



TESTIMONIAL: **GABRIELE**

I'm 38 years old and I come from Naples, Italy. Since I was very small I felt something inside me that I can't explain, what made me feel that I was different from everyone else. In fact, I wasn't like the other boys; my desires were different.

I remember that I liked to play with girls' toys like dolls and instead of playing with the other boys my age I played with the girls. I liked playing and being with the girls. I didn't know what it meant but I knew I was different from the other boys. My mother would get mad and would tell me not to be like that, that I was a boy not a girl, and that would hurt me. I would have liked to change, sometimes, but I felt such a strong desire to be feminine and I didn't know where it came from. Sometimes I would think, "I don't want to do it, but I like it so why not, what's wrong anyway?" But I knew that not everyone looked at it as a normal thing and my parents and my friends started teasing me and telling me that I was a little girl. I can't explain it, but as I grew up this "second personality" began to possess me. I remember looking affectionately at a friend of mine in grade school and feeling very attracted to him, as though I wanted to be somebody special to him. That's how this lie began to grow in my mind.

CHILDHOOD

When I was with my friends I had to hide my tendencies from them because I knew that what was growing in me was wrong. I wanted to dress differently and I always looked for colorful things. I was very attracted to women's clothes: dresses, jewelry and everything that glittered. I began to have some battles within me because I didn't want to accept the fact that I was a male and this brought a lot of bitterness into my family. Thinking it would do me good, my parents sent me away to a catholic boarding school, but that didn't help at all. I left the school at sixteen, after living there for three years. I told my mother I was changed but I was really just the same, or worse, because those desires had continued to grow. In reality I couldn't accept myself any longer as a man but I still had to hide because of the trouble it caused to others.

I began working and another four years passed, then I decided to face life for myself. I was attracted to the homosexuals that lived in the same part of town where I lived. There were a lot of young guys that made themselves up like women and were prostitutes. I like their way of living. I was filled with rebellion towards my parents and just then I met a friend who fed my desirous fires by telling me that they couldn't stop me from being what I was. Even though I knew that it was a dark reality, I was bound to it and couldn't get free. So I decided to leave home and live with my friend who taught me how to act and look like a woman. He taught me to shape my eyebrows, wear make-up and dress like a woman. It was bliss to everything that I had ever wanted! He made me understand that I was like this because it was something inside of me, and I believed and desired everything he said. I thought this was the way for me and that there wasn't any other solution for my life.

THE BLACK TUNNEL

I was working and was just living on the street. Then he told me I needed to earn some money so I began to prostitute myself. I liked being on the street and getting looked at. It was a way for me to release all that pent up frustration that I had kept in me for so long, a way to release the femininity that dominated me, a way to live differently. For years, I had walked in a black tunnel: believing that the only way to find myself and be happy was to live as a woman, and yet seeing the others around me being repulsed and rejecting my strange ways. I had begun to feel hurt inside because, in the beginning, I didn't understand that they were rejecting me, but then I painfully realized that I had become an outcast to society.

I got picked up by the police, and they put me on records which made me feel bad. I started to see that everything wasn't going my way. I couldn't convince anyone that I didn't want to be like this but there was something in me that drove me to it. I thought maybe it would be better if I was completely transformed. I began to take hormones and perfect my female imitations. I told myself, "I'm this way and I'm going to make something of it anyway." "It's nature's mistake!". I thought, "I've been created differently." That's how I tried to justify my way of living. I was living with others who were changing their bodies and their faces surgically to take away their masculine aspects and make themselves look more feminine. But there was something inside of us that wasn't working out.

THE FIRST RAYS OF LIGHT

Sometimes I would justify myself by saying, "I am a woman in a man's body." I saw my friends coming back from London after having sex change operations, because that is the ultimate aim that a transvestite can reach to feel like a real woman. It was the last frontier that remained before me. But I saw them falling into depression, they didn't feel accepted and they never did reach their dream.

While I was out prostituting myself on the street, I noticed that the people who would come with me were full of dejection and sadness. They were looking for someone to talk to, someone on whom to pour out their frustrations. I realized that I wasn't feeling bad because I chose to follow this life, but that mankind on a whole was feeling bad.

One evening I came back home and I was really sad. I don't remember where I'd been, maybe at some night-club on a rainy night. I just remember that I felt so bad and was in indescribable pain. It was a physical pain; I felt like I was dying inside and I began to cry out to God saying, "God, why was I ever born? Why do I have to suffer so much? Why can't I live like a normal person, have a wife and family, be happy, love and live a quiet life?" As I lie in bed I began to praise God and feel great joy inside. In that moment it was as if a light came beside me and I wanted to touch it, but then it went away. I'm not sure what happened that day, but I'm sure God touched me. This happened three or four years before I got saved, but it left its mark in my heart. Talking to a friend I said, "There must be a way we can change. Why do we have to keep on living a lie and feeling bad to even talk about it. We aren't accepting ourselves, and no one else is accepting us." My friend answered, "So, what would you like to do about it.?" This is our life and we'll never be able to change; we're in the ring and we'll never get out."

THE LOVE OF GOD

I thank God that one year ago I met a believer named Biagio who comes from the same background as I. He had been a homosexual, but I hadn't seen him for four years. I had heard that he had changed but I hadn't understood what had really happened to him. When I saw him again, I saw that he had really changed. He was dressed normal, and above all, I could see a change on his face and in his expressions. He told me how Jesus Christ had change him, and that Jesus would do the same for me.

That morning, I was on my way to the hospital to visit a friend with AIDS who was dying. I could see the fear of death in his eyes, not because of the physical death but because he was dying without God. I knew I needed to stop and give my life over to Jesus so he could transform me.

One evening I went to a tent meeting with Biagio, that at the time in Naples, and he explained that I only needed to ask for forgiveness with all my heart, and that Jesus would forgive me and change my life. He read some scriptures from the Bible stating that before God we are equal and we all need to ask forgiveness for our own sins. This encouraged me because before God I was just like anyone else, and He loves us all the same.

I really thank God for how he has changed my life and I can testify that the love of God has change my heart, my desires and has opened my eyes. That evening as I returned from the tent meeting. I looked at myself in the mirror and saw the real Gabriel; I finally saw my real identity. Before I couldn't understand if I was a man or a woman. God let me clearly understand that I am a man, and that all those thoughts I had before were lies from the devil.

I thank Jesus that he died for my sins and I can really cry out, "I'm free!" Now I know that with Jesus Christ, I have won the victory and I can go on because he lives in me and he gives me the strength to say "no" to sins. This is the wonderful thing that Jesus has done in my life, and I want to thank him all the days of my life!



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