

Masturbation, Sin, and Showers

A North Carolina native's personal essay on 'the fundamental guilt of growing up gay'

by Nathan Strang :: Bilerico.com



I would masturbate in my bed at night...my mother would often knock on my door:

"Nathan, I know what you are doing. Is that right in the eyes of the Lord?"

Ashamed, I'd fight a raging teenage erection...addicted to this feeling...I had to get off. But Mother was right, it was wrong! Why couldn't I be righteous? Why couldn't I follow His Way and be the man He wanted me to be? I couldn't help it though...I had to finish. Now even more cautious, I'd bury myself into the sheets, slowly massaging myself...I promise this will be the last time Lord! As I finish, I roll over, exhausted.

The bathroom was across the hall from my room. The walls were thin and I could hear her every night crying in the shower:

"Oh Lord, I don't know what to do anymore! My children have forsaken Your Word and reject me at every passing! I live in a house where no one respects me and my children deceive me!"

As my mother sobbed, continuing her watery flagellation, I prayed. I prayed for forgiveness. I prayed for peace for my Mother. I prayed to be a better son. I prayed to be a better man in the eyes of the Lord. I prayed for him to remove these despicable thoughts and to replace them with good things. I didn't know I was gay back then. I just knew I was full of sin and deceit.

I masturbated every night. I prayed for forgiveness every night. My Mother cried every night.

Everybody does it. I knew how to do it; it's programmed into every red-blooded American boy. I knew what to do. It started with the *National Geographics*. We had a bit of a collection in the past, and I would tear through every one, looking for a glimpse of human anatomy. There was no Internet, and Daddy never had any smut (that I could find). Mother was the spiritual post in the family, and she did a very good job of protecting my sister and me from the "evils" of the world. We were home-schooled, secular music and television both prohibited. Left with the one uncensored glimpse into the world, those pictures of burly bearded men in Russian saunas were the most erotic thing to me. Even to this day, it gets me off.

I was born gay, but I didn't know this at 13. All I knew was what I was told: it was my Sin Nature...

I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior at an early age. I was 8, at a day camp at the local YMCA. Across the slippery floor I ran to my Mother and shouted:

"I have Jesus in my heart!"

Just like that, JC and I were tight.

I participated in every church function imaginable; and — I thought at least — soon was growing up to be a righteous young man in the eyes of The Lord. I was growing up physically as well, and it wasn't long before I realized what felt good. It wasn't long before my Mother found out as well.

Impure thoughts.

I didn't know I was gay, but I knew I had impure thoughts. What was making me be so bad? I was taught that because of my Sin Nature we were predisposed to let our minds wander; left unchecked we could become rapists, sodomites, and could never reap the benefits of being God's Children. I didn't know I was gay, but I knew I was attracted to men. Sexually, I was confused, but I listened to my Mother. All of these deviant thoughts were keeping me from the "Kingdom of Heaven." I tried my hardest to stay away, but it was all around me! I tried to be repentant, and Mother was fervent in her efforts to bring me from the gutter.

As a homeschooler, I was both educated and reformed. Once, I was caught with a few slips of male pornography, remnants from one of my first and few times allowed online. Mother said my deviant behavior was destructive and painful to her (for subjecting her to the imagery), and destructive of my relationship with God. I was assigned

a paper to write. The topic: sexual deviancy. I wanted so dearly to be a good Southern Baptist boy, and began the research into biblical interpretations; they would serve as the tools to repress me. I did not know I was gay, but I knew I was a deviant.

Masturbation in itself was a triple sin. The act, coupled with homosexual thoughts and an apparently unrepentant heart, tormented me. It tormented my Mother as well. I wanted to make her happy. I wanted to make God happy. Some of the other boys from church "suffered" from masturbation, but they only had to turn off one thing: lust. I could try to stop the lust, but the unwanted thoughts kept coming back.

I didn't know I was a homosexual, but I thought I was broken. I would cry at night:

"Why Lord!? Why me? Why do I have to be the one to suffer like this? Why can't I stop these thoughts, why do I continue to hurt those around me? Take this from me Oh Lord! Make me right in your eyes, show me Your Path, and let me shine Your Light through me..."

The Lord did not take this away from me. I was left with an impossible quest to rid myself of something that would not go away. The depression left from tossing and turning all night, searching my soul for that radical "switch," it exhausted me.

My relationship with my Mother strained, as my Sin Nature made it hard for her to trust me. I could not have male friends for she feared I would molest them, and drag them down into sin with me. My parents were separated, and I was not allowed to spend time with my dad; she was afraid I would be corrupted by his secular ways. Despite my struggle as an apparent deviant, I continued to focus on the Bible. I became a summer missionary, went to revival camps, and filled my time with His Work. There was nothing else to do, there was no one else I could be.

I was 14, Mother had gotten a job, my sister turned 18 and moved out, and there was no one to supervise my homeschooling. I could no longer be trusted at home; I had to go to public school. My first day at High School, a friend from church brought me to the clique that would be my family for four years...the outcasts. Goth kids, trench coats, and snitty attitude aside, they took me in and started the work of unraveling this tangled little boy. I excelled in school, but got an F in social skills.

Liberated from my Mother's daily stricture, I slowly began to see the light. It was a secular light, but a light that warmed a part of me that was cold, scarred, and lonesome. I fractured into two people: this worldly young man who loved his new friends and felt respected, and a worried Christian, aware he was backsliding and feared the flames of hell and the wrath of God. The prayers for forgiveness appended with tormenting thoughts of the future. If I continue to backslide I would never be happy, I would hurt everyone I knew, and God would turn his back on me. To this day I fear one thing above all: eternity.

I did not know I was gay, but I knew I was of the world. Yearly, at some Christian revival or conference, I would rededicate myself to Christ. No more masturbation, no more impure thoughts! It would last about a week.

I was 16, fully integrated into school, trying desperately to be normal. I even found myself a girlfriend! Thank God for promise rings; we never had sex, and so my ability to even perform such an act with a woman was never questioned. I did love her though. My academic success allowed me to attend Governor's School, a startlingly liberal summer camp for the brightest students in North Carolina. It was held in beautiful historic Salem College, in Winston-Salem, NC.

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