traumatic household—both my parents being codependent drug addicts. Many family members, especially males, were also addicts who did not know how to meet my needs for healthy intimacy. Unfortunately, I was never really exposed to the beauty of the true masculine.

Through Catholic college fellowship groups I began to let my guard down a bit towards men. I had some decent friendships with a few men with whom I felt comfortable.

At the training there were many men, almost all of whom were older than me. This was triggering for me. I tried to just smile and be as friendly and Christ-like

to them as possible. During the teaching on "Offering the Gift", it hit me like a ton of bricks. I could finally see reality for what it was.

Andy spoke the simple yet so revealing words, "Gender matters!! The devil wants you separated from the opposite sex. We need healthy intimacy with them!" I finally understood. I needed to develop even stronger trust in men. And not only that, I had masked my sinning against them as 'boundaries.'

I wholeheartedly believe in boundaries. But I misused them. Let me share with you a little conversation I had with God at that point: "God, You of all know that men have wounded me in deep ways. You know that I'm only comfortable with so much."

The Lord gently responded, "Let me take your walls down. You can't fully know who you

are as a woman until you know the masculine—you need to see what you are missing from them and to stay open to what you can offer. Repent in not loving my beloved sons."

My heart cried, "Yes, Lord. Okay, Lord. But surely I am not in the wrong. I have not sinned against them!" And finally He gently reminded me, "It is possible to wound others through the wounding you've received. I understand it and I forgive it, but that doesn't make it right."

A light bulb went on! I had a layer of misandry I believed was totally justifiable. Now my eyes are open and the Lord is opening my heart more and more to intentionally loving my brothers in Christ. I repented to my Father and to my brothers in the room that next day. What a beautiful teaching and life lesson! 🙏

Hope for New Identity

In 1999, I was grateful to find a Living Waters program to help me sort out my gender confusion and same-sex attraction. My relational idolatry had separated me from God, whom I dearly loved.

I had been in an eight-year relationship with a woman who was equally broken. We both needed God's help. I felt Him grieving over me day after day, and could no longer bear that grief any longer.

Through the Living Waters teaching, He began to show me that I was trying to meet an

unmet need with someone who could never fill the need. I experienced healing prayer in my small group. The women leaders were an extension of God as they spoke truth into my being.

I was learning to receive from God: His nurturing love and His compassion for me. Once I was more secure in His love, He

began to show me whom He had created me to be. It was fun as He and I discovered who I was, what I liked, and that as Andrew says: "I was a good enough gift".

I no longer needed to define myself in comparison to someone I envied. I was free from comparing myself with others!

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Hope FOR Purity

Before I met my wife, I had what you could call a “hardcore” porn addiction which included habitual masturbation. When I started dating my wife, I stopped looking at porn but began acting out sexually with her.

I received counseling at First Stone (www.firststone.org) and for the first time heard someone talking clearly about how we are supposed to relate with each other sexually. We struggled to remain pure in our sexual relationship until we got engaged and for a time things were going well.

We got married and for the first few years I was able to maintain purity from a “gotta serve my family” sort of motivation. As that motivation began to wear off, I became entitled. I could look at what I wanted.

I became good at deception. I would search for things on the internet very “innocently” or what would seem innocent to any internet reporting tool.

Being blessed with a highly intuitive wife, she would ask me if everything was ok. The typical conversation would involve me lying, then cold sweating. Finally, I would reluctantly confess to her with an hour-long conversation and sleepless night to follow.

I opened myself up to people, mainly as a fallback to confess whenever I fell. Typically, a confession represented several weeks of consistent failure.

After the third or fourth time of this happening, my wife suggested I attend Living Waters. I thought highly of First Stone and Living Waters because of the events I attended and some relationships my wife and I had built there. I had even joined my wife on occasion to help lead worship at LW and a few First Stone events.

But committing to a full year!? A counseling session? Sure. A weekend event? Why not, we aren’t doing anything else. Living Waters? That’s almost a year’s worth of meetings! I work full time! And it’s 4 hours a night! Blah Blah Blah...

I reluctantly went the first few times with a bad attitude. I tried not to look too many people in the eye, and conversed with no-one. I was there to do my duty, to pay my penance. After all, wasn’t I better than all of these people? I mean, I didn’t wear my sin as outwardly as these other people, right? After all, I had been a worship leader here right...

The LORD began to humble me. I began to lighten up and receive what the leaders and materials were bringing through the LORD.

When small groups formed, we were given the opportunity to tell why we were at Living Waters and to confess. The opportunity to confess in that environment was huge. Not only to confess, but to get prayed for was awesome.

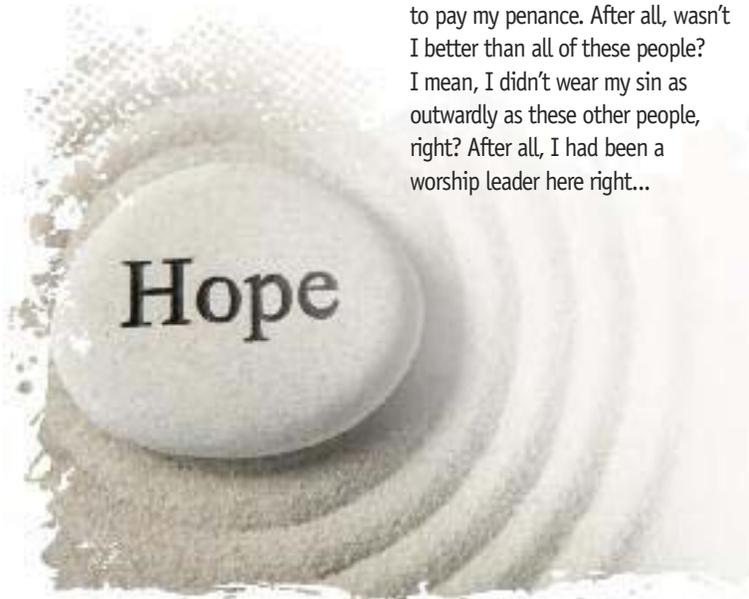
I think sometimes confessing when no one else is confessing can be hard. It can feel like you are the only one who fails. The environment at Living Waters feels more like a confession culture, which I think in this context is healthy. My reluctance to confess became a healthy expectancy to confess to my brothers in the small group. This was my biggest take away from Living Waters—the power of confession and the power of praying for fellow strugglers in the spirit of James 5:16.

Since that time, there have been failures, but I have been living with more freedom now than I have since before I was a teenager! That’s a long time.

Sort of unrelated to my sexual freedom was a convergence of our church life and my time at Living Waters. Through the ministry and teaching of my pastor, prayer, and the worship time at LW, I received the gift of tongues for the first time. It was a moment of great intimacy between God and me. I will never forget it: a sense of peace and love washed over me as the Spirit began speaking through me to the Father. What a time! 🙏



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Hope for Restored Faith

I was standing in the middle of the room weeping and crying out to God. Annette had just shared about how bitterness ruins marriages. My heart was undone. I had justifiable reasons to be angry.

On our wedding day, we'd pledged to love each other and God. Christ had been the center of our wedding day. Christ had been the center of our dating relationship.

We had moved to Kansas City to get trained for ministry. How was it that 15 months into our marriage, Chad stopped believing in God? How does that even happen? How does a Christ lover become a lost agnostic? When Chad left God, he left me. That's what my heart said, anyway.

These were questions and accusations that swirled constantly through my brain. Annette spoke on forgiveness, and my heart broke. I knew I needed to go forward for prayer. I had so much love mixed with resentment and pain towards Chad. I wanted to be clean. The deep resentments and accusations were poisoning my soul. Even if Chad never changed, I wanted to love him and be clean.

I left Chad sitting in his seat, and I moved forward to receive prayer. There were many waiting to receive prayer that night, and I waited in the shadows, weeping. My eyes were blinded by my tears, when someone came up behind me and put their arms around me. I turned. It was my husband. He enveloped me into his loving embrace. We stood there, clinging to each other for what seemed like hours. It was only minutes really. With tears mixing, we both spoke of our love to each other. That night, I let something go that needed to go.

You see, our struggle related to Chad's struggle with God, lasted for 12 years. This night was probably around year 7 or 8. We both knew that we needed what this class taught. We needed to trust God, even a God my husband was not ready to believe in, and release our bitterness into the cross.

Chad eventually returned to the Lord. Actually, the Lord revealed himself to Chad in such a way that Chad could not refuse.

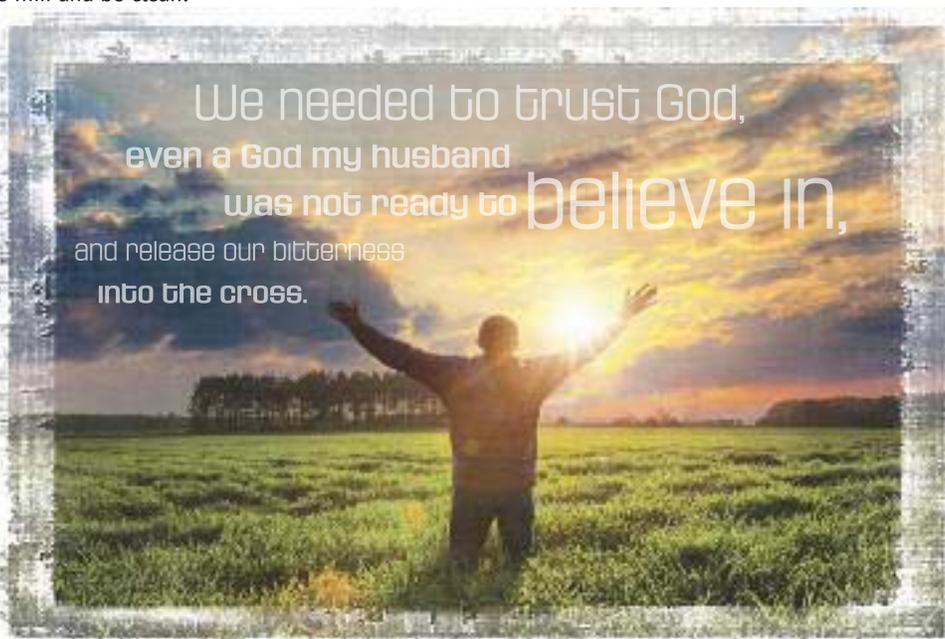
We took the Beauty and Breach class a second time, just months after Chad's return. We walked through more pain and forgiveness each week as we met for class. Beauty and the Breach gave us the tools to release the pain to Jesus and open our hearts to each other once again.

We are now missionaries in Uganda. Our entire family of 5 ministers to orphans. We are grateful not only Beauty and the Breach but for Living Waters as well (which we went through a combined three times). These groups gave us the tools to release sin and pain. They gave us the tools to stand uprightly with Jesus and trust Him, even when we're faced with pain and suffering. 



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Hope FOR Forgiveness

At age 24, I returned home from working out of state to discover a new Spirit living in my Dad. Even his physical appearance had transformed, and he now bore the tender Spirit of the Living God. While I was away for the summer, God had removed the scales from my father's eyes and allowed him to see the evil he was participating in.

Over the next year, I lived at home while pursuing continued education, and witnessed both massive change for the better in my parents' relationship, as well as remnants of what I perceived to be deep pain. A few days shy of my 25th birthday, after nearly a year of noting the happenings between my parents, I inquired more, only to discover the devastating truth. Both my parents had been involved in extramarital affairs at different times throughout their marriage. The standards held for me of faith and righteous living had been broken by the most-trusted individuals in my life.

After a time of intense mourning, and the personal challenge of Jesus Christ, I decided that forgiveness was my non-negotiable choice. Jesus spoke to my heart and said, "If you want to follow Me, you must be about what I am about. And I am about forgiveness." (Of course, with any challenge or boundary line of Jesus, there also comes great blessing for us.)

As I thought about how this horrible situation would be remedied, I remember my spirit inquired as Peter did in John 6: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Where else would I go? I knew Jesus was my only hope for setting things right.

Despite my decision to forgive early on, I also knew I had to work through my deep anger and pain. As I began a rigorous senior year, I knew I did not have time at present to properly heal. I decided that upon graduation, I would do whatever it took to forgive—this included going to professional counseling, spending time in the Word of God, listening to Him, allowing His Spirit to walk me through my wounds and counsel me, and letting wise counsel in to help facilitate healing.

A good friend shared with me his journey as an intern at Desert Stream, and encouraged me to read *Strength in Weakness* by Andrew Comiskey. Hungry to reconcile the sexual and relational brokenness I was encountering with the redemption of Christ, I devoured the book and pursued Desert Stream, to see if I might stuff envelopes for them in exchange for getting to spend time at their ministry.

I was able to intern for them, and that summer was the pivot point of my healing. In the mornings, I would do whatever little tasks were needed, participate in confession & prayer with staff, and study John 4 (Samaritan woman at the well) with Ann Armstrong and other women. I also spent weekly time with Ann, listening to

the Holy Spirit with her, and seeking the One and Only True Healer—Christ Jesus.

Jesus and His Spirit exposed lies and showed me the true beauty that existed in my parents; He tenderly led me into truth and full forgiveness. Desert Stream was my facilitator, but Jesus Christ is the one to whom I owe every bit of healing I have achieved.

As time goes on, I am finding that at least once annually I must fight against resurgent anger and pain, and the temptation to step back into the prison of un-forgiveness. But if I am willing, Jesus Christ ALWAYS will hoist me on His back & carry me as together we do battle against these arrows of the enemy.

Meanwhile, my parents are my heroes—they have humbled themselves before the Lord, and He has and still is fully restoring their marriage. They are seeking the Lord harder than ever as a couple. In their humble selflessness, and die-hard spirit, my parents have given me and my family the legacy of Christ's restoration. If you ask them, they are adamant to acknowledge that it is Christ to whom they owe their marriage, their healing hearts, and their ability to persevere. I am forever thankful. 🙏



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He tenderly led me into truth and full forgiveness...

Jesus Christ is the one to whom I owe every bit of healing I have achieved.

Hope for Healing

One day about 17 years ago, I woke up to a spiritual train wreck. I had been a faithful wife and mother, as well as a hard-working Christian servant.

It was near the end of our church's 40-day fast when all of a sudden, liberally out of the blue, I woke up angry and hated everything about my life. Nothing was different, but everything had changed. I was bewildered and terrified.

Thank God for Living Waters! I was accepted in the next program and spent the 30+ weeks immersed in everything Living Waters. It was glorious. It was torture. The wonderful leaders patiently and tenderly helped me unravel years of unprocessed sin and hurt, buried under more years of "good girl" religious activity. I fell in love with Jesus again and learned how to simply "be."

Fast-forward to Wednesday, October 15, 2014, shortly after 3:00pm. Jesus healed my neck. Oh Hallelujah!

It was the first day of the 40-day "Pierced for the Bride" prayer and fast, and I had been looking forward to joining the DSM team at their offices to pray. As we settled in after a time of worship and confessing our sins, I felt I needed to get very low before our Savior. I bowed my head and couldn't get low enough.

The pain in my neck was constant and excruciating—it was from an old injury some 35 year prior. I thought to myself, "I will bow this old stiff neck if it kills me!" In a flash, a memory of a

previous healing came to mind, where I had made a similar vow to offer up my pain to the Lord "if it killed me." Immediately I thought, "Lord, are you healing my neck?" Instantly I felt a slight sensation on my neck, as if oil was being poured on me. And then I knew: my neck was healed! All pain was gone and full range of motion was restored without pain!

Later in the day as I sat in my car mulling all this over, I got the impression that the Lord was saying to me, "Contend for your healing! You are an object lesson."

A few days later, my husband and I met a man who had recently undergone failed surgery. As we talked with him, the pain in my neck returned. I very quietly "contended" for my healing in prayer and the pain lifted. I immediately excused myself to be alone with the Lord.

I had the distinct impression that the man had a spirit of infirmity and it tried to jump on me. Because I resisted that spirit by contending in prayer, it left. Since the Lord said I am an "object lesson," I believe this in-

cident has application for others, both physically and spiritually.

The day Jesus healed my neck He answered an old question. I never understood what had happened the day I woke up to my train wreck 17 years before. As I worshipped Him in my car, thanking Him for healing my neck, I suddenly understood that all those years ago at Living Waters He had answered my prayer and delivered me from the Fear of Man, nothing less than a religious spirit, a demon. When the demon was gone, my whole paradigm shifted and nothing was the same.

I believe we are in the Last Days. I believe the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds (2Cor 10:4). I believe that DSM is the point of an arrow for such a time as this. Our culture has said "yes" to wickedness, but we say "Yes" to the Lord!! Jesus is alive and well and is helping His Bride ready herself for His return. She will be beautiful, she will be ready, and she will be equally yoked to Him.

To God be the glory for the great things He has done! 

Hope For A New Identity

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I was free to love others for who they were without demanding they meet my needs. It was and is amazing!

My testimony is different from yours. But when Jesus asked me, as He did persons in the New Testament: "Do you want to be healed?" my answer to Jesus was "YES! I want to be fully healed! "

And He has done it. I now identify as a woman of God, a Christ follower. I am not a gay celibate; my identity is in Christ. I asked God for more, and He gave me more! 

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Art Direction
Immanuel Communications

Desert Stream Ministries publishes the following:
 Newsletter (Spring and Fall)
 Mid-Year Report (Summer)
 Year-End Report (Winter)

Mission Statement

Based on the biblical foundations of compassion, integrity, and dependence on God, Desert Stream Ministries proclaims to the world the transforming power of Jesus Christ. We equip the body of Christ to minister healing to the sexually and relationally broken, through healing groups and leadership training for the local church.

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