

Finding Comfort

We are all on a journey discovering ourselves, for me that journey involved a period of cross-dressing and finding comfort in the deep love of God.

When did it start? I recall painting my face with water colour paints and answering the back door to my best friend, I must have been around 8 I think. He said nothing – he probably didn't notice. I remember a scout pageant of knights of old, and what we wore looked like a dress – I wore it again at home and it felt more like one. Then there were years of wearing clothing from my mother's store of clothes she wore when she was young, and no longer wore, and clothes that people gave her.

I remember the years working out how to create a girl's shape with many pairs of pants, and the padding of socks and stockings under suitable undergarments, back in the 60's they were boned and created to curve you quite effectively. Spending time creating, forming, making up and becoming a girl however briefly – became an addiction for me. Only for me, only once I ventured out in the garden, but was never seen by others. I would actively avoid being asked to dress as a girl in plays, but secretly thought I could do it better than those who did.

There was always a thrill in the risk of being found out, the frantic hiding in the toilet if mother came home early and gradually sneaking the clothes back. The pleasure when dressing up becoming linked to sexual feelings as adolescence progressed, reinforcing the desire and the satisfaction. What would it be like to be a girl? My relationship with real girls were not at all successful. I was a boy – yet confused seeking comfort inside?

Why did it start? - “If you had been a girl we would have called you Helen”, mother said. She had lost a daughter at the age of 4, my step sister, – somehow I tried to replace that daughter in an effort to make mother love me and not physically punish me as she did. Dad was quiet and said little especially when in a sulk, when there had been a falling out between Mum and Dad.

Mother said once – can I ask you something personal – I said no. Maybe she knew? I hoped nobody knew! it was my inner secret my inner shame. I remember in my teens worrying that if I had a drink I would reveal my secret - it didn't happen.

When I left for college at 18 the clothes were gone – I never brought any of my own – I used to borrow garments from the lodgings where I stayed – always returning them undetected. The cross-dressing always hidden. I had this dream of being dressed up and travelling in my car having changed on the way – I never had the courage to be seen and certainly not “come out” in any way.

The desires to dress up diminished in my mid 20's and seemed to stop when I formed a stable relationship with my now wife in my late 20's. I told her about my past habit and when I started to seriously explore having an active Christian faith I was introduced to the Christian Healing Ministry I told a Christian minister and for the first time felt that I had faced the fear with God. That seemed to be an important release – that is not to say it was entirely the end of the thoughts – at times I would take an avid interest in the underwear departments of stores or catalogues and in the clothes put aside for jumble sales. But I resisted wearing women's clothing, only occasionally adapting my male outfits in some way.

Through many years, I'm in my late 50's now, there seemed to have been a shame deep inside that clouded my personality. Through many times of Christian prayer ministry I have come now to accept that God accepts me and does not condemn me. When I have been aware of the deep love that Jesus has for me, I have been able to release the pain that is inside. That pain of unfulfilled love from my mother and my attempt to win love through a false created self. I have seen how much the heavenly Father wants to show me the "Father love" which I did not demonstrably receive. I have come to know that I am an adopted son - my orphaned heart is being healed.

There are times when I forget the love and acceptance that is there – when my mind tries to run an old tape – the "enemy" wants me to feel worthless, outside hope, ashamed, and when you are involved in Christian Ministry as I am, that is not a route that can be followed. So I try to turn my thoughts to what is good and honourable and true. At some point the living God breaks in again – when I find Him, or rather He finds me, I feel restored, re-found, knowing that only in Jesus am I completely free, as the hymn says, "His Grace has brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home".

If you have a Christian faith you may know of the Father's love – if not I do pray that you will be helped to find it. I am still on a journey to find my true self – those early years made quite a mess. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory. Knowing you are loved can bring you into a place of freedom and living hope and remove the years of shame. May God bless you in your journey.

Richard

(Richard – not his real name – is a Christian minister in the UK)