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BEYOND SELF-PROTECTION: A STORY OF LIFE

BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND—I was born the second and unwanted child of professional parents. We were the classic dysfunctional family and I suffered physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as neglect.

My parents enrolled me in Convent school at age 3½, where I stayed until I was 17½. Some of that time I boarded and some I was a day pupil. My family is not Catholic, so this experience was for “my own good.” However, it was a nightmare experience, which included me being left there alone for a full week while everyone else, including my parents, went on summer vacation.

So I learned early that when no-one else was there, God always was. I became a Christian at 12, although because of the religious teaching at school, I had always believed in God and loved Him.

Because of my strict upbringing, I didn’t do a lot of socializing. Consequently, I didn’t date. In fact, it didn’t occur to me to think about sexuality at that age.

I became increasingly unhappy at home after enduring years of my mother’s constant yelling, whether I was waking up or going to sleep. Also there were her constant accusations that I was being promiscuous, when in fact I was at Bible studies. The sexual abuse and the personal conviction I had—that I was bad, totally wicked—came to a head.

I felt trapped: totally, utterly trapped. I couldn’t get help from anyone outside the family, because who would believe me? My parents were pillars of the community. It had also always been made clear to me that if I ever at-

tempted to leave home, I would be dragged back by the scruff of the neck. I attempted suicide. It seemed my only way out.

I was introduced into homosexuality around age 18 by an American pastor. He asked me to befriend a girl whom he knew to be a lesbian. She “fell in love” with me, so I decided to experiment by responding. I socialized in gay bars, yet still attended church meetings. I couldn’t give up my faith, but it didn’t seem to be meeting my needs.

Later, I had a wonderful career opportunity to work for the Royal Scottish Ballet Company—a dream come true! However, the manager happened to mention that the person I would be working with “was a dyke” and had sexually conquered every woman who had worked with her.

I had a choice. I could follow the career of my dreams, or walk away and probably never work in theatre again. If I stayed, I knew I’d get involved with this woman, because it was what I wanted. But I also knew that I would become so involved in homosexuality that I would probably lose my faith.

I chose to lose my career.

Then I decided I needed to shake myself up as a Christian and be more serious about my commitment. I turned my back on lesbian activities, became more involved in church, and shortly after was introduced to Gary, who became my husband. He was already in full-time Christian work, so it seemed natural that after we married and underwent further training, we would take up pastoral and teaching roles in a leading charismatic church in Scotland.

When inner healing/deliverance ministry was introduced into

the church, I responded. Sadly, this simply resulted in further abuse. Those I came into contact with seemed at best well-meaning amateurs; at worst, they were in need of serious healing themselves. So, as the years went on, I became progressively more skeptical about “healing” ministry.

By this time, Gary and I were established in independent Christian teaching and counseling. In America, we eventually got involved in ministry to people overcoming homosexuality. All was going reasonably well, and I never gave my own past lesbian experience a thought.

This didn’t last. After we returned to the UK and settled in Ireland, I was in total culture shock. Belfast was radically different from the life I had enjoyed in New York, I was pregnant with child number four, Gary was unemployed, and we were broke. Then came the final straw: my parents told me they were planning to move from Scotland to live beside us in Belfast!

I couldn’t cope. I threw myself into work and study—anything to numb the torturous pain I felt. Ironically, I studied advanced psychology and worked in a very intensive Child Abuse Unit.

Eventually, I couldn’t control the pain. In near-hysteria, I argued with myself that my own childhood pain had been dealt with, so how could that be a problem? Then I decided: My problem was not my past abuse, but the fact that I was indeed gay, always had been, and why had I lived all these years trying to deny it?

I argued with God. Although I knew He loved me, I couldn’t feel His arms around me. So I

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