It was helpful to have both a friend who knew what I was going through because of being in a similar situation, and a straight friend who stood by me. Most of the friends to whom I "came out" over the years were, in fact, straight Christians, and only two of them reacted negatively. The rest of them continued to love me and to relate to me as they had before knowing.

Over the next few months, I got information from a local gay phone line and wondered whether my beliefs about what the Bible said were wrong. After much thinking, I concluded that God's intention for His creation really was for one man and one woman to be in a life-long committed relationship, and that anything else was wrong.

I did not know then whether change was possible, but decided that, even if nothing ever changed in regard to my sexuality, following Jesus was my first priority. This was a difficult decision for me—I knew that it could mean being single for the rest of my life.

That August, my family moved to London, Ontario. At university, one of the first people I met was a Christian med student named Ron, and we became friends. It took a long time for me to trust him enough to tell him why I was feeling so depressed. When I did, our friendship remained the good friendship that it had been.

Much later, Ron told me a story which he had heard in one of his classes, about an alcoholic doctor with two sons. After leaving work, this doctor would often drink enough to make the family dinner time a very unpleasant experience. His sons grew and got bigger and one day, before dinner, they tied him up in his study. His wife simply assumed he was working late. It was the first peaceful meal in a long time, and the boys used the same method on other nights.

At some point, after a neighbour noticed a light flashing on and off and discovered what was happening, the doctor went into treatment for alcoholism. The point of the story, though, was that while what the boys did worked, it didn't really solve the problem. It was a maladaptive way of coping with the situation. Somehow, this story made sense out of my own experience, and gave me a great sense of hope for dealing with my own past..

Two things happened during the years between hearing this story and starting to deal with my abuse. I learned a lot more about homosexuality, including alternate perspectives to those which were generally available. I began to see how the things that happened affected my sense of who I was, both as a person and in terms of my gender identity and sexuality.

I began to understand how my responses to what happened, like shutting out my dad when I felt rejected, further affected my sense of who I was. It later became clear that my sexual fantasies about men mirrored the unresolved abuse from my childhood, and were an attempt to reconnect with the masculinity which I lacked. Trying to get worth and masculinity from other men was, for me, a "maladaptive way of coping with the situation."

Secondly, I learned that God really loved me. I very much needed to know in my heart that I mattered to Him and that He loved me as I was. I didn't have to change first, or solve all my problems; in fact, there was nothing which I could do to get Him to love me more than He already did. Having grown up in a church, I knew in my mind that God loved me. But my experience with my earthly father, whom I felt did not love me, made it hard for me to believe in my heart that God my heavenly Father really loved me.

Part of what helped me heal in this area was to separate "my two fathers." This enabled me to love my earthly dad, to see him as a man who has many good qualities along with his shortcomings, and a man who was a better father to me than his father was to him. And I could see my heavenly Father more clearly as One who always loves me and is always there for me.

Knowing that God really loved me gave me a solid base from which to deal with the abuse of my childhood. As I worked through first one incident, then another, I began to see the lies which I had believed. The abuse told me I was good for nothing; God tells me that I am very precious and that the abuse should never have happened. The abuse told me that I was bad; God tells me that what happened is not my fault.

As I grieved the loss of my childhood and my innocence, God held me and comforted me. He also placed around me a number of friends who helped me through this painful time. One of them was a woman named Wendy, who had been my colleague for about five years. Over those years, a good friendship developed, and almost without knowing it, I came to love her. We were married in July 1991, not in the mistaken belief that marriage "cures" homosexuality, but because I truly loved her and was attracted to her. This was a great surprise to me; I hadn't expected to get married, nor had I been sexually attracted to women before.

I used to be—but am no longer—exclusively homosexual. I now experience sexual attraction to women, and find my physical relationship with Wendy very satisfying. Though I still experience some attraction to men, I expect this will continue to decrease as the abuse and its shame are worked through, and as I gain a greater sense of my masculinity.

I have to keep going to God. I need to have His truth and His light shine on the lies which I have believed for too long. He really knows who I am, and all that He created me to be, and I look forward to its continued unfolding in my life. ◆

"I decided that, even if nothing changed in regard to my sexuality, following Jesus was my first priority."

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▸▸ *CONFERENCE*

Parents Gather for Fellowship, Encouragement

Some of those who attended the East Coast "Family & Friends" weekend included (l-r) Bud and Sandra Phaup, Alan Medinger (speaker), Anita Worthen (speaker), Billie Lou and Stokes Liles.

COLUMBIA, SC—Exodus board member Anita Worthen was excited earlier this year as she made last-minute plans to teach at the first "East Coast Family and Friends" weekend in late March.

"I receive many calls from moms in the Southern States whose child has just told them 'I'm gay,'" Anita explained. "Because of their culture, [these parents] seem to have a more difficult time than most sharing this distressing news with hometown friends."

Then came an unexpected hitch: Anita's husband, Frank, who was also scheduled to be a featured speaker, got so ill that he had to be admitted to hospital. Anita was stressed out, knowing that many coming to the weekend conference were eagerly anticipating her husband's testimony of overcoming homosexuality (Frank is one of the founders of Exodus; he was active in a gay lifestyle for over two decades before leaving homosexuality in 1973).

At the last minute, another veteran Exodus leader, Alan Medinger, agreed to fill in for Frank. Alan has been in ex-gay ministry since 1979 and also has a dynamic testimony of overcoming homosexuality.

"It certainly was a stressful time of preparation but the weekend was well worth it!" Anita said. "As we arrived Friday, the workers were setting out extra chairs because more people were arriving than they had prepared for."

When the audience broke up into small groups on Saturday, Anita suggested they divide into two groups depending on whether they had a gay son or daughter. Anita joined the group with a gay son and "found the Southerners very open and ready to share. I really enjoyed my time," she said.

Anita and Frank Worthen are hosting another "Family and Friends" weekend in the San Francisco Bay Area Aug. 20-21. Other guest speakers include Starla Allen and Exodus director Bob Davies.

If you live on the West Coast, or wish to include this event in your summer vacation plans, the Worthens extend a warm invitation for you to attend. Call their office at (415) 453-6475 for further information.

Anita also says she is willing to help sponsor other similar events around the country, if a local group is interested. Call Anita at the above number for more information on this exciting opportunity. •

Exodus Portrayed in Stage Play

SEATTLE—A one-man theater piece about ex-gay ministry was presented at a Seattle gay bar in April and May.

"Straight" featured David Schmader, who wrote the two-act show after being part of group meetings at *Metanoia Ministries,* the Exodus affiliate ministry in Seattle. The play caricatures a three-day retreat in Texas for ex-gays, featuring football for the men and make-overs for the women.

Schmader's play is not the only drama about Exodus. *The Advocate,* a national gay newsmagazine, featured an article about Craig Chester's screenplay about an ex-gay who attended the 1996 national conference in Boston.

Save Me is "a gay romantic comedy" about one gay man's experiences at an Exodus ministry. Production was set to begin in the early spring of 1999, according to the article. •

▸▸ *CALENDAR*

• **Aug. 12-15/Washington, DC.** Annual "Courage" (Roman Catholic) conference, featuring Fr. John Harvey, Joe Dallas, and others. Info: 212/268-1010.

• **Aug. 14/Wheaton, IL.** "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: 1-800-A-FAMILY or 719/531-3400.

• **Aug. 14/Houston.** "Freedom From Homosexuality" seminar, sponsored by Christian Coalition for Reconciliation. Info: 713/465-7045.

• **Sept. 10-11/Largo, FL.** "Sexual Healing Seminar," featuring David Kyle Foster. Sponsored by Set Free If You Want to Be. Info: 727/586-3733.

• **Sept. 10-12/Enid, OK.** Mid-Central Regional Exodus Conference, featuring Bob Davies and others. Info: Freedom At Last, 316/945-7050.

• **Sept. 24-25/Birmingham, AL.** "Sexual Healing" conference at Christ Charismatic Episcopal Church, featuring David Kyle Foster. Info: 205/787-2053.

• **Sept. 25/Clear Lake, TX.** "Sexual Wholeness Conference," featuring Dr. Michael Tutt, Tim Gould, Dr. Marlin Lance, Lynne Russell. Sponsored by Sexual Wholeness Ministries. Info: 281/992-8800.