

Courage Ministry
Article 96 – December 2016
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An enlightening testimony of the Lord's providence and blessing

Introduction:

Testimonies of Courage people regarding their wrestling with God about their same-sex attraction (hereafter ssa), are inspirational and help us in our own fidelity to Jesus and the Church. In the following testimony I have asked an older Courage member to answer the same set of questions that were used in previous testimonies. (See articles 85, 86, 92, 93.) I have edited his account for brevity sake.

Question One: When did you first notice the feeling of same-sex attraction?

I was first attracted sexually to other men when I started looking at pornography. There was a magazine that had images of men and women simulating sex acts and I was looking at the man instead of looking at the woman. That's the earliest memory I have of being attracted to a man.

Question Two: How did you handle this?

I felt very uncomfortable and thought, this is not right. I hid it. I did not tell anyone. But from that point on I started fantasizing more and more about men. I started looking at men in a sexual way. I did not have emotional feelings for men. I don't remember wanting to date a man or feeling like I was in love with a man. I just looked at them and wanted to use them.

Question Three: With whom did you confide?

I didn't confide in anybody at first. I was ashamed of the feeling. I knew inside of myself that there was something wrong with it. I didn't want anyone to find out. There was a point where both my parents separately asked me if I was gay and I denied it. I did not share my feelings of ssa with anyone until after high school, though many thought I was gay. The person I ended up sharing about my ssa, was my best friend. I do not remember exactly why I shared with him, but I had a feeling that he would be my friend no matter what. It was a relief when he accepted me although he did not approve of the lifestyle. I had felt more comfortable sharing my ssa with a few female acquaintances before sharing more fully with my friend. In my life feelings of rejection by men in my family and in school kept me from feeling I could trust men.

Question Four: How helpful was the person you first told about your SSA?

The acceptance I felt from the females gave me the confidence to tell my best friend.

At the time I would have said they were very helpful because they accepted me as I was. Looking back they just reinforced the idea that I was my sexuality so in hindsight their love was comforting but led me deeper into believing that I am my desires and that my sexual attraction defined who I am. My best friend's acceptance of me helped me to trust in men a little more. It also helped me to accept that a man could love me and be my friend without wanting anything from me.

Question Five: Do your parents know about your SSA?

Yes my parents do. I'm a very open person.

Question Six: What was their response ?

When I came out to my parents they both reacted positively. My dad said it was no big deal and my mother didn't seem to have much of a reaction at all. She and I were very close before I told her and we remain close. I don't think they were happy but they accepted me. As I said earlier, they had both already questioned whether I was gay so it really wasn't a surprise to either of them. It was dramatic when I told them for I said that I needed to talk to them both. At the time Aids was killing a lot so when I told them I was gay they both seemed relieved that I did not have Aids. While my mother did not want to know everything about me I decided that if she did not want to hear it all I would not share anything. She agreed to hear me out with everything. I did not share as much with my dad because we were not as close and our relationship was strained even though he did accept my ssa situation.

Question Seven: What gives you the confidence to confide in them?

I am very open with everybody and I have been that way all my life. I do not worry about how people will react to what I share about myself. That is not always a good thing for I share too much and it can have the effect of pushing people away from me rather than drawing them closer. I was worried a little bit, before telling my parents about my ssa, that they might reject me. My concern was based on the way some families rejected some of my friends with ssa. My friends never expected to be rejected, so I had small fear but it did not stop me from sharing.

Question Eight: If you confided in a priest, what was his response ?

The first priests that I mentioned my same-sex attraction to were those I went to for confession and I received little response from them. The first priest that I met face to face and with whom I discussed my same-sex attraction became my spiritual director after he referred me to Courage.

Question Nine: When did you first find out about Courage?

I first found out about Courage when I went to discuss my spiritual life with the priest who would eventually become my spiritual director. I was feeling strongly

called to either the religious life or the priesthood and a friend of mine suggested that I ought to speak with a particular priest. After sharing my life with him he suggested that I go to a Courage conference being held that year. I did not go that year, because I did not consider that my sexuality was a issue at that time. Since I was only occasionally engaging in masturbation and looking at pornography I felt that I did not need to be around men who were actively living a gay life. However, after getting off drugs I realized that pornography and masturbation were real problems and that the way I was living was contrary to the practice of my Catholic faith, which I had just begun to practice again.

Question Ten: What was the motivation for you to seek help from Courage?

I was a pothead for fifteen years of my life. By God's grace I finally quit. During the time I was daily using marihuana my sex drive diminished significantly. Masturbation and pornography were not a problem at that time. Once I stopped smoking and started practising my faith again I started looking at pornography on a more regular basis. I was aware that objectifying and using people for my sexual gratification was contrary to the practice of my faith. So I searched for a Courage Chapter and finding one I met with the chaplain and began attending meetings.

Question Eleven: What have been the highs and lows of your time in Courage?

The highs have been attending the conferences. At the first conference I met a guy who is now a very good friend. He sat down beside me one day and put his arm around me. Up to that point I was very uncomfortable with people touching me. He could see that I was uncomfortable and asked: "Is there a problem?" I said "Yes there is a problem", he smiled and said "too bad". However at that moment I felt a change within me and since then I have been much more comfortable with physical contact. At the second courage conference the same friend invited me to the healing service that occurs on the first night of the conference. While I did not want to go I did go and reluctantly went up for the priest to lay his hands on me. I did not believe that anything would happen. As soon as I allowed the priest to touch me I felt warm. I started to lose my balance and fell forward into his arms. The priest hugged me and I started to weep. I felt that God was loving me through the priest. I kept thinking of my own father. It was another transformative moment.

The other high associated with Courage is all the new friends that I've made. I've never had a lot of male friends and there was not a lot of men in my life that I could trust and depend on or to be my real self with. I found that in Courage the lows are not really lows. One of the difficulties for me was learning that friendships are difficult to maintain. People hurt you, sometimes unintentionally. Relationships require work. I cannot develop friendships just by seeing people once a week and talking for five minutes or sending texts back and forth. Friendships require communication, honesty, openness and sacrifice. These have been the challenges in my life for I lived a very self-centered life before becoming a Courage member. I

believe that friendships require selflessness.

Question Twelve: What is your view about the Courage approach to SSA?

The way the apostolate works with us who have ssa is very effective. The priests are very loving and very honest. They deal with each of us as individuals and tailor the way they speak to each person based on that person's personality. They don't beat around the bush. They are true to the teaching of Christ and His Church, which is something that I desperately needed. They lead us like Fathers should lead their children. They teach us how to be authentically masculine and feminine men and women.

Conclusion

The author of this testimony shared other elements that are encouraging and inspirational. I edited the testimony for the sake of brevity.

Brisbane Courage is a ministry of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane

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