other before we made any plans with other friends. I felt I would die if she withdrew from the relationship, even slightly. Our lives revolved around each other in a consuming sort of way. These qualities, I learned later, were all characteristics of an emotionally-dependent relationship.

My relationship with Kim lasted a year and a half, until my mom found out after discovering a love note I had written to Kim.

My mom demanded that the relationship stop, embarrassed to have a gay daughter. She also called Kim's mom, and together they plotted to end our love affair. Eventually they were successful.

Afterwards, at 17, I began to experiment with guys sexually to find out if I was really gay or not. Each time I felt used and degraded because the guys didn't care about me at all—they only wanted sex. As a result I knew I preferred being with a woman. I found it very gratifying, and it felt natural to me.

In college I continued in homosexuality. Once again, I enjoyed being the center of another woman's world. It also filled a void in my life as I deeply longed to be loved. My last girlfriend, who was seven years older, was a Christian and she struggled with guilt because she was brought up believing homosexuality was a sin. I struggled with guilt because she was married. Her husband worked 70-80 hours a week, leaving her emotionally needy and susceptible to looking outside her marriage to meet her needs.

While we were lovers, she stayed involved in her church throughout our 18-month relationship and her divorce. One day I expressed my interest in joining her church softball team. She told me I'd have to join the church and I told her no way. But for some reason the coach let me play.

I never anticipated the impact this softball team would have on me. My teammates were so loving and accepting. They knew I was different, but they never treated me like an outsider. I wanted to know more, and I wanted to experience what they had so I started going to church regularly.

I never dreamed that after all I'd done, God could still love me or that He would even want me. Here I was, a lesbian and a homewrecker. Though I felt disqualified, God still accepted me. I became a Christian in November 1989.

> ***"I never dreamed that after all I'd done, God could still love me. Though I felt disqualified, God still accepted me."***

My girlfriend and I wanted to do the right thing, but our physical relationship continued for many weeks. Eventually I broke off the friendship with my lover, but continued to suffer in silence with my homosexual desires. I was even angry at God for making me gay, not understanding that He doesn't make anybody homosexual. Like many lesbians, I chose this path because I had been trying to protect against further hurt from a man and I was looking for my mother's love that I didn't receive when I was a girl.

Then I heard the president of Exodus International on the radio. I marveled at the wisdom of this man, Sy Rogers, who obviously understood the struggle I was in as he counseled people on a call-in show. When he announced the date of a seminar in Orlando, just two hours from my hometown of Tampa, I made plans to attend.

That seminar changed my life as I heard Sy share his own story of overcoming a lifetime of homosexuality, and I was filled with hope that I could, too. I found out about an Exodus ministry in Tampa, and began attending weekly support group meetings where I learned about the roots of my homosexual struggles.

I also attended the annual Exodus conference that year in San Antonio. There I participated in a "makeover" session which had a deep impact on me. For the first time since I had been sexually abused, I wanted to be pretty, just like other women at church. As I walked back to my dorm room after the makeover, a thought hit me and stopped me in my tracks.

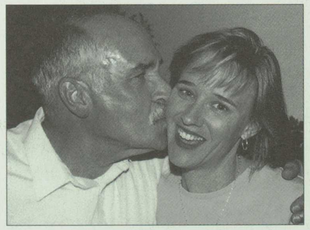
"Do you remember those girls back home at church that you envied because they were beautiful?" God seemed to be asking me. "You're no different. You are beautiful—just like them."

Stunned, I continued down the path to my dorm as tears stained my cheeks. All my life I struggled with intense feelings of inadequacy about being a girl and suddenly I saw myself as just like them.

When I returned to my church in Tampa, I asked all my friends to start calling me "Christine." Though it felt odd at first because I had always been "Chris," I wanted to embrace my femininity. In the church I met godly, strong women who helped me to see that being female wasn't a liability.

I also saw men in a different light. They were true friends, and they were interested in me, not sex. For the first time, I felt safe as a woman.

The key to my healing was developing healthy same-sex friendships. I also saw a counselor to help me deal with the sexual abuse and dysfunctional family issues while continuing my involvement in church and Exodus. With God's help and the support of caring people, homosexuality no longer casts a shadow on my life.



Christine and her father attended the 1999 Exodus conference together.

This summer my Dad and I attended the Exodus conference together, where I taught a workshop. I never dreamed that the man who first inspired me to believe that being a woman wasn't good or safe would one day accompany me as I went to tell others it's a lie. ◆

*This testimony first appeared in the September 1999 issue of **Charisma & Christian Life** magazine. Christine can be contacted at: Worthy Creations, PO Box 550637, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33355.*

▸▸ *CONTROVERSY*

National Gay Leaders Deny "Ex-gay" Claims

COLORADO SPRINGS—Leaders from some of the largest pro-gay organizations in the country met August 23-24 in Colorado Springs for a "National Religious Leadership Roundtable" conference to "affirm gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality." Organizers chose Colorado Springs as the meeting site because of the city's large evangelical Christian population.

"We are coming to the religious right's front porch in Colorado Springs to tell the world that they do not speak for all people of faith," said Laura Montgomery-Rutt, national organizer for Equal Partners in Faith.

Invitations to attend a panel discussion on the opening night were sent to local churches and organizations. Several ex-gay staff members at Focus on the Family, including Exodus chairman John Paulk, attended.

The local newspaper, *The Gazette,* said organizers wanted to "draw voices from both sides of the debate" but John said the ex-gay perspective was not represented.

Amy Tracy, a former lesbian who works at Focus on the Family, also attended the panel discussion, and said she was offended by the off-color jokes and sexual innuendoes exchanged among panel members. She cited one example: Judas's betrayal of Jesus with a kiss was made into a sexual joke. "That grieved me," Amy said, "and I felt it grieved God as well. I walked away with very little respect for the panelists because of those remarks."

In a letter published by *The Gazette,* pro-gay religious leaders singled out Focus on the Family for special condemnation because of the ministry's "false and inflammatory rhetoric against homosexuality and homosexuals."

But the letter, addressed to Dr. Dobson, was published in the newspaper before Dobson had even received a copy. "This was a deliberate political ploy," John Paulk said. "They were not truly interested in an open dialogue, in a meeting of the minds."

Dr. Dobson said, "This was primarily a political gathering, and not one designed to promote tolerance and understanding. It was to advance the cause of the homosexual activist movement."

John Paulk agreed. At the meeting, John handed a written note to the panel, apologizing for any Christians who had wrongly told them that God did not love gays and lesbians. "My apology was categorically denied by several of the panelists," he said. John also submitted a written question to the panel, "Do you believe my experience as a former homosexual is valid?"

After seeing his question, John said the atmosphere among the panel members changed. "It seemed like a veneer was removed. Previously, they had been smiling, happy and joking. But I saw real venom emerge in response to my question."

John said his experience as a former homosexual was totally invalidated. "They said the ex-gay movement is a sham, that ex-gays only exist within their own mind."

Later, Focus on the Family placed a full-page ad in *The Gazette* newspaper, defending the fact that homosexuals can change through the love and power of Jesus Christ.

Many say we don't exist.

We do.

We former homosexuals and our families have been changed by the transforming love of God.

The proclamation was given.

Last week, Mayor Mary Lou Makepeace issued a proclamation declaring this week PrideFest Celebration Week and honored the Pikes Peak Gay and Lesbian Community Center for their efforts within the city.

The Center believes the proclamation shows that Colorado Springs is "progressing in tolerance and diversity and becoming a world-class city." They hope the PrideFest would "create a sense of community and promote acceptance and understanding among lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people and the community at large."

Last Monday, a group of gay-affirming Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Muslim religious leaders held their bi-annual inter-faith meeting of the National Religious Leadership Roundtable here in Colorado Springs. We were personally invited to attend this gathering in hopes of establishing dialogue.

In good faith, we accepted their invitation.

We attended and listened to their cars. And as Focus on the Family staff members (*and* former homosexuals), we publicly apologized to the panel on behalf of every Christian who may have miscommunicated to homosexuals that God does not love them. We affirmed that God *does* love them. And as ex-gays, we asked if they validate our experience and conversion to heterosexuality.

They rejected our apology. And we were told that there is no such thing as an "ex-gay." Specifically, it was said to our faces, "You don't exist."

Is this tolerance?

Is this a *celebration of diversity*? Is this beginning a process of seeking dialogue about homosexuality and homosexuals? We think not. Indeed, the letter addressed to Focus on the Family speaking of dialogue and tolerance, was sent not to the ministry, but to *The Gazette.*

Why is it so difficult to accept that we were created by a God Whose transforming love does have the power to change a homosexual into a heterosexual? We are living proof. The love of Jesus Christ drew us out of homosexuality. We do exist.

Please, listen to our hearts.

Can it be possible that we are motivated by love rather than by hate? We *are* motivated by God's life-changing love for so—and even more so by His tremendous love for *homosexuals,* right where they are. His grace compels us to share the truth of our experience. Yet, it deeply saddens us that we are considered hateful because we believe that when anyone asks God for a relationship with Him, He always responds in love.

When we were in need, thankfully, there were some in the Church motivated by *love* who sought to understand us and were willing to walk beside us. We are growing in numbers. And now our families sit in your pews, play in your parks and live in your neighborhoods.

We genuinely care.

And we feel privileged to share with others our experience of the transforming power of God's love and forgiveness. Our sincerest desire is to offer the message of hope that's being silenced today: there *is* freedom from homosexuality through the unconditional love and grace of Jesus Christ. You can change into a new creation—the one God intended. We experienced His peace and rest by letting Him fill us with the amazing, genuine love we'd been searching for all our lives. And we are forever changed.

Focus on the Family stands ready to assist you in any way we can. Please call us at 1-800-A-FAMILY or visit us on the web at www.family.org

. . . *the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*

—John 6:37b (NKJ)

This full-page newspaper ad featuring ex-gays and their families appeared in the Colorado Springs Gazette.

A group of ex-gays and their families posed for the ad's photo, including John and his wife, Anne, and two sons; Doug Houck (*Where Grace Abounds*/Denver); Michael Haley and his wife, Angie (Focus on the Family); plus several others. "We are living proof [of change]. The love of Jesus Christ drew us out of homosexuality. We do exist," the ad said.•

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▸▸ *CALENDAR*

- **Oct. 15-16/Asheville, NC.** "Ministering to Sexual Brokenness" conference, featuring David Kyle Foster. Info: 828/258-8720.
- **Oct. 16/Austin, TX.** "Champions By Grace," the annual Southwest Central Exodus regional conference. Info: 512/930-3970.
- **Oct. 16/Fresno, CA.** "Homosexuality: A Christian Response in an Age of Confusion," featuring Joe Dallas, Bud Searcy, Russell Willingham, Donna Hopkins, & others. Sponsored by New Creation Ministries. Info: 559/227-1066.
- **Oct. 20-23/Atlanta.** "Family & Friends Weekend," featuring Anita Worthen and others. Sponsored by Resurrection Life. Details: 404/636-5924.
- **Oct. 22-23/Charlotte, NC.** Friday night "Mega Youth Rally"; and Saturday conference, "God, the Media, Sex, and Our Kids." Both events feature Mike Haley from Focus on the Family. Sponsored by Recovery House. Info: 704/536-6705.
- **Oct. 29-30/Johannesburg, South Africa.** "Living Waters for Africa" conference, featuring staff from Desert Stream (Los Angeles). Info: TRAILBlazers, phone: +27 11 704 1397; e-mail: trailblazers@icon.co.za.
- **Oct. 30/Elizabethtown, PA.** Second annual "Change My Heart" Sexual Healing Conference, followed by evening banquet. Sponsored by Day Seven Ministries. Info: 717/367-7117.
- **Nov. 5-6/Richmond, VA.** Healing seminar with Clay and Mary McLean, sponsored by Set Free. Info: 804/358-8150.
- **Nov. 6/Sacramento.** "Love Won Out" conference on youth and homosexuality, featuring Jane Boyer, Joe Dallas, Mike Haley, Joseph Nicolosi, John Paulk. Sponsored by Focus on the Family. Info: 719/531-3400.
- **Nov. 18-20/Crystal, MN.** "Pursuing Relational Wholeness" conference. Info: 612/537-8905, ext. 1115.