

## **In Jars of Clay, by Willard (Ouija) Sink**

### Jeremiah 18:3-5

*"So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot He was shaping was marred in His hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seems to best to Him."*

Remembering my childhood before the years of 7 and 8 is still like looking through a thick fog. I remember my Mother as angry, very unhappy, and she lived isolated from her family and neighbors and had no friends. She was a very lonely woman, a perfectionist, and everything had to be kept in perfect order and her house was "her world". My Dad was always working and when at home he was busy in the garden and with other projects and wasn't involved with the family. Most conversations between my parents was usually arguing and fighting about something.

I was not allowed to play in the house even in the winter because my Mother didn't want the house messed up and she said that I was messy. I was always very lonely, had few friends, and wasn't allowed to invite anyone over to play. I remember always being alone and feeling unloved and unwanted and I know that I was never held or touched but slapped often. I do not remember having family conversations and the only communicating I remember was my parents yelling at me, or correcting me for doing something wrong and I was often called stupid and my Mother hitting me often. I remember one day when I was helping my Mother clean the house, and she became very angry that I had not sufficiently dusted the tables in the living room and she went into the kitchen and grabbing a knife she came after me in a tirade. I hid under the dining room table and when she was off guard I ran out the door into the orchard and climbed up in a tree. I often hid in the trees in the orchard. Sometimes when she was angry I would hide in a huge corn field across the road from the house and I remember being sexually molested in the corn field. I didn't understand why.

At around the age of 9 I was sexually molested by a family friend for over several years. I tried to tell my Mother and she said she never wanted to hear something like that come out of my mouth again and I remember feeling hurt, scared, and lonely and very confused by what was being done to me. I had no one I could talk to, and no one to help me understand what was happening. How could I understand why these things were being done to me? I remember my life as very hard.

We seldom attended church except at Christmas and Easter as a family and I have no recollections of attending at Thanksgiving. My Grandmother on my Dad's side lived in a small house behind us and was a kind and religious woman and an elderly neighbor would pick us up and take us with him to church. Some Sundays we walked to a nearby German Baptist Church where the men sat on one side and the women on the other.

From the first grade to the seventh grade my parents never attended any of my school activities and any schoolwork done at home was on my own. I failed both the first and second grades and was held back to repeat those grades because the teachers said I was very slow. I remember feeling very ashamed and humiliated and stupid. I was always skinny and awkward, and the other kids made fun of me. I was often called names by the other kids. I remember being called dummy, faggot, sissy, queer, and 4 eyes. I didn't know what some of the words meant.

My Dad was a strong man, good hunter, and a fisherman but he never took me hunting and fishing and I remember asking him if I could go and he laughed and said maybe some other time. He never took the time to teach me anything about hunting and fishing or take me with him. He never played with me or taught me how to play any male sports like other fathers. I was everything but athletic and coordinated, so I was always the last to be picked for teams at school and I was embarrassed and humiliated. It hurt because it said to me, "No one wants you and I felt like I had no worth. I have heard many times sticks and stones may break your bones but words can never hurt you". That statement, in my opinion, is a lie and brings destruction to the soul, and birthed in hell! You can heal from sticks and stones, but words continue to haunt and crush your heart and spirit.

In the 8th grade I knew that I was more interested and attracted to boys than girls. I wanted the guys to like me, but I was rejected by most of the guys and was more comfortable around the girls. I look back and clearly see that I was always oriented to my own sex and I frequently acted out homosexually. This attraction bothered me deeply and I was in counseling and received psychological counseling but it didn't help. The next 6 years of my life were a downward spiral which took me deeper into the darkness of acting out homosexually. By the time I graduated from the academy and went to college, I was absorbed and obsessed with homosexuality and living as a "closeted gay man".

I thought leaving home would solve my loneliness, rejection, and abuse and by going away to a private school I would be safe, so I asked my father and he agreed. I looked into several schools, finding a private boarding academy, Augusta Military Academy in Fort Defiance, Virginia, only a few hours away. I thought it wasn't so far away that I couldn't find my way back home, but it was far enough away that I thought I would be safe. I was accepted to enter the 9th grade at AMA and entering my first year I felt scared and alone and for the next 4 years I boarded at the academy. An all male school is not always healthy and the male faculty had more than it's share of abusive and homosexual faculty. I went from pain to deeper pain. During summer vacations, along with many other young boys whose parents found it inconvenient to have them come home, I went to the Academy Summer Camp until fall classes resumed. Over these years I would visit for short breaks at home, and for a few days everything was good, but in just a short time I would find that life was hard and I needed to leave. Life was hard but I always believed that God was good. I graduated from the academy and applied to Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia.

My freshman year at Roanoke College was a disaster. I was acting out sexually and I started drinking too much and I was put on academic probation. At the end of my second semester I was asked to withdraw. My parents were furious and my Dad told me to get out, and that I would never amount to anything. I knew a wonderful religious lady who was the Mother of a female friend and went to talk to her. She was very encouraging and told me about a college that I might get into (I needed to avoid being drafted) because she knew the President of the college. The next day, it was a Saturday, she had set up an appointment for me to meet with Dr. James Comstock, President of Shenandoah Bible College. And that was the beginning of another new and wild experience of "GOD showing up in my life" and seeing that God is good. I remember as we drove up Mill Mountain to the College seeing a large sign "Welcome to Shenandoah Bible College". I had never heard of a "BIBLE College"?

Dr. James Comstock was very kind and radiated warmth and kindness. The only really clear thing I remember about my interview with Dr. Comstock was a question he asked me. After many "just getting to know me questions, he asked me if I was a Christian. I clearly remember thinking to myself, "I was born in Roanoke, Virginia, I am an American, so what else in the hell" could I be? "Wow! Was I in for a surprise and a roller coaster ride! I was told that it would be best for me to live on campus and I could move in on Monday and start school. He handed me a Student Guide with information and included the Do's and Don't's of SBC.

During my first year at Shenandoah I heard and believed I understood for the first time the "Gospel". \*Romans 3:1C declares "None is righteous, no not one; no one understands; no one seeks God." I understood we all needed a Savior and I understood that I desperately needed Jesus! Again I asked Jesus to come into my heart. I had walked down church isles at least 3 times before and confessed my wanting Jesus but evidently by my lifestyle I thought It didn't take before but, my understanding was so beyond as I had been reading Joseph Alleine's, "An Alarm to the Unconverted". But this time it seemed different! God seemed to be drawing me to Himself in a way that I was aware of and there was no doubt that I was drastically changing as never before. And I must say in ever a book scared was scaring the hell out of me that one was! For several years while attending Shenandoah. I was so busy in "church stuff" that I didn't act out on my homosexual feelings as frequently and was "straight" for long periods of time not really understanding that my feelings were only suppressed. The dark hole in my heart was still there. I believed that God was calling me into the ministry but I knew that something was very, very wrong. I sought help from several professors to no avail. "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come."( 2 Corinthians 5:17) I thought I understood this verse, but I didn't understand why my homosexual desires continued to surface. I now understand that a better interpretation from the Greek is "If you are in Jesus-a process of transformation has been initiated and will continue to unfold in your life."

I don't remember how many therapists I sought for help, but no one seemed to be able to help me and most therapists wanted to help me accept who they thought I was and embrace my homosexual identity. I just could not believe that God had created me this way and that I was to accept this as a way of life. I tried many things including drugs, shock treatments and Aversion Therapy, but nothing worked for any length of time. If there was anyone out there who claimed to have healing powers, and healing meetings I would attend and over time I had tried them all! I did not want to be homosexual and I did not believe that God had created me a homosexual or to have to live homosexuality.

In 1966 I confided in a pastor about my homosexual struggles that I trusted. He was a dear man but his advice was disastrous .He told me that if I would find the right woman and get married she would straighten me out! I took his advice! I already knew a wonderful Christian girl sooooo I had found the right woman and within a year I proposed and on June 17, 1967 we were married! I found the right woman and I married the right woman but that didn't "straighten me out". That was the beginning of a time of joy filled with heartaches and pain. We were married for 33 years and on August 15, 2000 my wife Sharon died after an 18 months battle with pancreatic cancer. Those 33 years were packed with many wonderful experiences including the births of 5 wonderful children. Our life was also filled with struggles, failures, and heartaches, and those years were

plagued with my continuing to seek pastoral and psychiatric help and fighting depression. I was on a number of medications for most of those 33 years. Still I found myself exactly where I had always started, with a dark hole in my soul, hating that I had same-sex attraction, living a closeted life and not understanding why. \*Romans 7:15 "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." Throughout those years I struggled with my identity, homosexuality and life was very difficult at times, but I never question God's goodness.

As my wife was dying God was doing amazing things in my life. He turned my world upside down and inside out. For several months I thought I would die and death seemed to be all around me. As I grieved through my wife's death God began to reveal Himself more clearly. Now feeling left alone, I began searching out all I could about homosexuality. I was convinced that God had something more for me. A friend and pastor Hunter Dockery of many years knew about my struggle and had on several occasions introduced me to people who had struggled and had "changed" or were changing. He visited regularly and was very involved with me, my wife, and children through the months that she fought cancer. He made himself available listening and processing with me about death, life, and my pain and my struggles. He became very involved in my life as he saw how troubled and desperate I was. Hunter very clearly, to me, cared about me as a person and I was not a project! I felt that I mattered" to Hunter. God knew that I needed someone to incarnate with me who was willing to enter "my pit" in order to understand me and my world and to help me out of the pit. (Seeing Jesus' Love as Incarnation) I began to search out many reparative programs, and conferences dealing with homosexuality, and read many books on homosexuality and sexual brokenness. I often would often dialogue with Hunter about what I was reading and learning. He often helped me understand what I was reading in light of the Scriptures, guiding me to see what God said on the subjects. The more I studied, and sought more therapy the more clearly I began to identify and understand my wounds and brokenness. I began to realize and continue to learn that the most dramatic power in my healing is not in the many books, the programs and conferences and psychological counseling but in the work of Hunter Dockery with me. I was amazed at just how much God did have to say! Hunter worked with me one -one and helped me build a community of believers to love me and walk with me. As I listened to the Word of God being taught, and studied the Scriptures, and God continued to transform me.

I continue to experience healing as I understand my need of Christian men being actively involved in my life and especially the "men not like me" who are willing to get involved in my life, challenging me, also entering my messy world and loving me in spite of my being a broken man.

Quoting \*Galatians 5:16 " But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." I am learning how to walk and live by the Spirit. And Galatians 5:25 says "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." I am learning what it means to be in the process of yielding to Him. I am experiencing the pain and joys of the journey of healing and it is an ongoing journey. In learning about the healing process of transitioning from homosexuality to heterosexuality, I have learned that my sin of homosexuality is no different than all the other sins named in the Scriptures. God's mind for me is to deal with my sin and all sins, to seek Him to be holy, reflecting Him and to bear the image of Jesus. God's will is that I transition from homosexuality to holiness.

Galatians 5:22- 24 says:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

Life can be very hard at times but God continues to show himself to be so very good and full of love, grace, and mercy.

What God has done in 65 years of my life is amazing. For most of my life I was a broken and shattered vessel and now I am experiencing God shaping me into a new vessel.

Today I stand amazed and live in awe of God.