

“COMING OUT” LETTER TO PARENTS

Occasionally, I’m asked to evaluate someone’s “coming-out” letter to their family. This one, so typical, is from a girl in England, and breaks my heart:

Dear Mum & Dad,

I love you both very much, which is why this letter has turned out to be one of the hardest things I’ve done in my life. I started it about a year ago and I’ve written it in my mind so many times that I almost know it off by heart. Before I go any further, I want you to know how very much I love you both and I hope that what I’m about to tell you won’t change that. Mum, I’ve watched our friendship grow so strong over the years and I’m really blessed in having a relationship with you that most daughters could only dream of. A love so strong, but I’ve been afraid of putting it to the test all these years. I’ve hidden a secret from you both for a very long time, a secret so enormous that I’ve not been able to share it with you for fear of it changing our closeness. However, I’ve come to realize that I can no longer hide from you because I’m only deceiving you and myself, and there should be no need for me to go this secret alone.

I have spent the last few years agonizing over this, totally alone, I’ve tried all sorts to bury it – thrown myself into as much sports as possible, learnt various instruments, composed pieces, written poetry and just recently thrown myself into Bible study, but I’m tired. I’m tired of spending countless hours trapped in my own thoughts, tired of sprawling my thoughts and feelings down on paper, tired of saying one thing and thinking another, tired of pretending to be something that I’m not.

I’ve argued with God since I was 17 and I’m tired of fighting him, I’m tired of crying myself to sleep each night, asking Why me? What have I ever done? And most of all Why won’t you change me? Well I’ve made a decision, I’m not going to argue anymore, if God had wanted me to be different, he would have changed me, therefore he must love me the way I am.

Mum, ever since I was 14 and found the word that described me I’ve prayed and prayed for God to change me, but he hasn’t so I’m finally having to accept myself for who I am so that I can get on with my life. I didn’t chose to be gay, I just am. I’m sorry it’s taken me so long to get up the courage to tell you. I guess I hoped that if I just held out long enough, prayed hard enough, and was a good enough Christian then it would just go away and I could be ‘normal’. I know you’re only just finding out about this (or maybe you had wondered?) but I’ve known I was different ever since I was a young girl. This is not a phase that I’ll grow out of, and it’s not some fashion that I’m going through. I’ve not just suddenly chosen to become a homosexual and I’ve not been influenced by people around me, I’ve always known.

I made a promise to myself when I was 17 to never tell anyone—well I guess I’ve just broken that promise, but I can’t cope with being alone any longer. Every day gets harder

and harder as I watch my friends getting into long-term loving relationships. The yearning to be able to share my life and be close to someone is unbearable and I'm really struggling to fight the natural desires of my heart in order to remain faithful to my beliefs—a fight that I'm sure to lose if I continue living this alone. Mum, I know this is probably difficult for you to comprehend right now and my timing isn't brilliant either but all I can think about, day in, day out, is this. I can't concentrate on my work, I'm losing interest in life and I'm losing interest in God. In fact, I'm so angry with Him, I can't even cry anymore. I think I actually hate Him for making me like this and not changing me. I don't know how to give my life meaning, I have no focus or structure, nothing to look forward to. To me, I don't have a future and I hurt so much when I think about all the things I won't ever have or experience—like children, marriage, being needed and having a family of my own.

I'll never hear the word 'mum'. I'll never get to take the kids to school or get them dressed and make their lunch. I'll never be able to kiss them better or tuck them into bed. I'll never see birthdays, parties, Christmases or family holidays. There is so much that I'll miss and I can't describe how that feels, every time I think about it. I feel as though someone's ripping my heart out through my chest. I'll never come to terms with it because I still hope that maybe one day I'll find that special someone, but mum unless God performs a miracle then I'll be alone.

I've spent the last however many years sitting through endless jokes and derogatory comments about homosexuals which have just about torn my heart out. I've joined in on the "ooh, he's fit!" comments, I've even tried having boy friends, which I can honestly say meant nothing to me, and I'm not going to do this anymore. It's been absolute agony and I won't pretend to you anymore. Do you have any idea at the amount of times comments about boyfriends, girlfriends, children, marriage, family, and homosexuals come up in conversation? It's all people talk about. The amount of times I've been asked 'Have you got a boyfriend?', 'Who do you fancy?', 'What are you going to call your kids?', even comments like 'Will you ever smack your children?' It's demoralizing and it hurts like hell. It's a constant reminder of who I am, and I just can't take that kind of hurt anymore.

I've never felt like the other girls. Even from my earliest memories I never once had the desire to play with dolls and skipping ropes. I hated dressing up and having to wear skirts and dresses, I've never been one for make-up or fancy shoes. I grew up in trainers, jogging bottoms, and baggy T-shirts. I felt wrong wearing or being anything different. I played football with the boys and enjoyed a bit of ruff and tumble. And above all, I was never interested in boys. Can you imagine how it felt when all of my friends started talking about boys and I suddenly realised that I was noticing girls? Can you imagine how it felt when I screamed my heart out to God and he didn't answer me?

Mum, Dad, I can't change it. It's no fault of yours, it's just who I am and I really hope you understand that. I read a book about a year ago and I cried the whole way through. It was so real to me and that's when I finally realized I had to face up to it and start accepting myself. It's a book called *My Son, Beloved Stranger*, the author of which I have been in touch with. She's devoted the last 12 years of her life to supporting homosexuals

and their families. I wrote to her and she replied immediately. I was so touched by her loving response and the support she gave me, it could almost have been you. Since then, I've been a member of a couple of internet groups for gay Christians where I've found fellowship of a kind that I could never receive at church. I've posted messages and received encouraging emails and I've also supported other people. I use another name there, but I miss being me. The encouraging words from others are great, but it's not quite the same as hearing those words from you.

I've been having ongoing counseling since Oct 2001. It took me four sessions before finally blurting out why I was there and I couldn't go home or back to uni that day because I was in such a state. We (Margaret and I) have talked about all sorts of things over the past half a year and I want you to know that she's not brainwashed me or tried to influence me in any way. I'm sure it probably seems an abrupt and rash decision on my part. But it's not - it's been 7 years in the making, with the last few being very lonely. Margaret's been great but I'm now ready to tell you. I need to get my mind back on my schoolwork and I've realized that's not going to happen until you know.

I'm sorry for any hurt this will cause you both but it's hurting me too and I have to spend the rest of my life with it. Obviously, I know this is quite an emotional piece of news and I'm not expecting you to swallow it on your own. If you want to confide in anyone then I don't mind, but I do have one request and that is that you ask me first.

Mum, Dad - I love you. I wish I was a kid again, coming home with a little hurt that you could make better with a kiss and a hug. But I'm not a kid anymore, and this problem won't go away with a kiss but I do still desire your love and acceptance in my life.

Love,

Nicky (pseudonym),