

You're Never Too Old to Change!

by Don W. Prichard

This first-person story was sent to us by a NARTH supporter whose life has been powerfully changed through counseling and the support of a ministry.

I have dealt with homosexual struggles since I was three. About one year ago, I finally became tired of its hold on me, and I decided enough was enough.

Now for the first time in my life, I am truly happy, at peace, and finally have the joy of the Lord in my heart. This is all a new experience for me. It feels as though I am in the process of being set free from a lifelong curse.

I first became aware of my same-sex attractions when I was three. At four, I was molested by two older boys who were brothers. I loved it and I wanted it to happen again. Finally, some attention from males! To my disappointment, this was a one-time occurrence. I was an effeminate and sickly child, and I lived with a perpetual obsession for the bodies of other men, especially men who had large biceps.

My relationship with my father was always distant, as he was ashamed of his unmasculine son. My mother kept me too close to her. In fact, except for a period of 14 years when I was out of state, the two of us lived together until her death at age 91.

Neither my father nor mother ever told me that they loved me, and I was never held or kissed. I also had a very distant relationship with my sister, my only sibling.

I was baptized when I was fifteen. I remember it well because I found the young handsome minister to be very appealing. The boy who influenced me to come to the church, Paul, was someone I was actually "carrying on" with sexually. That conversion experience didn't seem to have any impact on my teenage homosexuality. In fact, the highlight of my high school years continued to be the gym locker room.

Paul and my other high school friend eventually went on to marry and have children. I never did, but was always haunted with feelings of loneliness and emptiness.

Never during my life did I ever find the attention and love I was seeking. There's nothing "gay" about the gay lifestyle. Even a sixteen-year, monogamous homosexual affair brought no satisfaction. Then I was celibate for eleven years, and was so proud of myself.

However in 1996, I met my nemesis—a man twenty years younger than myself. I thought I had finally found someone who loved me; at least, he said he did. But the relationship was short-lived. He broke it off after three months, and about the same time, my mother died.

Then I became very ill with pneumonia and my ex-lover was having trouble with his housemate. I asked him to come and take care of me, and he agreed. He then became insistent that I move back with him to Atlanta's gay community.

But I didn't want to leave. I was already desperately depressed because of my illness and my mother's recent death. His complete rejection of me when I refused to move to Atlanta was the straw that broke the camel's back. I

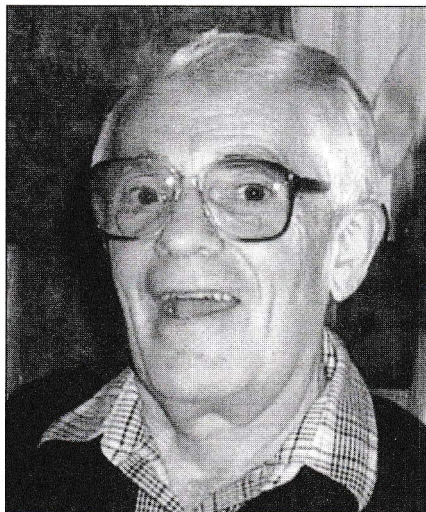
tried to take my life.

God mercifully spared me. He knew I had a story of healing and hope to tell. I knew after this horrible incident and a month's hospitalization that I had to take charge of my life and make some changes—pronto.

I wanted to deal with this lifelong curse I had endured from a thoroughly Christian perspective. So I contacted a ministry in Atlanta and began seeing a counselor there on a one-to-one basis. I also joined a counseling group for men coming out of a gay lifestyle.

Today, lust no longer has a tremendous hold on me. There are occasional difficult moments, but they are the exception, not the rule.

The most rewarding part of my homosexual recovery has been that I am finally making close male friends. This is a



"After years of sadness," Don Prichard says, "I finally have something to smile about."

new experience for me. Wouldn't you say it's about time at age 65? Having been rejected by men all my life, it's simply grand to know that many men really do like me. I can like them, too, with no sexual attraction to distract me. I am creating healthy relationships with males about whom I don't fantasize, with whom I don't fall in love, and for whom I do not have lust. I can now hug a burly man and not get "sexcited."

Recently I was in a prayer circle with a man on either side of me. I handled it with no sexual arousal whatsoever. That's a first. Can I say I'm proud of myself and still be humble? I feel like I'm "one of the boys" for the first time ever. And I have become less reliant on my numerous platonic girlfriends.

In seeking out male companionship, I have had to take the initiative. Even though I've feared rejection, I've gone ahead and made the first move, and haven't been rebuffed yet. I find most heterosexual men are open to Christian fellowship. I'm not a sports enthusiast and never will be, but we still have plenty to talk about.

A man recently started coming to my congregation who's macho and sixty; we hit it off immediately. I've even spent the night with him and his wife with no problem. I swim daily and have become good friends with several men at the pool. The locker room there is no longer a place of forbidden and secretive longing. I also occasionally ride my bicycle with men from my neighborhood.

I get a weekly massage, which I had always preferred to have done by a woman; now an outdoors-type man does it, and there is no problem on my part. He is a wonderful Christian married man, and we've become good friends.

I also have a great time with the fellas in my ministry group. It's great to have a place where I can be completely honest and in which there is a giving and sharing atmosphere. I have desperately needed Christian male companionship with men who can identify with my struggles. I had been looking for a support group like this for fifteen years. I don't drive at night or on the expressways, so a kind young man from another town who attends the ministry group takes me to the meetings. I'm the grandpa of

the gathering but feel I can bring a different dimension to those seeking help.

My counselor has shown me that it will be a long, gradual walk out of the lifelong anger, disappointments, frustrations, and shame which inhabit perversion's path. Mine was a life of never-ending self-hatred and shame, but I actually feel better now than I did when I was forty. My emotional and physical health have never been better. I have a wonderful place to live with some delightful neighbors. I have the most wonderful group of friends I have ever had. I am active in volunteer work. Most important, I have a church where I am loved well and prayed for, and where I participate actively. I have renewed my friendships with my two closest college buddies. None of this was possible while I had the ever-present blot of homosexuality preventing me from forming healthy male relationships.

I had always believed my homosexuality was primarily a problem in dealing with women. However, I now see that that is not where the difficulty lies. My relationship with men has been the issue all along. I could never have a genuine friendship with a man, because I would always fall in love with him! At last I understand why. Now, I'm no longer afraid to talk to men. I can even hug them with no sexual thoughts trying to take over. This is progress!

"The most rewarding part of my recovery has been that I am finally making close male friends."

I always did try to live a good life and have been actively involved in church activities and ministry, especially to the elderly. Yet there was always that dark spot of homosexuality that haunted my every move. Through the help I have received from counseling and an ex-gay ministry, I am thrilled to find that there is a way out, as well as plenty of people to help me on the way.

The gay lobby is very influential, and they have pretty much convinced the average American that our struggles are genetically induced. According to them, there is no hope of change. They are wrong.

I've discovered that you're never too ingrained in a habit, or too old to change and begin anew. It's a thrilling adventure. Join me!

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