

Adventure In Divine Submission

by Mike Hawkins - Now Present With The Lord Jesus Christ

Why would someone CHOOSE to be a homosexual? Why would they choose a life of rejection and scorn from so many different areas of society and God? Why would they become involved in something destined to bring so much heartache to their life? Many believe, as I did, that there is no other way; that they were born that way and must accept that there can't be any other way for them.

There were many influences which made the "gay" life-style seem like my only option. Since I was a small child I can remember being attracted to other males. I wanted desperately to find friends of the same sex to identify with and just play together. As hard as I would try, though, it seemed I could never fit in. I wasn't athletic or very coordinated physically, so if all the guys were playing sports I was always on the outside looking in. When teams were formed in school, I was always the last to get picked because if I was on the team, they usually lost. Because of this, I was ridiculed often and teased about being a sissy. Over and over again I was made to feel as if I was not worthy of being a boy, so I played with the girls. I began to act more and more like a girl, which only brought further isolation from other boys in my school and neighborhood.

As I became more isolated from other males, it became the one area of my life where I had the greatest need. I needed guy friends and wanted their friendships so badly. I wanted to be a part of what I saw all the other guys around me doing. Learning of my sexuality in adolescence, I mistook my desire for bonding with other males as a sexual desire and felt a great deal of guilt, which only served to lessen my self esteem, making me feel even more unworthy to be a man. With my masculine identity destroyed, the next step to becoming involved in sexual activity was easy. I found an outlet to soothe my need for compassion and friendship with other guys. The more I became involved in homosexuality, I began to believe that this was what my life was supposed to be. Since I had desired male friendships since I was so young, I believed that I had been born a homosexual and had no other options to fulfill the need for same sex love that all of us have.

I was raised in a Christian home. I had been taught the Bible since I was a child and knew what it had to say about homosexuality. But I couldn't imagine that if God was love and all I was wanting was love, how could homosexual love be wrong? I struggled with this issue most of my teenage years and into early adulthood. Eventually, I chose to abandon my faith and seek out fulfilling my homosexual desires. I felt that I would find love and fulfillment there, since all the church had to offer for my needs was condemnation and guilt.

My parents were heartbroken at my choices as I told them I was living in a homosexual life-style. They responded differently than I had expected in many ways, though. My dad, being involved in church work since I was 8 years old, was very conservative in his faith. He devoted himself to his ministry and his faith with such conviction that I knew he would reject me and never want anything else to do with me. I was certain that I had been "disinherited" from the family. But, he and Mom surprised me! They said, "We can't accept your life-style and what you have chosen for your life. We believe it is sinful and wrong and it hurts us very much. But we will never stop loving you. We want to be a part of your life, so please don't shut us out. We love you and will be here for you when you need us."

I put that promise to the test many times over the next few years and brought my parents a great deal of pain in the process. They never did abandon me, no matter how much I hurt them. They demonstrated the true love of God that they believed in with all their hearts. I know this was not easy, because I would tell them how much I despised and hated them. I would do things deliberately to make them cry and to disappoint them over and over again. But they were always there for me. I slowly began to see that what I was looking for in homosexuality was never going to be realized apart from Jesus Christ. It was His love, displayed through Mom and Dad, that I needed to fulfill my desire to be loved and to give love.

I finally came to the realization that my homosexuality was a choice and that there were other options for my life. I could find the fulfillment I needed in male-to-male friendships without homosexual expression. In I Corinthians 6:9-11, a verse that had often been used for condemnation, I found redemption and salvation. Verse 11 says, "And such were some of you, but you have been washed, you have been cleansed, you have been sanctified by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ." I saw in that verse that there had been people even in the earliest church who had been homosexual, but Jesus had delivered them. It was possible to change.

Abandoning homosexuality was not easy. But, the closer I grew to Jesus, the easier my battle became. There were many who loved and ministered to me and who stood beside me the whole way. I can think of one friend, Keith, who was just a friend. He spent time with me, prayed with me and taught me in many ways how to reclaim my masculinity. He helped me find my worth as a man. People coming out of homosexuality need to learn how to develop relationships, and as Christians we should be like Keith, ready and willing to reach out and embrace in the love of Christ those who need His love through us.

I stand free of homosexuality today by the grace of Jesus and His power to truly change our hearts. David says "Create in me a pure heart, Oh God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you." Psalms 51:10 - 13(NIV).

God truly has created a pure heart within me and I am eternally grateful for His love. About a year after I made a commitment to leave homosexuality, I got the dreaded news that I was HIV positive. HIV is the virus which causes AIDS. God knew of my commitment to change my life. Why did He have to allow this to happen to me? AIDS is a frightening disease, and I assumed my life would be over instantly. As I began to learn about this disease, I discovered that I had several years left. One of my biggest fears was whether or not I could potentially infect those I loved. I soon learned that casual day to day contact would not put anyone at risk for infection. The only way I could infect someone else was if they came into contact with my blood or through sex. One of the strongest emotions I felt was anger. Anger at God for allowing this to happen in my life. Anger that I would have to face the homosexual issue seemingly for the rest of my life. Anger for the shame that I felt. This anger produced rebellion and for a while I really struggled to find my identity all over again. But God is gracious and provided key people in my life to guide and direct me and pull me back into His loving arms.

In December of 1991, I was diagnosed with full blown AIDS. This meant that my immune system was no longer able to fight off common infections in the environment. I had become infected with a disease, histoplasmosis, that people with healthy immune systems could easily fight, but my immune system was no longer strong enough. This infection ravaged my body and within days had begun to destroy every major organ in my body. Finally the doctor told my parents that she didn't think I would recover and that it was time to call the family to come say their last good-bye.

Up until this time we had told no one that I had AIDS. We were so afraid of the rejection that we might face that we just kept it to ourselves. Now, my parents and I were faced with a burden we could no longer hide and we needed to have the support of our friends and loved ones. We began to reach out and tell others that I had AIDS and was not expected to live. Instead of the rejection we expected, we found that our church, our friends and our family rallied around us and gave us the support we so desperately needed. People began to pray. They began to pray that God would heal and preserve my life. All across the nation prayers began going up to God that He would step in and do what the doctors couldn't. God answered those prayers and a few days later I was well enough to go home from the hospital. God healed me of histoplasmosis and has preserved my health since. I still have AIDS. I have almost no immune system at all, yet God's grace continues to keep me healthy and active most of the time. Now my question is not, "Why did God allow this to happen to me?" rather, "How does God want to use this in my life?" In II Corinthians 12:7-9 He showed me the answer.

"...There was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me lest I should be exalted above measure. Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my sickness, that

the power of Christ may dwell in me."

God has provided many opportunities for me to share my experience with others. He has taken the tragedy and despair of AIDS and turned it into a powerful tool of his grace and mercy. In sharing my story with others, I have seen many come to a deeper relationship with God. I have seen young people commit their lives to waiting until they are married to have sex and avoiding the risks of also becoming infected with this virus. I have seen my own relationship with God take on a new intimacy I might never have experienced without AIDS. While AIDS is a disease of death, it also teaches us how to really live! AIDS has brought me closer to my family and has been a catalyst to repair so many relationships. That is what Paul means about power perfected in weakness. That is why he says 'I will rather boast about my sickness...'. I have learned that God is bigger than all life's problems and troubles. He is bigger than homosexuality. When I thought there was no way out he provided the way. He is bigger than AIDS. When I thought my life was over he taught me how to live and continues to protect my body from death.

AIDS has become more than just

Acquired

Immune

Deficiency

Syndrome.

In my life it now is an...

Adventure

In

Divine

Submission.

AIDS has taught me that if I will just submit my life, my frustrations, my problems, worries and fears to God on a daily basis, He is faithful to meet all my needs and I am able to "boast about my sickness that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

Mike Hawkin's Obituary

William Michael "Mike" Hawkins was born December 14, 1964, and died of AIDS, July 27, 1995, at the age of 30 years, 7 months and 13 days.

He came to Patsy and Marlin Hawkins at 4 days old, directly out of a hospital nursery in Amarillo, Texas. He finished high school at Putnam City High School in 1983 and attended two years of college at Central State University. In both high school and college, Mike was active in music and drama, played the piano and sang both solos and with musical groups.

Mike's work career included managing Oak Tree stores in Oklahoma City and Little Rock, Ark. At the time Mike became sick suffering from AIDS, he was managing Hollywood Portraits in Little Rock. In January 1992, Mike founded and became the first director of Christian AIDS Network (CAN), a division of First Stone Ministries. CAN is based upon the scriptural admonition, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). CAN is an organization designed to minister to AIDS patients, provide support groups for family and friends of AIDS victims, and provide AIDS education in churches, schools, university student unions, and PTAs.

Mike was a popular speaker, sharing his testimony of deliverance from homosexuality, always emphasizing the Biblical truths that:

(1) homosexuality is a sin.

(2) homosexuality is a choice, not a genetically inherited trait, and

(3) freedom from homosexuality is not a plan but a person and that person is Jesus Christ.

AIDS stand for "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome," but for Mike, AIDS stood for "Adventure In Divine Submission," an acronym Mike coined to describe his walk of faith. While at times he would question why he suffered from AIDS, he recognized as Paul said in II Corinthians 12:7 "...When I am weak, then am I strong."

In addition to his work with CAN and First Stone Ministries, Mike was a faithful member of Council Road Baptist Church and an active participant in the Career Singles Sunday School Department.

Mike is survived by his parents, Marlin and Patsy Hawkins of Oklahoma City; one brother, Stacy; sister-in-law, Tasha; nephew, Quinton; niece, Morgan, also of the City; grandmother, Lula Hawkins, Dill City; and a host of relatives and friends.