

## Testimonies from Exchange Ministries

“Out of the Darkness and into His marvelous light”

### **Cherrie – A Mom’s Story**

As a toddler, Jennifer loved books, but I pushed for dolls. She loved wearing pants, I argued for the dresses. I loved fairy tales, but she loved the encyclopedias and National Geographic. Jennifer was artistic and gifted. I was the school drop out with disabilities and a testimony that read much like the “woman at the well.”

We were so opposite, and yet more alike than we could see. We were both led by our emotions, which took us on the roller coaster ride of our lives.

I had no idea that I was so full of fear, guilt and shame as a result of childhood abuse. I thought that had already been dealt with. But I’m sad to say that even a commitment to Christ did not keep those emotions from raging and holding me hostage. Not surprisingly, my daughter followed the same pattern. Jennifer received Jesus as Savior at a young age, and had a personal love relationship with Him for many years.

However in her second year of college, at the innocent age of nineteen, she came home and made the devastating announcement that she had entered the gay lifestyle. Life as we knew it would no longer be the same.

At this point in telling my story, I could easily fall into the “if only’s” – if only I had done this, if only I hadn’t done that. However, I have made the decision to walk in victory, not in the regrets of the past. I discovered in recent years that to walk in the freedom that Christ has for me, my focus must be on Him and not on my daughter or me.

That is not to say that the Lord hasn’t required me to take a long, painful look back on my parenting skills. In reflection, I had wonderful “Martha” qualities - not as in Martha Stewart, but as in the “Busy Martha” of the Bible. This meant positives like cooking and baking; attending all PTA meetings, sporting events, band concerts, and most school activities. I wanted to do all the “motherly” things that hadn’t been done for me. We were great at attending Sunday school, church and even attended several Bill Gothard seminars. I was absolutely driven to do things right, and not repeat the sins of neglect or abuse onto another generation.

My greatest failure however was not listening, really listening, to my daughter. I knew so little about nurturing, and practically nothing about connection or communication. My way of parenting was to talk "at her," not "to her." It wasn't long before all I could hear was my own voice. I now know that I was so needy myself, I had little left over for anyone else. That is why Jesus has encouraged me to slow down and listen to Him; to put Him first. Finally, I am fully committed to doing just that.

As for Jennifer, it has been thirteen years now since her startling announcement. The lesbian community very early on became her mentors, friends and new "family." Her wardrobe no longer resembled that of a young woman, and her shoulder length hair was razor cut to a one-half inch length. I became numb and speechless which proved to be a blessing as I was just too shocked to reject her! But I did eventually reject someone else - someone closer to me than my own family. I rejected God.

I just couldn't understand why He had allowed this to happen! I felt that my Heavenly Father had betrayed me, just as my earthly father had done so many years ago. I was desperately heartbroken as I watched my precious daughter sink deeper into deception and farther away from me and the Lord. My prayers seemed at the time to fall on deaf ears. Depression, embarrassment and despair became my constant companions.

Thoughts of suicide resurfaced as the shame and guilt overwhelmed me. A numbness and comatose state of mind soon followed. I saw Jennifer as a victim, seduced by the enemy of her soul. I saw myself as a rejected failure, leading me again to follow my deadly emotions and victim mentality, which won out over God and His Word.

I'm sorry to say, I could not even begin to see the pain and struggles in my daughter's life as I was too consumed with how her choices were affecting me and our family. I felt that even Jennifer's homosexuality was all about me, and it took years of wandering in the wilderness to finally recognize that.

I am so grateful to say that over the past few years, the Lord has been patient and merciful in restoring me to spiritual health and wholeness. He's shown me how to take responsibility for contributing to Jennifer's pain and struggles without assuming blame for her wrong choices. I have asked for and received her forgiveness, and we are continuing to grow in our relationship. My most fervent prayer is that she returns to the Lord; I trust God to take care of the rest.

The Lord blesses me daily with increasingly more hope and faith for Jennifer's restoration, even after thirteen years! It has taken me far too long to realize that He is faithful and worthy of my trust. I now know that I was every bit as deceived as I believe my daughter to be, and that only the Truth can set us both free!

I remember in a conversation with Jennifer, I told her how her entry into the gay lifestyle had been the worst thing that had ever happened to me, but that it was also the best. It shocked me into a reality and awareness of the brokenness in myself as well as in others. God was then able to reveal His heart to me to show me that those struggling with homosexuality had not asked for their rejection and damaged emotions, anymore than I had asked for mine.

I have since gone from asking Him to change "her;" to pleading that He change "me." Thankfully, my belief system, that it is my "job and duty" to love my daughter has now changed to believing that it is my God given "privilege." His grace has allowed me to embrace both Jennifer and her sweet partner with a genuine love that I never would have thought possible. But of course, we know that with God "All Things Are Possible!"

Through the ministry of Exodus, and by attending the last two Annual freedom Conferences, I have been blessed to meet many precious men and women who have been miraculously transformed by the Power of our Almighty God. I can say without a doubt that I see more of Jesus in some of them than I have ever witnessed anywhere else. I have also had the opportunity to sit and talk with many new friends who still struggle with same sex attractions. I have had the privilege of hearing their hearts and heart breaking stories. I do confess that seeing their demonstrations of affection to one another is sometimes difficult, but God's amazing grace allows me to accept them and love them without approving of their lifestyle.

I am so aware of how I might have been swayed by the tides of emotion in favor of these same sex relationships, had I not been rooted and grounded in the infallible Word of God. Most importantly I now see that Jesus came to our world, not to condemn but to save and show us the love of His Father. I have such a passion to do the same and to see God glorified on my journey.