

Finding Comfort

Everyone is on a journey of self-discovery. For me, that journey involved a period of crossdressing—and also in finding comfort in God’s deep love.

The first incident I can recall of moving in the direction of crossdressing was at about age 8, when I painted my face, as if I were a woman wearing makeup. A bit later, at a scout pageant celebrating knights of old, we wore outfits that looked like dresses. I wore mine again at home, and when I did it felt more like a dress to me. Following that episode, for several years, I secretly wore clothing from my mother’s closet.

Later I discovered how to create a feminine shape with many pairs of pants and paddings of socks and stockings under suitable undergarments. I spent an enormous amount of time putting on makeup; I was obsessed with the thought of becoming a girl. I was simultaneously terrified at the thought of being caught and also excited by the risk that I might be discovered. Once I ventured out into my parents’ garden, but I was confident no one saw me. In drama club, I avoided being asked to dress as a girl in plays, but I secretly thought I could do it better than the boys who accepted the challenge.

I enjoyed the thrill in the risk of being caught, even the frantic hiding in the bathroom when my mother came home early, and then stealthily sneaking the clothes back where they belonged. The pleasure I felt while dressing up becoming linked to sexual feelings in my adolescent years, and that reinforced my desire and satisfaction.

What would it be like to be a girl, I wondered. My relationships with girls were not at all successful. I was a confused boy, seeking comfort inside.

Why did it start? A key moment may have been when my mother told me, “If you had been a girl, we would have called you Natalie.” My stepsister had died at age 4, causing my mother deep anguish. So I tried to replace that lost daughter in an effort to make Mother love me and to end the physical punishment she inflicted on me. Dad was quiet and withdrawn and did nothing to help me.

Mother once asked me, "Can I ask you something personal?" I answered no. I think she suspected I had some kind of gender confusion. But I was determined to keep the secret that had me locked up in shame. In my teen years, I worried that if I ever got drunk I'd reveal my secret. That never happened.

When I left for college at 18, I mostly quit crossdressing. I never brought any women's clothing of my own during those years. But I did sometimes borrow garments from lodgings where I stayed. I always returned them undetected. Throughout that period of my life, my urge to cross-dress continued to conflict with my fear of being caught.

My desire to cross-dress diminished during my mid-20s, and, in my late-20s, seemed to stop when I formed a stable relationship with the woman who later became my wife. I told her about my past habit. Then, when I started to seriously explore having an active Christian faith, I was introduced to a minister, whom I hoped could help me. I hoped my new faith would put an end to my desires. It didn't, so I fought the desires.

Through the years, my deep shame clouded my personality. Through many times of prayer, and meeting with my pastor, I came to understand that God accepts me and does not condemn me. In moments of awareness of the deep love Jesus has for me, I have been able to release the inner pain. It was a pain of withheld love from my mother and my attempt to win her love through a false created self. I have seen how much the heavenly Father wants to show me His love, but struggled to accept it. Gradually, I have come to know that I am an adopted son; my orphaned heart is being healed.

There are times when I forget God's love and acceptance, times when my mind tries to run an old tape. The enemy wants me to feel worthless, outside hope, ashamed. But when I started to have a relationship with God, my life changed. So now I turn my thoughts to what is good and honorable and true. At some point, the living God breaks in to bring me restoration and contentment in knowing I am free. As the hymn says, "His Grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."

If you have a Christian faith, you may know of the Father's love. If you do not, I pray you will be helped when you find it. I am still on a journey to find my true self. Those early years made quite a mess of my life. But, thanks be to God who

give us the victory. Knowing you are loved can bring you into a place of living hope, freedom, and a place where shame is longer present.

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