

A Matter of Survival (Part 3)

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by Bob (written for Help 4 Families)

People will be lovers of themselves, abusive, without love, without self control, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. (2 Timothy 3:2-4)

This store had become a familiar setting, though it was quite unlike the shops I formerly frequented which displayed their alluring articles of women's apparel. When I was actively involved in the transsexual lifestyle, letting me loose in a woman's dress shop was tantamount to trying to confine a bull in a room of red banners. Euphoric fantasies and emotional discharges would surge throughout my being with the force of an atom-smasher!

The store I had just entered was world's apart! It was extremely over-populated with men, an environment that used to be so unbearably intimidating. The fragrance was typically male as well: the smell of fresh cut wood. It was a lumber yard. I had come to purchase some 2x8's for steps I was building at home. But things were unexplainably (most alarmingly) different.

It was as though the little boy in me had matured and was taking manly steps. Inwardly I was taking larger than normal steps, masculine steps, very similar to a self-assured machoism that John Wayne portrayed. But in this case even the "Duke" would have had to sheepishly step aside! "What is going on here?"

It wasn't that I was actually strutting like a peacock, but felt as though I were. I passed by the bath accessories, noticing my reflection in the lineup of vanity mirrors. The name for them is most appropriate, because I felt very proud about my appearance and place in life. I paused in front of one full-length mirror, gazing with approval at the manly image before me, seemingly oblivious of what others might think. My perception was that everyone's eyes were focused upon me in a positive, affirming, perhaps even envious, way. Most unusual of all was the feeling of being a mature male deep in my interior. Quite incredible!

I advanced to the counter to place my order. There the six-foot lumberjack stood. But I didn't experience the normal cowering of a little boy or an inferior male. If anyone had been in front of me, I suspect that I would have brushed him aside, saying, "Out of my way!" I was not in the least bit intimidated!

My five-foot-ten frame seemed to tower above his and I heard my unusually deepened voice barking, "Hey Tom! Give me five two by eights and five two by fours that are ten foot long! Make sure they're treated, too!" He dutifully completed the form and asked if I wanted anything else. "That'll do it for today. Thanks, bud!" I walked away, shaking my head in disbelief that I had actually said it in that way.

Having sorted through the pile of lumber for the best pieces, I strode toward my vehicle with them slung over my shoulder. My memory flashed back to a most distasteful event of childhood when my father had placed a monstrous board on my shoulder, expecting me to carry it a distance of what appeared a mile to my six-year-old frame. My dad had taken on the task of building his own garage. Not a particularly gifted carpenter, he was extremely impatient and used me as a "go-fer" for his tools.

"Go get my hack saw!" I hurried to the basement, wondering just what that looked like. I returned with some kind of a saw, but clearly not the one he needed. Once again I was shamed by his angry words, "You dummy! I told you to get the hack saw. I'll tell you, if you want anything done right, you do it yourself." Sounded good to me! I didn't much like being the apprentice carpenter anyway. Who needs the sweat, the dirt, the back-breaking work, the cigarette smoke, or the verbal abuse?

It didn't take many more of these episodes to make sure that I was unavailable when Dad did his work. I didn't care to link my sexual identity to his!

The deeper injury was my feeling of being ill-equipped as a member of the male species, totally inadequate for the task, seemingly unfit to manage myself acceptably in that undesirable role. I lived in a shame-based struggle for survival, trying my hardest to make it, but constantly receiving the message that I was somehow defective and inadequate as a male.

At least that was my perception and a deeply ingrained reality to me by the age of four. After all, the family is "the primary channel for learning one's identity, for having needs met, for understanding who God is, and for developing relationships."¹

The lumber yard attendant checked over my load and stapled a red flag on the protruding pieces of wood. As I drove home, my memory returned to another painful situation. I was playing on our front porch with the girls in my neighborhood. Dad was passing by with several pieces of lumber balanced on his shoulder and tools in his other hand. I was dressed in one of mommy's old dresses, as were the other girls. Dad jokingly said, "Hey, you make a cute looking girl, Bob. Too bad you weren't born one. That would have made your mommy happy!" I didn't laugh.

The "core-belief" was set in my heart like concrete: Life would have been better as a girl. Dad and Mom repeatedly reinforced their preference for a daughter, and their friends would often remark how much I favored Mom. To be like her sounded so satisfying to me. She was so loving and gentle. I perceived her world to be soft, perfumed, pampered and safe.

I did everything I could to maintain that belief, creating the image of my idealized woman and routinely escaping the incredible pain of being a male by cross-dressing. Female clothing was the object of my fantasies, and when I was wearing "Mom's things" I felt worthwhile and affirmed.

That is true for all of us who have become trans-gendered. It is the willful taking on of the illusion that being a member of the opposite sex is better, even if it be for a few moments. It serves as a coping mechanism, a means of surviving the day. It most unfortunately does not stop there, for the addictive appetite of the beast always demands more and more meat, to the extreme of gender-identity suicide.

One of my journal entries recorded these disturbing findings:

I thought that I could stop the forward motion of this lifestyle. I had been labeled a transvestite by my doctor. That's not the way things are now. I'm getting worse by the year! Now I am hopelessly trapped in cross-dressing every day and it consumes all my thoughts and plans. If I am not actually cross-dressing, I am planning it in my mind. I eat it, drink it, smell it all the day long. And to top it off, my dreams are saturated with it, too!

I could only end this madness, this compulsive drive and energy by being able to live as a woman on a full-time basis. That is now all that I can think about. Castration is a recurrent, delectable fantasy. I started out thinking that all of this could be controlled. That I could simply cross over the assigned gender lines and not be any the worse for it . . . perhaps even improved.

But, now I am no longer content to slip in and out of the two roles. I have spent so much time in the illusion, I feel I am now more of a she than a he. I no longer have the illusion. It has me!

I have heard (and voiced) the customary disclaimers for our trans-gender condition and our progressive self-debasing and sinful choices. A favorite one was, "We cannot be compared to anyone else, neither can our behavior be characterized as addictive, since we are talking about core-identity, not the external influences of some chemical."

Just prior to making the break with the illusions inherent in the transsexual thought process, I pondered these

questions in my journal:

Aren't we being a bit too melodramatic? Aren't we making ourselves an elite group of sinners? Are we not truly addicts, demanding our reprehensible 'drug of choice' to medicate our gnawing sense of personal worthlessness? Aren't the consequences too severe? Our answer is, 'NO!' . . . basically because we are so sinfully addicted, compulsively driven to do what the immediate self-gratification demands, with little or no regard to the consequences of such actions.

But that admission and realization didn't immediately transform me into some glowing role-model of masculinity. It is not until we dare to face the horrible inner pain and sense of masculine inadequacy, along with the multiple sinful choices we have made, that healing begins.

I had to admit that my addictive bond in creating the illusion of the feminine was merely masking my unresolved inner pain (and sin) that gave me a sense that I still controlled life. I could be a man or woman whenever I chose, maintaining a "false intimacy" with mom, while clinging to some semblance of my God-created gender.²

"The real issue isn't how deeply you were wounded, but what you've done to protect yourself from further wounds by turning to false intimacy. The issue is also whether or not you'll allow your woundedness to prevent you from loving God and others."³

Sadly, the vast majority of transsexuals are not wanting to pay the price or take the risks of putting an end to the madness. We argue, "If I give up being able to dabble in the feminine world, then what is there of value that is left?" So most give up any hope that their lives can ever be lastingly changed. And this cruel world with all of its godless advice and unloving tolerance, lets the wounded die.

My recent experience in the lumber yard was a direct result of the Lord's longsuffering and a decade of inch-by-inch redemptive healing, not man-made psychological persuasion to think positively about myself. It is part of God's design: to love Him first and foremost and to then love others as myself.

"Receiving restorative healing is much more than simply renewing your own efforts to do what's right. It's much more than just choosing to stop your addictive behaviors. Without God's help, you can modify your behaviors through willpower, perhaps even stopping them for a long period of time. But you'll continue to wrestle with internal struggles with no hope of conquering them. Sin is too strong to overcome on your own. You must pursue God on His terms, in brokenness and humility, facing the sinful condition of your heart and inviting God to begin healing you."⁴

Healing from transgender dysphoria is most certainly a lengthy process. It doesn't come easily. Nor does it seem Jesus is terribly anxious about speeding up the arduous task of cleansing, restoring and making all things new. Indeed, it would appear that God is relatively unconcerned about meeting our timetables and expectations. "Yet it is extremely important to recognize that He is never actually late. His timetable for action is simply different from ours. And it is usually slower!⁵ But it is complete and so very good!

A full year before the "Lumber Yard Experience" I was at a Leanne Payne Pastoral Care Conference, simply there to participate the best I could, knowing that there yet remained within me unresolved vestiges of the past. As I was praying, I was inwardly aware that Someone I knew was entering into my conscious thoughts. It was obviously Jesus.

The scene before my mind's eye was that of the front porch of my childhood home, where I had been playing with my neighborhood girlfriend, Carol. She was extending her baby doll to me. I was making the decision that was to affect the rest of my life's choices. (I was between three and four years of age.)

In the actual event so long ago, I had gladly received the doll, and with that exchange, the mantle of the feminine was warmly received, and the masculine was forsaken as a viable option for me. I was like her and both of us were like our mommies. That was good. So very good!

The revisited event took a different twist, for Jesus was in the scene, standing beside me. I looked up into His face. There was such a calmness and strength about Him. He smiled and said, "Bob, I have something here for you. It's much better for you to play with this. It's okay to be a truck driver . . . a man. It's okay because that's what I want you to be." He then held out to me a large wood (obviously homemade) red pickup truck. It was the neatest I'd ever seen. I took it from his large hand and placed it upon the floor in order to play with it. I rolled it back and forth. It was very heavy.

Jesus then began to make the sounds of an engine and to my surprise sat down beside me in order to share the fun with me. He rolled the truck back and forth to me, encouraging me to make the same kind of engine sounds. I did. At one point He was lying on His left side, getting more and more at eye level with me. His smile and laughter were beyond description.

Then Jesus got up and clasped my hand, saying, "Let's go." Carol was still playing with her doll. Before Jesus and I stepped off of the porch, He turned and took hold of my waist, lifting me abruptly above His head, suspending me there for what seemed a long time.

I was able to view this from both within and outside of my body. At one moment I saw what appeared to be a still snapshot of the scene. And then, I was looking down into the kindest face I have ever seen. His eyes were filled with joy in me. His arms were so strong. I thought, "How can He hold me in the air so long above His head?" It seemed as though His hands completely encompassed my waist. And the incredible strength! It radiated from His forearms into His fingertips and into my arched body.

Then He set me down firmly upon my feet, saying, "Come on, let's go for a walk." I bent down to pick up my red truck and took hold of His hand. I looked back and saw Carol still in her feminine imaginary world, playing with her doll. She waved goodbye.

Ahead was a long sidewalk. There were large trees on either side, providing a beautiful leafy tunnel. I walked with an inner confidence that I had never before known. As I looked up into the trees, I could feel the truck tucked close to my right side, while my left hand was securely fastened into Christ's firm grip. The sun was shining and I was happy. So happy!

Thanks to Jesus' intervention and progressive healing, I am more than just a survivor. I am being completed. My manhood is more of a tangible reality every day. That is the explanation of what transpired in the lumber yard. Owning and fully entering into my rightful inheritance: manhood! My female identity (and that of any other transsexual) was nothing other than a deceptive illusion.

Listen to one of my dear friend's comprehension of that same reality: The worst fear that I have ever had in my life was that there would be nothing left of me, that I would somehow disappear and cease to be if I gave up this woman that I felt was inside of me. I know that you have talked to me about this Bob and have had to also overcome this same fear yourself. But I never had the courage to actually do it.

Well, in the presence of God, I finally received the courage to face this horrible fear. A person who was praying with me said, 'Pull the idol from your heart and give it to Jesus.' I was seeing Jesus on the cross. It was a big cross, and Jesus was big. He was even big enough to take all of my sins. And the expression on His face showed me that He was happy to take my sins. He wanted to take them. He wanted to lift this burden off of me which I was no longer able to bear.

In my mind I took my hand and pulled this woman out of my heart. When I pulled her out she was almost as big as me. It left a huge hole in my chest and my body was almost hollow. Then God gave me the grace to look into the woman's face before He took her away. To my surprise it was she who had no face! Not me! It was she who had no identity, NOT ME! She was the illusion! Then I pushed her away toward Jesus' cross. She began to spin head over heels toward the cross. Then she was hurled over the shoulder of Christ, shrinking in size, until she finally

disappeared. This was too good to be true because it was she who disappeared, not me! Praise God!

Then, if this is possible, Jesus' smile got even bigger! He wasn't done with me yet. He looked down at the huge hole in my chest and from His heart straight to my heart came a blast of light. Not a single burst but a steady stream. He just kept on filling me. God gave me a new identity! I am now a real person! I am God's son and the more I become like Christ, the more of a person I will become. Thank you, God!"

Let me close by quoting Dr. James Dobson from his excellent book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. He says that God's heart "is especially tender toward the downtrodden and the defeated. He knows your name and He has seen every tear you have shed. He was there on each occasion when life took a wrong turn. And what appears to be Divine disinterest or cruelty is a misunderstanding at best and a satanic lie at worst.

How do I know this to be true? Because the Scriptures emphatically tell us so. For starters, David wrote, 'The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.' (Psalm 34:18)

What comfort we should draw from that understanding. He is calling your name to the Father today, pleading your case and describing your need. How wrong it is, therefore, to place blame for your troubles on the best Friend mankind ever had! Regardless of other conclusions you draw, please believe this: He is not the source of your pain."⁶

Footnotes: 1. Jeff Vanvonderen, *Tired of Trying to Measure Up*, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1989), 41. 2. Harry W. Schaumburg, *False Intimacy*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1993), 74. 3. *Ibid*, 74. 4. *Ibid*, 75. 5. James Dobson, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, (Wheaton, ILL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993), 52-53. 6. *Ibid*, 236.

One Saturday a few weeks back, the Lord spoke into my Spirit that it had taken Him nearly 20 years to convince me that He loved me. I stood stock still over the vacuum cleaner and pondered hard at that one. I realized it was completely true. It had taken all the years since I returned to Him at the age of 31 to believe He loved me. For one thing, I had not understood what His love was. I measured His love by the ebb and flow of circumstance, and indeed the Old Testament understanding of God can make a case for this view. Thank God that's not all we have!

One day, not that many years ago, at a point when I was in deep struggle in my own life, and the love of God seemed to laugh in my face, I read again Paul's words: ". . . nothing can separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus . . .", whereupon he lists all kinds of things, awful things, that I would have interpreted as the measuring rod of God's love in my life. But he says, these things are things that are part of life that come to everybody in greater or lesser degrees, and have nothing to do with God's love, which stands firm, undisturbed and steady, burning like an eternal flame for me, regardless of what might happen in my life.

So what, then, is the love of God, if not freedom from suffering and the presence of earthly blessing? "This is the love of God," the apostle says, "that when I was still a sinner, Christ died for me." Period. So now I see why the "nothing" of life can never touch this love. It is inviolable, eternal, securing my permanent spot in my Father's kingdom forevermore—however long that may be! I have a permanent love-spot in my Father's heart. Period.

Even my sin does not affect it. Even my failing Him, disappointing Him, and everybody else—can't jostle it. His love is there for me, just because He wants it to be and not at all because of my good behavior. Though I abandon Him, He loves me still. Though I curse Him, He deflects the curse of my ignorant heart and loves me still.

God loves you. You want to run away from God and most of all way from yourself. So what? The love of God stands firm for you. Furthermore, God relentlessly and persistently loves you. Regardless of what you feel or fail to feel in prayer, while you were lost in your sins, hopeless and helpless, Jesus died for you. Nothing you have done, are doing, will do, can every change that. It happened in history, not at the emotional whim of God's heart. It is done.

And one day, you too will be swept away in awe at the realization of what Father has done for you.

You are His own! It will never be any different. Once upon a time, you gave Him your heart. Maybe you were a child and you wonder if you even knew what you were doing or if it “counts.” I tell you, God collects on the commitments of childhood. In my own case it was 22 years before that commitment revolutionized my life, but it did! I could wish it had been a lot sooner; I do wish it had been, but it was not.

In this dismal season, let your roots go down deep into the well-watered soil. Simply permit God to love you and deliver you and heal you. He is. He will. No striving on your part. And do keep this in mind: You have not “blown” the call of God on your life. The call is always before you, not behind you. He calls you to Himself. The details of your journey to there may vary considerably, but the end of it is the same. Don’t worry. You belong to Him and He will take care of His own.

It will save you measurable grief and detours, of course, to walk away from your own particular “fishing net and tax collection business” and to follow Him. That’s the real “running away” I’ve found. I, too, have struggled with that one. Oh, just to take off! Leave husband, job, children, church, and disappear.

Some do; I understand why. But God will not let me run away anymore, only into. Into Him. And there is where the true freedom is, from me, me, me! There at last, “that body of death” is taken away and I am a new, ever new, creation.

I recommend it!