

# Homosexuality in the family

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The mother of a homosexual son  
tells the story of her adjustment  
to the situation  
and of her son's return to normalcy.

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By MEG TRUE

Two years ago we sat down quietly to the Thanksgiving dinner that special friends had prepared and sent us as an expression of their concern for us. There were five of us—Jewell, my son Rob's wife; their two children; my husband; and I. As we looked at one another, there were tears in our eyes and lumps in our throats so big that it seemed we could not swallow our food. But love had already won a battle for us, and from what seemed to be a distance I heard my voice saying, "They were so kind to prepare this meal for us, and they will be so disappointed if we don't have a good Thanksgiving, that we must eat it and try to enjoy it." And, because friends had cared enough to try to comfort us by their thoughtfulness, we were somehow able to lay aside our sorrow for a few minutes and enjoy our dinner.

For me, the nightmare had begun at six o'clock in the morning, two days before, when the telephone rang. My

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sleepiness vanished abruptly when I heard Jewell sob, "Mom, Rob didn't come home last night." I thought that there had to be some logical explanation, but she seemed so frightened that I told her to leave a note for Rob, telling him where she would be, and that dad would come and bring her to our house.

Two days later we still had not heard from him. It had been a stormy night when he disappeared, and we imagined all kinds of accidents. As time went on, and we heard nothing from him, our grief deepened. In our hearts we began to mourn him as dead.

Then our bewilderment grew when his car was found at an airport. But we were unable to trace him in any way. Now we knew that he probably was safe somewhere, but where? And why had he gone? We surmised that his emotional turmoil indeed must have been great for him to have left without notifying anyone and without taking clothing with him. It was many days later that we discovered what had brought the intense depression, desperation, and torment that had driven him clear across the continent in search of what he felt would be true acceptance and help.

Answering the telephone one evening, I heard Rob's voice. When my initial excitement had subsided, I tried to understand what he was telling me. He explained that he was involved in a church for "gays." He had been given shelter and other necessities, and was working and was having a wonderful spiritual experience in that church.

## Many in despair

Later I learned that many of the members of such churches would prefer to be in their home churches, but feel themselves unwelcome there. Some of them have prayed and prayed and found no change in themselves, and finally, in despair of ever being "normal," have accepted themselves as having been born homosexual, and have begun to believe that this state is "normal" for them. This is one rationalization that helps them to tolerate their "difference." Rob went through such an experience. These churches teach that homosexuality is normal, and, of course, Adventists cannot agree with that. However, until recently, evidence to lead people to

## A message from the author

How would you react if suddenly you were to discover that a member of your own family was a homosexual? It happened to me. Judging by statistics, there must be a number of Seventh-day Adventist homes that are going through such a trial. It is with such families in particular that I am sharing my experience. But others too need to consider or possibly reconsider what should be their attitude to families in trouble and to the homosexual in particular.

What I am telling is a true account of my experience in relating to a homosexual son; it is an account of his search for peace of mind, of his struggle to overcome the problem, and of the spiritual realizations that helped us both. It is written with his full approval and encouragement. Although I am writing only of recent events in his life, we can look back to specific instances in his earlier life and plainly see

God's leading and loving care during that period as well.

As I write this article my prayer is that:

1. Those in similar trouble may find understanding and hope to help them in their trial.
2. Those not in such trouble may be led to a better understanding of, and Christian charity toward, the homosexual and his family. After all, the homosexual is a person, as they are, only with a different sin, and therefore, with a different kind of heartache.
3. All will believe the important and joyous news that a homosexual can become heterosexual. Many do not believe this is possible, but it is. God not only is the Creator; He is the Re-Creator. He worked a miracle for my son, and to God he is surely no more special than are others with the same problem.

believe otherwise has been limited, because, owing to the social stigma attached to any homosexual association, those who have been cured have not felt free to let it be known publicly.

For documentation on this point I refer you to a forthcoming issue of *Insight* magazine (March 21, 1978), and particularly to an article by Colin Cooke, who offers statistics and who cites a report that tells of more than 200 persons who have become completely heterosexual, possessing all the normal instincts toward the opposite sex (page 11).

Rob did not find the answer to his yearnings in that "gay" church. Eventually he found his way to a Seventh-day Adventist pastor in the area, who helped him realize that it would be possible for him to return home and pick up the pieces of his life again and go on. This he did, and, with the help of counseling, he and his wife found a way to keep their home together.

During Rob's absence, our family had grown closer together, and each member was able to accept him with love and to rejoice when he returned.

We realized that this was no "young boy" problem that we were dealing with. It was a deadly serious matter that easily could lead to death itself if the associated depression deepened enough. Until now we had had neither a true realization of the enormous battle going on within him, nor of how alone and "different" he believed himself to be, nor of the feeling of guilt he carried. My son was not dead, but the son that I thought I had was dead. In many ways this man who had returned was a stranger.

Although we, and this included his wife, could accept him, and were trying very, very hard to understand him and his problem, we found that others who were less involved were unable to bridge the gap.

One of the hard things for me to bear was the discovery that as these other people gained knowledge of the problem a change came in their attitude toward him, and sometimes toward us, too.

It made me very sad when I saw the hurt look in Rob's eyes as he told me that Mr. and Mrs. Friend no longer spoke to him. Or that he felt that his presence in the church was an offense to Mr. and Mrs. Straight, and that they didn't attend church if they thought he might be there. These attitudes made his feeling of self-worth drop lower and lower, and as it did, he became more and more defensive, even to the point of arrogance, which made it even more difficult for people to be his friend. Thus his "problem" became even more troublesome for him than before. The loss of friends was a real sorrow to him and to us.

### **A vicious circle**

I strongly believe that if a person is to change, it will be love that will accomplish it, not scorn, fear, and rejection. When we scorn and reject another person we are doing it unto Christ, as truly as we are doing good to Him when we help another person.

It is a vicious circle. The more "unacceptable" the person becomes, the more he needs acceptance. People need to look beyond the thing that looms so large now, and see the value of a person. Only God can correct the problem of homosexuality. We need to trust Him to do it in His own way, and in His own time, as the person

cooperates with Him. A Christian's part is to continue loving the homosexual, not because of the things he does or does not do, but because he is a person.

As involved family members stop "bucking" so hard against the whole situation, they will find that God will help them by supplying them with the love they need for their dear one who is "different," and for those who condemn him.

Which brings up the subject of forgiveness. It is my firm belief that the price of unforgiveness is too high, and I refuse to pay it by accepting a snub. Yes, people may offer snubs. In our case, my son has been the recipient of several direct snubs. I have experienced only a sudden cooling and withdrawal of friendships. In these instances I have been helped by asking God to forgive me for being hurt by the people's attitude and to forgive them, also. In my thinking I silently assure them that I forgive them, and I tell myself that I forgive myself, too. This procedure seems to work well for me.

### **Willingness to forgive**

I believe also that it is important that we allow God to free us of unforgiveness toward the one who first introduced our loved one to homosexual practices. We probably don't know who the person is, but I feel we still need to forgive that unknown person. The question still remains, Why did Rob respond in the way he did?

A person may be hurt by the attitude of some people in the church. Because a parent sees a homosexual through different eyes, he may not be aware that his child is seen by church members as a threat, because they are afraid that he will lead their sons astray.

Others in the church, I believe, are honestly unaware that they are being self-righteous and unkind in their treatment of the homosexual in their midst. They are trying to be "good" and are afraid they might be offending God by approving sin, if they were to accept the homosexual as he is. They do not understand, and hence they fear him and the sin that he represents. Because this is a sex sin, they see it differently from other sins, and they see their own particular sins as less offensive. They forget that the homosexual too may be yearning desperately for a change within himself, but he too has accepted the idea that a sex sin is the worst kind of all, and he hates himself so intensely for it that he can't believe that God loves him. When he finally does begin to believe that God loves him, in spite of all, then he can respond to help.

One of the greatest fears of the homosexual is the fear of rejection, and because of this fear he often wears a "coat of advance defense" that draws to him the very thing he fears. He fears to make friends, lest they reject him if they find out about his problem. He fears rejection by his family, his wife, everybody. And he rejects himself. The hurting part for the family is that he probably learned this in his home originally.

Some may wonder why we did not do a better job of rearing our son so that this would not have happened. I am sure that other mothers besides me have searched their minds over and over, to learn why and where they failed. I have wondered whether Rob's deviation was caused by some prenatal influence or medicine I had taken. Was it because of bad thoughts I had harbored? Because he wasn't petted enough as a baby? Was he

petted too much? Was it because I had to work? Was it because we had too many children? Were we too strict? Too lenient? Too what?—on and on. *And on.*

Of course the truth is that the mother is only partly responsible. The father's attitude toward the boy or girl (although in this article I am talking about male homosexuals specifically and not about lesbians) has an impact too. The child's place in the family plays a part. Was he the oldest, in the middle, or elsewhere? Was it the family's economic status at the time of his greatest needs? His friends, his success as a student, all enter into it, and help mold his feelings of rejection. His own exercise of choice counts in this also. Why one son reacts to his place and circumstances in life as he does and other members of the family are "straight" is a mystery.

### **Guilt can be dropped**

But the wonder of it all is that mothers can drop the burden of guilt they are carrying and the homosexual son can drop his guilt and become heterosexual, which is the way God created human beings. The problems of both are basically spiritual. In my next article I will talk more about God's ways of taking care of this, and about realizations that have helped us.

I have spoken here of unhappiness caused by people who lack understanding and compassion. I should like to speak also of the many other friends who have stood by us faithfully, even though they did not understand. They too do not approve of the practice of homosexuality. (And perhaps I should state here that by "practice" I include not only the actual physical practice but the mental practice, as well. Jesus did not seem to distinguish sharply between sinful thought and sinful acts. Either way, one's soul is in jeopardy.)

These latter friends have been steady, and have helped in whatever way they could. Sometimes this has meant only lending a listening ear. This is important, because one stands very much alone in this situation. Talking something out is a form of therapy, and this is restricted in this type of problem. Along the way there have been pastors, doctors, and counselors who expressed Christian love by hours spent in trying to help Rob. These people were concerned enough about him, as a person, to help him carry on. Without that concern, I doubt that he would be alive now. May God lead all homosexuals to the right person at the right time!

I realize that there are those who say that we should go only to God with our problems. However, it is my belief that God heals only a few people miraculously; with most, He expects us to use the healing facilities He has directed the church to provide. Rob's cure (or conversion) is by God's power, and is no less a forgiving and healing because understanding and support were given by Christian counselors who helped him over the critical spots.

I know it is not easy to reveal one's true self to another, but a counselor's role is not one of judging, it is one of helping and encouraging. The lay person is often unaware of how critical certain aspects are in the life of a homosexual. I have been told that the highest suicide rate is among homosexuals. How much sorrow and heartache and despair that represents! And how it must grieve God's heart to have it happen! □

*Concluded next week*

# Homosexuality in the family-2

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Concluding her story, the mother  
of a homosexual son tells of the  
spiritual insights that brought  
them both victory.

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See also editorial page 18.

By MEG TRUE

To return to Rob's disappearance. From it we gained a deeper understanding of the meaning of the parable of the prodigal son. We rejoiced at his return. We did not ask him to do anything, bring anything, or offer promises for the future. Despite his disappearance, we still loved him, had prayed for him, and had yearned for his return. And if human love was able to do that and span the gap, how much greater is God's ability to love the erring. The father yearned for his prodigal son as much while the son was away, living in sin, as he had earlier or did later. All the son could bring to the father when "he came to himself" was his failure and shame and *himself*. But that was all the father needed, and he took over then and provided all else. This is a wonderful Bible story, because the father is God, representing Himself in a way that we can understand. By this illustration those of us who have failed can be sure that God will accept us when we turn to Him. And if He, knowing what we are, can accept us, surely we too can accept ourselves. To do less is to deny Him.

Accepting oneself is the second step in a homosexual's becoming heterosexual. The first step is accepting God, as He is portrayed when He receives His prodigal son. The third step is thanking and praising God for having provided all things necessary for one's needs. Jesus said, "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you" (Mark 11:24, N.A.S.B.). The last step is the living out of this praise in one's daily life.

God led Rob and me, each by various routes, to see Him as He is, and to realize that somehow we had misunderstood and were trying to overcome by allowing

Him only limited power in our lives. We were relying mostly upon our own self-control and were failing miserably.

Rob was functioning under the belief that the formula for success was not to yield to his urges, that he must live a moral, upright life, and that he wasn't sinning as long as he kept his will in an iron grip and was not a practicing homosexual. He believed that by the grace of God he should be able to overcome his evil tendencies. But, somehow, he envisioned *himself* as doing the overcoming, with God being only a strengthening force and standing by for crisis intervention. Only when he realized that being "straight" could be a gift of God, and that his part was to accept that gift, did he begin to recover.

Won't Rob have to "do" something to keep himself from reverting to his old ways?

Not in the sense that many of us think of "doing" something. However, he does have a response to make to his loving Father, who has provided the solution to his problem. This response will be his insurance in future crisis situations and his guarantee of success, and it consists of allowing God to convince him that in his basic nature he is heterosexual because God made human beings that way. In the book of Genesis it is stated that at Creation He made male and female (chap. 1:27). That surely would mean with a natural attraction for each other. Therefore, that attraction, when turned to members of one's own sex, is a deviation from God's plan, and as such is sin.

Rob must also make a response to God, we noted, by allowing Him to convince him that his sin has already been taken care of by Christ's sacrifice.

So, if Rob is basically heterosexual (not homosexual as

**"We need look for no outward evidence of the blessing. The gift is in the promise, and we may go about our work assured that what God has promised He is able to perform, and that the gift, which we already possess, will be realized when we need it most."—Education, p. 258.**

he had believed previously) and if on the cross Christ had already dealt with the problem of his sin, then what is the problem?

The problem is to allow God to bring His past accomplishment into present manifestation in Rob's life. His response to "doing" here is to accept God's overcoming and sustaining power. This is to be done through appreciation and thanksgiving and praise to Him for what He has already done and is still doing and will continue to do for him. So, it will not be Rob's overcoming his problem. It will be only his response to God's gift of his nature as it is in Him. I will discuss that a little further on, but first I should like to go back to original acceptance of God as a loving Father, and our acceptance of ourselves as we are.

To many it comes as a surprise when they are led to admit that they are angry people. Usually people feel that they are passive and self-controlled. And it is even more of a surprise to learn that they are not only angry, they

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are angry at God. By going this route Rob and I were both led to find peace of mind through acceptance of God as a kind, loving Father, and to find that we didn't have to work our way into His favor as we had thought. We were instructed that it was perfectly safe to tell God that we were angry with Him, that we didn't like the way He'd allowed things to happen in our lives, that we had prayed and were disappointed and angry when we could not see any replies from Him. We were also led to see that often when we were angry inside at others it was because we were substituting them in God's place, and when they failed us we were hurt and angry.

We also learned as we told Him of our feelings and as we told Him that we didn't like the feelings, that He did not strike us down. Instead, the resentments began to disappear by degrees, and He appeared to us in a different light. Gradually we came to realize that He wouldn't turn us away because of all the unloveliness within us or because of the things we had been doing. Our problems were different, but the same principle applied in solving them. We no longer had to hide things from God or from ourselves.

### Accepting ourselves

Next came the realization that if God loves us as we are, then we can accept ourselves because He accepts us. Then it was an easy step to accept another person, just as he is, without condemnation. We could trust this loving Father to take care of that person's wrongdoings and errors. It wasn't our burden. And we could start anew at the present point and forgive freely—not only forgive others but forgive ourselves. What a relief that was!

One way that God seems to have chosen for me to express or react to His acceptance of me and to express His love is for me to write these articles. A short time ago it would have been impossible. But now I can say for a fact that God's love is sufficient to carry a person through the upsetting experience of discovering homosexuality in his family. Even if the homosexual does not seem to be searching for help, you can still love him as he is and you can trust God to be in the midst of the problem to help and to care. Your loved one is God's problem, and He is big enough for the job. Your problem is how you react to the situation.

By his new understanding of the lovingness of God and of God's acceptance of him, the groundwork was laid for Rob to go on to the concept of total praise to God, and this was used to lead him over the top of his particular mountain, and should keep him there. I am quoting here from a letter from him that seems to express this concept:

"We [homosexuals] accept the concept of a kingdom of God and think of everything around us as being involved in that kingdom. That is, anything either adheres to, or goes away from, this kingdom. This would mean that, in the realm of homosexuality or anything else, since God's kingdom is perfect, when we choose to become part of that kingdom our perfection is guaranteed. We may not feel it yet. We may have urges and impulses the other way, but in the reality of God's kingdom we are what He wants us to be. Everything that happens to us from then on God can turn for our good. If we are a part of God's kingdom God can turn the worst thing that can happen into good. Looking at it that way,

God can turn into a 'good' the fact that I grew up with problems. Now I am coming to understand that, because of those problems, I'll be able to help other people, because I can witness to the fact that God is a Re-Creator.

"With the kingdom concept we should associate a praise concept. I am learning that I should no longer pray a prayer such as, 'God help me to do this,' and 'God help me to do that,' or 'God, I'm so tempted and tried, that I am torn apart.' Instead, I pray, 'God, I thank You and praise You that You have already done [whatever I am asking].' For instance, 'I praise You and thank You that I am already totally heterosexual.'

"By praying in praise, I acknowledge that I am part of God's kingdom, and the fact of accomplishment is also acknowledged. Also, I am no longer struggling and fighting and battling. I am really saying, 'God, You did it.' And so I can take no credit for myself, and then the answer to my prayer comes. This ministry of praise places God on the throne of His kingdom, and by becoming part of that kingdom I do succeed and can know that I will continue to be successful. This concept is

based upon Scripture, and I have found that it works well.

"For instance, one day I met a person who would normally have attracted me. I praised God by saying, 'Lord, I praise You for a beautiful person and I praise You that I look at him with heterosexual eyes.' Immediately the attraction left me. I praise God that this method works! If at first it doesn't seem that there is a victory the thing to do is 'hang in there' and say: 'I thank You and praise You that it has been accomplished, even though I don't feel it at this moment.' This is using faith, and eventually it does work! Eventually the day arrives when a man knows that he is no longer homosexual. He is thinking heterosexually."

I believe that the concept that worked for Rob and me can be used also in other areas of life. Again, the steps are:

1. Accepting God (as a loving God!).
2. Accepting yourself (because to Him you are important).
3. Accepting His kingdom (through thanksgiving and praise).

#### 4. Living a life of praise to Him (by His power).

I think most Christians believe that in the last days homosexuality will increase rapidly. We need to remember that these homosexuals will be not a group of evil beings from nowhere set down in our midst. Among them may be some of our acquaintances, our church brothers, our blood brothers, our sons, our own husbands. Surely these people are on God's "wanted" list. They are His "lost sheep." I believe that there is a definite ministry to be done among this group.

#### **Helping the homosexual**

One way that I can serve in this ministry, I feel, is to speak up, whenever possible, in an effort to help people see homosexuals as persons whom God still loves, and to help others to realize that they can allow themselves to be friendly and loving toward them without jeopardizing themselves spiritually. Yes, I realize that there are evil homosexuals. Also, I realize that there are evil heterosexuals. My daughter-in-law has stated to me: "Many times I was unaware of Rob's unspoken plea of 'Please help me, don't hate me.'" I am sure that many people are unaware that this can be true of the homosexual in their midst.

Recently Jewell and the children sat down to Thanksgiving dinner with us again. This time Rob was with them. This man did not seem to be the same man who had gone away two years before. Gone was the faraway, dead-pan expression, the quietness, the aloofness. Instead, this man's eyes were alive. He was outgoing and

aware of others. He was happy! And he said, "I can truly say that the problem is completely under control." If his history follows the route of others he can expect some flashbacks as he goes through life, possibly somewhat comparable to those of an ex-smoker who can still remember and may have occasional urges to smoke. However, that person is not a smoker, and the habit is no longer in control of his life or of significance. Or perhaps God will free Rob of the flashbacks, too. It is in His hands.

Needless to say, his wife no longer lives under the constant shadow of fear and dread and her former feelings of rejection. Her increased peace of mind is strongly evident, and they are both encouraged by the prospect of a bright future together.

To those who are in any way involved in loving and caring for a homosexual, I can assure you in all sincerity that we serve what I call an impossible God—the greater the impossibility, the greater is His grace manifest in our lives to take care of it. He has carried us through nearly 20 years of unhappiness, but now we can truly praise Him for the experience. He has not failed us. Instead, He has enlarged our concept of love to an immeasurable degree.

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:24).

"For with God nothing shall be impossible" (chap. 1:37). □

*Concluded*