

# I'm A Brand New Man

by Jim Venice

I was born and raised in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Both of my parents were just 16 and newly married when I was born. Like many teens, they married to escape the turmoil of their sin-filled homes, thinking that things would be better on their own. Their relationship was doomed from the beginning, being so young and both without even a high school education. My father turned to alcohol to deal with the pressures of life. After all, that's how he had seen his parents cope.

After the birth of my second brother, just four years later, my parents' marriage came to an unexpected ending. My father ended up in prison for several years because of a crime that he had committed. Alcohol and sin had taken my daddy away, and my mother was left to raise three baby boys on her own. She worked hard, determined to feed and clothe us boys. Sometimes she'd work 2 or 3 jobs at one time, just to be able to provide for her babies. I remember being left with very young female sitters. While I was just a toddler, on separate occasions two of the sitters molested me. I never told my mother until years later.

My daddy was gone. I knew that he had done something very wrong, but I didn't understand fully. I did not have a daddy to hold me when I cried, no one to teach me how to play catch or throw a ball, to fight and rough-house with, or even to use the restroom like boys do. I don't remember a time when I got to be bounced on my daddy's lap, to be held and kissed, or told that "I love you" by my dad. All that I knew was that my daddy did something very bad and that I didn't want to be anything like him. All of this happened at a time when most boys are saying, "I want to be just like my daddy."

Instead, my mother was my hero, my buddy, the only one I could depend on for whatever I needed. She had to be both mother and father to her boys. I became "a mama's boy" and somewhat of a "sissy." My mother knew she had to find a father for her boys. She remarried when I was 5. My new step-father was good to us kids and of course we just loved having a man to play with; someone to be a daddy to us. He later adopted us, gave us his name, and took care of us like we were his own. I was still mama's boy, extremely close to her. I never bonded with my step/adoptive father. You see the damage had already been done. I didn't like men, men were bad. I was never affirmed in my masculinity. I didn't want to be mean, rough, and tough, and I didn't know anything about sports. There came a time when I remember watching the other boys and wishing that I could be more like them. I felt different, alienated and separated from my own gender. I envied the other boys. I was the one who always played with the girls, their doll houses, hop-scotch, and jump rope. When I was forced to play teamed sport games, I was always one of the last ones picked.

Then came puberty. I was so ashamed and embarrassed of my changing body. I did not want this to happen. Most boys are excited when they start becoming a man; when they get that first whisker or that first hair on their chest. Not me. I did not want to be a man. The girls that I had played with were now becoming attracted to young men. They had crushes on them and talked about their great looks, or how cute they were. Where did this leave me? I became more alienated from my own gender. The envy that I felt toward the other boys gradually turned into an attraction toward their masculinity. I didn't understand why this was happening to me. I became attracted to my own sex. I began fantasizing what it would be like to be one of those "cute" guys. My fantasies turned to lust and I began to have a problem with masturbation. I needed help desperately.

I had gone to church with my family off and on for several years now. My family began to go to church regularly when I was twelve. I was invited into the church's youth group and became involved in their Bible Quiz program. Jesus became my Lord, I was baptized in the Holy Ghost, and loved the Lord with all of my heart. Again, my family quit going to church. I was determined to serve the Lord. Various people from the church saw that I got back and forth to church. I went to three weeks of church camps every summer. I became heavily involved in many other church activities. Every time the church doors were opened I was there, usually on the front pew. I became very close to the Lord and had a very special anointing on my life. His presence was so real and so strong. I felt a calling to some kind of ministry, not of preaching, but of teaching, encouraging, and healing. This ministry never had a chance to fully develop because of my secret struggle.

Because of my step-father's abusive nature our relationship had badly deteriorated, pushing me further into a dislike of men. My alienation from my masculine identity deepened. All through junior and senior high school my best friends were always girls. I would never play sports, not only because I never learned to play, but I felt inferior. I had a very poor self image and even stuttered. I became a loner. The church was my escape from my world. I never became close enough to anyone to share my private sexual struggle. I was embarrassed and ashamed. I kept it all to myself for all of those years; I never told a soul. I knew what the Bible said about homosexuality and perversion, but I still had my secret problem with fantasizing and masturbation; it became "my thorn in the flesh" to keep me humble and continually on my knees asking for God's forgiveness. I even fasted frequently, praying for deliverance. Because of my lack of athletic and social ability, I

chose to excel in academics. I was an honor student at school. My Bible Quiz Team won national finals in 1981, 82, 84, 86. In 1986, I was the Bible Quizzer of the year. I won several scholarships in high school. I was still very close to the Lord with an humble heart.

I was never attracted to girls at all, they were my friends. I never even lusted after women. There was a young lady, Debbie, I met at youth camp. We became close friends and even went to sweetheart banquets together. She was sweet and pretty, and we had fun together. She did not make my hormones rage like how most of the other teenage boys reacted toward girls. She became my long distance "girl friend." Eventually, God managed to move her family to the town where I went to church. She was the only girl that I had dated. After I graduated from high school, we broke-up so that we could date other people. I got my first job and met my first real close male friend. It was nice having a friend to share my deepest darkest secrets with. We became roommates. Then one day our friendship became sexual in nature. I became alienated from God. I blatantly sinned against myself and God. Neither of us wanted to be homosexuals. Our sexual relationship only lasted a few months. I knew it just was not right and could not live that way. I found myself in my living room crying out to God. "Lord change me, fix me, please deliver me. What ever you have to do." Acting in faith, I went back to my girlfriend and we married within six months. I still struggled with my masculine identity; but because we were best friends, we did have a good marriage. But I still desired other men more than my wife. I stayed in the altars, still keeping my secret from even my wife. I didn't want to hurt her, I loved her very deeply. But those other feelings were still there. Nobody wanted to be changed more than I did. I believed God enough to help others get victory and deliverance, even healing in their lives. "But God, why won't you do this one simple thing in me?" After five years of marriage, I was once again introduced to homosexual activity. This time it felt right to me. I bought into the lie that "Since God had not changed me, there must be a reason. He could have changed me if He wanted to. God must have made me this way for a reason. God doesn't make mistakes, does He?" For the first time I accepted myself as a homosexual and was glad about it. I felt a great sense of freedom at last after all those years. (This is what happens when gays "come out of the closet" - they feel free at last.) I opened up to my wife for the first time and I decided that we should separate. If I was going to act out, I didn't want to take the risk at exposing her to sexually transmitted diseases. I later found out that we were going to have a child, after several years of trying to have a child. What timing! God had a plan.

We finally did divorce after 2 years of ugly custody and visitation right battles. I entered my first long term gay relationship; it lasted 4 years, and my second almost 3 years. During this time I became very angry and bitter with God and with the church. I even grew to hate God. I could not reconcile His Word which was hidden deep in my heart with what was going on in my life. I chose not to think about God at all. I learned a lot about gay people during this time. Most of their experiences are similar to mine. Most come from broken or abusive homes. Most of them have never had a positive male role model to affirm them in their masculinity, or to make them want to grow up to become a man. Homosexuals are not pedophiles. Most would never hurt or molest a child. Almost all pedophiles are heterosexuals. Most homosexuals are still small children, trapped inside a man's body, looking for a man to affirm them. They are looking for the "daddy" that they never had. I am not saying this to make anybody feel sorry for homosexuals, but so that you will better understand them. They don't need to be told how awful they are or how much God hates them and their life style. They already know that; that is all they have heard all of their lives. The body of Christ as a whole does not understand how to minister to "sexually broken" people, (i.e... homosexuals and lesbians, prostitutes, pedophiles, transvestites, those struggling with pornography, masturbation, adultery, fornication, victims of incest, molestation, rape, and their offenders, and other such perversion.) God said, "My people perish for lack of knowledge:" Hosea 4:6. The church for many years has buried their heads in the sand when it comes to sexual immorality. Sure they are quick to condemn actions, but don't know how to minister to the needs and hurts. Most don't even want to know and refuse to deal with sexuality behind the pulpit. Just like alcohol and drug addiction, repentance is just the beginning of the long road to recovery. There are underlying needs that must be met and the hurts that must be healed. Frequently the underlying hurt in substance abuse is found in sexual brokenness of some kind. God loves people... all people. So much that He gave His own Son to die for their sins. Yes - even those of us who have been "sexually broken," both men and women, homosexual and heterosexual. It was His great love that sought me out. I was 30 years old, happy in my second gay monogamous relationship and on my way to hell. I had bought into the lie "hook-line-and-sinker." Yes, this one, who for more than eight years of my life had burned the Word of God deeply in my heart. It was a very strong delusion.

One day in early November 1996, my phone rang. It was my youth leader and Bible Quiz Coach, who I knew for all of those years while I was away from the Lord had been praying for me. She begged me to come home to our church homecoming. I hadn't been in church for seven years. For some reason I couldn't come up with an excuse and said that I would go. After all it would be nice to see everyone again. My ex-wife and I had managed to have an amiable relationship for our son's sake. I would take an eight hour road trip with her and our son. We would travel from Oklahoma City to St. Louis. It was nice to be able to talk with her again about old times. We stopped and spent the night with our pastors in Springfield, Missouri. They were so glad to see us and we them. They grabbed me and loved me. They knew what had been going on in my life, but never once mentioned it, nor were they condemning. If they had, I was prepared to up and leave. But they just loved on me. It felt so good. The next day, Saturday, we got together with several others from our home church outside of St. Louis. Again, everyone was so glad to see me and just loved on me and hugged me. Nobody confronted me about my life. The next day was Sunday, the big church homecoming. It was so good to be in God's House and to feel loved by everyone and especially by God. Still no one confronted me. They just loved on me and hugged me. I felt loved and wanted to find a quiet place to pray. I waited, the chance never came. It was one of those services where the preacher didn't get to preach. Go figure - It had been seven years and God finally gets me in

His house and I want to pray. Wouldn't it seem that God would make sure it happened? I didn't get to pray, nor did I get to hear a sermon.

"What's up God?" On our way home to Oklahoma City, we stopped in Springfield for Sunday night service. Once again it felt good to be in God's house. I felt His love and just wanted to quietly pray somewhere. I waited once again for a general altar call where everyone finds a place to pray. It never happened. I started to get upset now. "God, you get me in your house twice in one day and I want to pray." I mentioned it to my ex-wife. She grabbed our son's hand and took him to the altar where they prayed. I finally ended up at the altar crying out to God. "Lord, I know that you love me and if you can change me there is still no one who would want it more than me." God knew what He was doing. He had arranged for two sets of Godly parents, who had homosexual sons, to be there to minister His unconditional, awesome love to me. My pastor's wife said, "If God can't change you, then I will be the first to say that God is dead." We prayed for what seemed like hours. There was no divine flash of lightening, no glorious transformation. But when I got up, I knew that I did not want to be a homosexual any longer. It would have to be a walk of faith and obedience. But I did have a clean slate. My sins were forgiven and cast as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12). I was a brand new man, a new creation without a past (2 Cor. 5:17). I was no longer a homosexual! (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

I have since become involved in an ex-gay ministry (First Stone in Oklahoma City). I have been ministered to by people who have successfully left the gay life style. I have been learning a great deal about how I got into that mess and how to keep from getting back into it. I would like to share some of this with you. Hopefully it will help someone in need. I found that God is bringing thousands of men and women out of the gay life style. It is His boundless love and presence that transforms us, not hateful and compassionless condemning words. It is not a life of "going back into the closet" and suppressing homosexual desires but a life of joy and true freedom. I have found it to be a continual deliverance by His presence and glory. (Gal 5:16 Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Eph. 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:) My repentant heart had to be obedient and I had to turn from my wicked ways. God hates sexual immorality not only because it is sin but because unlike other sins, it is the only sin committed against one's own body. (1 Cor. 6:18) You literally become ONE with that individual (1 Cor. 6:16), you open your soul up to their past and the evil in their soul. Have you ever noticed how that when couples have been married for most of their lives, they begin to look alike, sound alike, and think alike? They are becoming one, complete in each other. That's why Christians should never marry non-Christians. God hates homosexuality even more because it is an attack against Him and His character. God made man in His image and called THEM Adam (Gen. 5:2). I always thought that there was a mistake in this passage. But they were both there in the beginning; Eve was present in Adam, part of his flesh and bones. They were one - complete in the image of God. In marriage, man and woman are rejoined and become one again, forming once again a complete man in the image of God. It takes both male and female to complete the image of God in the rejoining of their souls, both masculine and feminine, both strong and soft. The plan of salvation was ordained before the foundation of the world. The greater purpose of marriage is to show us how Christ and the Church (the bride and groom) are to be one for eternity.(Eph. 5:21-33) On Earth, marriage is only until "death do us part." There is neither marrying nor giving in marriage in heaven (Mat. 22:30). The church can never condone homosexuality. It prevents us from being completed in the image of God in this life and one with Christ thereafter. Many believe that the answer to homosexuality is to get married, this could prove to be very detrimental. Ironically, just the opposite is true, the struggler must first master developing healthy non-sexual relationships with their own gender before pursuing relationships with the opposite sex. Only when they are secure in their own gender identity can they complement and relate correctly with a spouse in marriage. It has been known to take years for this healing process to happen. In my case, it took 30 years to get into my "mess." The healing process doesn't happen overnight and would be unrealistic for me to believe that it would. I am still in the healing process and still learning how to develop healthy non-sexual relationships with men.

What helped me this time was that my problem and situation was no longer a secret. Before, it was actually a stronghold that no amount of anointing oil or prayer could break through as long as my struggle was a secret. I learned that secrets are what empower strongholds. Darkness cannot exist where there is light (Eph. 5:8, 1 Pet. 2:9, Mat. 6:22-24, 2 Cor. 4:6.) Before, not even my wife knew about my struggle, but when I "came out of the closet" and went into the gay life style, the power of the stronghold was broken in my life. That's why homosexuals literally feel a sense of freedom when they "come out of the closet." It feels so good to be free. But sadly they enter into another form of bondage called deception.

Within one month after coming back to the Lord, He had restored my love for my wife and we were reunited in marriage. (Again, this is not the norm. Getting married is not recommended for many years.) Six months later we were expecting our second child. Who would have thought it to be possible? We didn't. God is being faithful to complete the work which He has begun in me (2 Tim. 1:12.) It is a continual walk of faith and OBEDIENCE. The Heavenly Father Himself has been affirming me in my masculinity. He promised that He would be a Father to the fatherless. He has been transforming me into the image of His son Jesus Christ. We are transformed when we worship Him and enter into His presence. His presence and glory actually does the transforming. (2 Cor. 3:18) That's why true worship is so vital in our church services. He can do more when we are in His presence in just 10 minutes, than years of preaching and teaching will ever accomplish.

Parents, look again at your marriage and its importance. Divorce greatly affects your children and even their children.

Boys must receive their masculine identity from their fathers; and girls their femininity from their mothers. That's the way God intended it to be. The amount of homosexuality and sexual immorality has been consistent with that of divorce. Forty years ago both were seldom heard of.

Consider this, 99 percent of sexual immorality has nothing to do with sex, but in fact, with lack of relationship, be it with God, themselves, parents, family, friends, one's own gender, or the opposite gender. I read a report recently that said that more than 80 percent of what keeps Christians from being all that God intended them to be is rooted in sexual immorality of some sort. It is an epidemic that the church can no longer ignore. The Lord intends for the church to be equipped to reach and to minister to "sexually broken" people. His love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8.) For where sin abounds grace does much more abound (Rom. 5:20.) Never once do I remember growing up in church, and hearing how that God loves homosexuals and that He can deliver them. But only how God Himself gave up on them. Never did one person stand and testify how God delivered them from homosexuality, perversion, or masturbation. (1 Cor. 6:9-11 ... And such "were" some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus...) Homosexuality is NOT an unforgivable sin, no worse than heterosexual adultery or other forms of sexual sin or even gossip. There are no degrees of sin. No big or little sins. ALL sin separates us from God and ALL sin can be forgiven through the blood that JESUS shed on Calvary's cross. There is so much more to know and tell about the healing process and the walk out of sexual brokenness.

God did not cause the devastation in my life, but He had a plan to turn something that Satan meant for evil into an opportunity to show His strength. God loves to show Himself strong in the areas of our lives where we are weak (2 Cor. 12:9-10.) When we are weak He is strong. This is how I have been winning my struggle with masturbation. I no longer try to hide my secret sin but I literally run to Him and He is faithful. My wife and I had both lived fairly sheltered lives. We didn't know how to minister God's healing love to hurting people; or to those with broken hearts and lives. We hadn't felt the devastation of divorce and how it felt to have your dreams shattered. But now we have. We know that God is going to use our experiences to reach hurting people that need to know that God still loves them and that there is HOPE! I am so glad that God had a plan and is always in control! I'm not proud of my past, but I am very proud of our Lord and what He has done in my life. I'M A BRAND NEW MAN!