

## ***Foundations Restored – A Life Transformed – Craig Beickelman***

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*Craig was a graduate of our 2003 session of Living Waters. He is a licensed minister and has served as a campus pastor at Western Michigan University and a teacher and counselor for Teen Challenge in Arizona. In addition to serving on our Living Waters leadership team, Craig leads the Reconciliation Ministries leadership team trainings and the Walking Free support group for men.*

I first knew that the Lord had a call on my life for ministry when I was a junior in college. Though I loved the Lord, my plan was to go into the theatre and make it big in Hollywood. The Lord made it clear that this was not His plan during my freshman year. With my dreams of going into the theatre shattered, I struggled in college with direction until the Lord laid out His plan. After graduation, I started my ministry career in campus ministry at Western Michigan University and loved it. After working in campus ministry for six years, the Lord moved me onto working in Teen Challenge as a teacher/counselor. I had a sense that the Lord's plan for my life was to work with hurting people, but that was about all I understood at that time. The Lord drew me out of ministry for a number of years to teach me about the everyday challenges that present themselves in the secular work place.



During my many years out of ministry the Lord has taken the time to work on me. As the youngest of three boys in an extremely dysfunctional and abusive home, I had always been the care taker and strong one. I started "counseling" people when I was in junior high and had taken care of hurting/needy people all of my life. It was easier to take care of others than to face my own pain.

I had always been different growing up and my dad never accepted me. Anyone not like him was wrong. He was a very logical accountant and I was a creative, sensitive boy. I wasn't the normal rough and tumble kid like my two older brothers. My dad was in his own world which consisted of work and having a "Better Homes & Garden" yard. My brothers and I were on our own to figure things out. My mother was very stressed out with 3 boys very close in age and had no support from her family to help raise us. When I was very young, my mother had a nervous break down from the pressure. I "learned" at a very early age not to be a burden to anyone. My mom became very depleted emotionally and started to turn to me as the youngest and most sensitive child for her emotional needs of intimacy and support. We became so enmeshed that I had no identity of my own. She affirmed me for being quiet and sensitive – not like my rough and tumble brothers who drove her crazy. I began to believe that it was bad to be male. My brothers and dad hurt my mom a lot and that was not a good thing. I began to want to be a girl and to dress up in my mom's old clothes that I found in our basement. I even gave my Ken doll a sex change. I struggled with wanting to be a girl all the way through grade school. I had a lot of trouble with my male peers and tended to have more girls as friends.



When I was 10-years old, my middle brother started to molest me. The abuse continued for about three years. It destroyed me. I didn't know how to deal with the shame, confusion, and devastation so I learned to shut down and become numb in order to survive. I walked into junior high school and was immediately labeled as "gay" and treated as a leper. Most of my friends split and I was left to exist on my own. In an effort to try and make sense of everything that was happening to me, I turned to the world of make believe – the theatre. I could pretend to be someone else and that people liked me. I reached out for a male image to become and grabbed onto the male model

image presented in “GQ Magazine”. I latched onto this persona with all of my might and transformed myself into this projection. I ran into the theatre and held onto the hope of being a star someday. The GQ image brought a lot of problems as men and some women started responding to the alluring person I had become. Being propositioned and sexually desired by others was now a normal thing and was very confusing for me. I eventually accepted the label of being gay in my 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade year of school. I knew it was wrong to act on these feelings, so I tried to ignore them. I had become a Christian in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, but never allowed the Lord to do much in my heart because I didn’t trust anyone – not even Him. I didn’t discover the Bible until I started to go to a youth group in high school. I kept asking the Lord to take my gay desires away, but that never happened. Eventually I just decided to do whatever it took to not act on them. The battle was intense. My brother had introduced me to hardcore porn during the years of my molestation, and I began frequenting the local bookstore and found a whole world of gay porn that I immersed myself into to try to deal with everything. In college the propositions became more frequent. I lost myself in helping others all the more and let go of having any life of my own. I did grow a lot in my walk with the Lord in college, but didn’t know how to address my struggles or my life.



I tried everything I could think of to get some help – counselors, pastors, and books. While I learned many facts about my struggles, I really didn’t receive any healing. A friend of mine told me about Living Waters. I will admit that I didn’t have much hope that the program would do anything for me. I cried my way through my first Living Waters in 2003. For the first time someone was speaking right to me and the Lord was giving me some hope for change. During the program bondages were broken, walls started to come down and many years of pain were beginning to be removed. After my initial session, I continued as a member of the leadership team. The Lord has kept working in my life through Living Waters and various counselors. He has healed my fractionalized identity and helped me accept not only my gender, but who I was created to be. He healed my broken heart and taught me how to forgive the many people who had hurt me. I am enjoying healthy male friendships and developing a genuine attraction to women for the first time in my life. As my involvement with



Reconciliation Ministries has grown, the Lord has started to speak to me about my calling to work with those coming out of sexual and relational brokenness; especially homosexuality and abuse. I was a little leery when He first started to show me this, but I am excited now. I have grown as a Christian man and leader. I am one of the teachers and group leaders in Living Waters. I lead the men’s Walking Free support group and the Reconciliation Ministries leadership team trainings. I am looking forward to all that the Lord has for me in the years ahead at Reconciliation Ministries and in the body of Christ.

*If you are struggling with your sexuality, there is hope and healing in the power of Jesus Christ. Call Reconciliation Ministries at 586.739.5114 and find out what options are available for you. Jesus Christ can restore your foundations and empower you to stand in your true identity in Him.*

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