

November 2016

Dear Friend,

Even those of us who affirm the uniquely transforming power of the biblical gospel can still have our confidence in that power deepened when we read about people like “Jane” (she gave us permission to use her real name, but we decided not to). For she has been transformed from a lesbian who grew up in the Mormon church to an evangelical seminarian who just started graduate training to enhance her ministry of sharing that message of deliverance to others. Here is a brief summary of her story.

She grew up in the Mormon church and later engaged in same-sex relationships for seventeen years. Her occasional encounters with some Christians filled her with shame as she was told that her lifestyle would send her to a “special place in hell.” One of her Christian friends shared the gospel more compassionately, however, and gave her a Bible. Even then, that Bible remained unopened for over ten years.

Then Jane came to a low point in her life and remembered the Bible that had been given to her. Searching for meaning, she read verses like 1 Corinthians 6:9 and was convicted of her need for grace and forgiveness. Shortly thereafter, she embraced the gospel and her heart was changed.

Several years after this conversion, she began co-leading a ministry at her church that focuses on helping both those who struggle with same sex attraction and those who are impacted by someone with that struggle. The ministry seeks to emulate how Jesus would respond to both groups in truth and love. One specific goal is encouraging gay people to make Him the center of their lives rather than their sexual identity.

More recently, wanting a deeper understanding of the Bible to better equip her for this continuing ministry, she decided to go back to school. In her own words...

One of the pastors at my church recommended Western Seminary; he thought it would be the perfect fit for me. He was spot on! I was extremely nervous to be on campus until Dr. Ron Marrs asked us to write our bio's. I shared a brief version of my testimony and ministry which made me nervous; I didn't know what to expect. Ron responded in such a caring and non-judgmental manner that my nervousness was settled. My first week intensive is almost complete and my decision to come to Western has been validated. The faculty and staff at Western are seeping with the knowledge I am longing for. Every

person I have been in contact with has exemplified what it means to be a follower of Christ; they are kind, caring, and teach the truth of the Bible with compassion. They are everything I am striving to become. I am thankful to have the opportunity to learn from these people.

I have never felt known, loved and accepted by a group of people in such a short amount of time. This includes the staff and my classmates. I am blown away by how my classmates and teachers are interested in my ministry. It amazes me how a group of us spent an additional 1.5 hours one night (after four eight-hour days in class) speaking about how we can effectively approach the LBGT community. It motivates me to continue living and serving in the name of Jesus in a loving and truth-filled way.

I am thankful that someone loved me enough to share the Good News with me, and now it is my turn to use my story for God's glory.

Jane's testimony exemplifies both the life-changing impact of the gospel and the loving community that it creates when people take seriously its values. While politics and laws have their place in our civic life, they can never produce the breadth and depth of transformation that the gospel empowers. The invisible (but radical) change in our spiritual position that comes from trust in Christ will manifest itself in a visible (but equally radical) change in our daily practice. Those transformed attitudes and actions in turn "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior" (Tit. 2:10), beautifying the gospel as we proclaim the good news of new life in Christ to others. It is that proclamation to which Jane has dedicated her life.

As 2016 comes to a close, would you please prayerfully consider making an investment in the equipping of people like Jane? For your gifts help make trustworthy, gospel-centered training as affordable as possible for people like her. We all know that significant errors in theology and morality can have tragic consequences, both in this life and in the life to come. That is why we need more people like Jane who have been transformed by that truth, who are well-grounded in the truth, and who are courageous enough to share that truth with others, even when it may be unpopular or controversial.

Yours for the gospel,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Randy Roberts".

Randy Roberts  
President