



ISSUE #1  
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*If I told you*

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SPECIAL THANKS TO

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# INTRODUCTION



*For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face.*

*Now I know only in part; then I will know fully,  
even as I have been fully known.*

*(I Cor. 13:12)*

IT PROBABLY GOES WITHOUT SAYING that some of the views expressed in this booklet do not reflect the views of the Gordon College administration. They don't even necessarily reflect the views of all the editors.

What they do reflect is a reality about our community. There are students at Gordon College who are gay, bisexual, and questioning. These are some of their stories.

You will find here reflective personal essays, short statements, and one interview. You will find a wide range of human emotion: anger, hurt, brokenness, confusion, and some glimmers of humor and joy.

These stories are coming to you anonymously because many of the writers feared what would happen if people knew who they were. But even the protection of anonymity considered, many of the writers got extremely vulnerable, pouring out to us and to you things they have only told a handful of friends,

family members, or nobody at all.

In light of this, we ask that you come to these pages with respect and gentleness.

It might be helpful to imagine that you are sitting in your room with a close friend who is finally telling you what they wish they could have told you a long time ago. You are taking a moment to stop, and listen to this person.

We hope that this publication will confirm that the debate about homosexuality is not merely a political one, and that the questions we need to ask about homosexuality are not abstract. These are real people.

This year's Symposium theme "Authenticity: to know and truly be known" fits in perfectly with the goal of this publication. To better love our neighbors, we need to know our neighbors. And despite all the diversity of opinion and experience in these stories, there seems to be a common refrain: the feeling of being unknown.

— THE EDITORS  
April 18, 2007



# ONE



*Like* MANY OF THE Gordon guys on campus, I laugh along with my friends at people who appear “gay,” or like a “fag.” I also participate in the use of these terms as insults, as do many of my classmates.

What most of the people around me don’t realize is that acting “gay” doesn’t make you gay. Again, like many of the Gordon guys on campus, I like sports, working out, playing video games, and talking about girls.

There is however, one slight thing about me that’s different: I struggle with homosexuality. I’m good friends with some of you who are reading this, many of whom are extremely homophobic and probably would choose not to be my friend anymore if you knew about my struggle. How does that make you feel? Unfortunately, due to the fact that you ridicule and deem homosexu-

ality as disgusting, I am afraid to share my struggles with you even though you may be one of my good guy friends.

OK, so I struggle with homosexuality. Let’s just say that I would rather have a mental or physical problem, such as depression or blindness. Guys don’t make fun of or openly judge the blind students on campus. Why make fun of those struggling with homosexuality, especially when they don’t know who does or doesn’t struggle with it? I have been in this situation more times than I can count with close friends – “hey queer,” “look at that guy, what a faggot,” etc. All the time wondering if this friend of mine would say the same to me if they knew I struggled with it.

To the guys on my floor who probably do this kind of thing the most, please watch what you say because every time you say it, whether or not you mean it, it’s directed at me.

# TWO



*I would* CATEGORIZE myself as bisexual, although I am still not entirely sure. Only three people from Gordon College know this about me. My family does not know, and only a few of my friends outside of Gordon do.

I am definitely hesitant to share this fact about myself with anyone, but especially people at our school. I feel this way for a few different reasons.

One reason is that I don’t believe my sexuality is anyone else’s business.

Another is that I don’t particularly

want others to judge me based on my bisexuality as a person who is more promiscuous. The stereotype is that bisexuals have sex with everyone and anyone. Since I am a virgin, I'm pretty sure that's a myth.

Most Gordon students are exceptionally backward-thinking when it comes to issues of sexuality (although the ones I did choose to tell have been extremely supportive). I am tired of others making me feel bad about who I am on the inside, so I tend to avoid those conversations altogether unless I know the person is open-minded.

I used to feel a great deal of guilt over my attraction to the same sex. I had heard that it was a sin and an abomination, and so I tried to push those thoughts out of my mind as much as possible. I felt like I was lying to myself. I finally accepted the fact that I had feelings for the same sex and stopped wor-

rying about it, and that made it so much easier to deal with. I know that God loves me and he knows that I am trying to do what is right. He also knows that I did not choose to have these feelings, I just have them.

Perhaps one day I will be able to say these things in some place other than an anonymous letter, but for now, this is as candid as I am going to get.

The main message I would give to Gordon students reading this is: try to be more compassionate to your fellow students who may be struggling with issues of sexuality. Be honest about your opinions, but don't make generalizations, don't use derogatory language, and please don't remain ignorant about the issue.

Finally, do not assume that everyone you speak to is 100 percent straight; because you would be surprised at how often that is not the case.

## THREE



*Blessed art thou among women*

*When* I AM IN DESPERATE need of emotional and spiritual solace, I do not turn to the Bible, or to the Church. I do not turn to my family, or even to hot baths and chocolate. I turn to the stories of Flannery O'Connor. This makes me think that something is terribly wrong with me.

Her characters can be awful – in the moral sense of the word – true wretches operating solely on the logic of self-aggrandizement and self-righteousness.

You and me, really. When we're being honest about the worst parts of ourselves.

But the trademark of O'Connor's writing, and the reason I can't seem to leave her alone, is her affection for freaks. Outsiders and misfits. Those that society does not want. They are confrontational. In O'Connor's stories, it is the rejected that undo the self-righteous. It is the unwanted that, sometimes violently, destroy the defenses of the smug.

The other day I was reading her story "A Temple of the Holy Ghost," in which two teenage girls go to a carnival sideshow to see a hermaphrodite, a person who has the genitalia of both a male and female. The hermaphrodite walks from one side of the stage to the other showing itself to the silent crowd, and talking to them:

"God made me thisaway and if you laugh He may strike you the same way.

a long time before anything happened. As a teenager, I kept it to my anxious self. Looking a little too long at the cute waitress. Wanting to please my female English teacher a little too strongly. I pushed it down. There was no place for it.

It probably didn't help that I grew up in Colorado Springs, CO. Home of Focus on the Family and the headquarters of practically every other conservative

*I am the self-righteous judge.  
I am the victim.  
And as both, I am deeply human.*

This is the way He wanted me to be and I ain't disputing His way. I'm showing you because I got to make the best of it. I expect you to act like ladies and gentlemen. I never done it to myself nor had a thing to do with it but I'm making the best of it. I don't dispute hit."

I put down the book. However often I read that story, it still bruises me. The hermaphrodite, so much less than human by the estimation of the crowd, is so much more vulnerable and open than those who have come to gawk. And that is why I love O'Connor.

She shows me myself not only as the sideshow freak, but as the two teenage girls who are disgusted by it. I am the self-righteous judge. I am the victim. And as both, I am deeply human.

And it is only when I am human, fallen, and acutely aware of it, that I begin to open to the possibility of grace.

I WORRIED THAT I WAS GAY FOR

Christian ministry in existence. As I've grown more cynical, I've come to call it the Evangelical Tibet. Intense right-wing Christendom nestled at the feet of beautiful mountains, with James Dobson as some sort of ACLU-bashing Dalai Lama.

Gays do not live in Colorado Springs, unless they're under the downtown bridges. And they certainly do not live in non-denominational Christian homes.

WHEN I TOLD MY FRIENDS AT Gordon what was going on, they were incredibly supportive. Much more than I expected. They asked what I thought about God in the midst of it all. What conclusions had I come to?

None.

And I still haven't come to any. I'm not even sure it's something that can conclude.

But they were - are - wonderful to

me. Kind and caring. Open. And devoutly pro-gay. To some extent, I think, to demonstrate their friendship and support.

But the problem is, I can't even be sure I'm in support.

To say that homosexuality is morally right, even amoral, is to go against everything I've ever been taught by any adult I ever cared to listen to. It is, in short, to undermine God as I've understood Him, as well as the beliefs and opinions of people I respect.

And though I appreciate both my friends' support of homosexuality, and the honest opposition I find in my parents, the problem remains that their opinions are just that. Tomorrow morning, they will wake up straight. And it is my soul that will bear the consequences of whatever I choose to do.

NOT THAT I THINK BEING GAY is a choice. If it were, I would not be writing this now. Even in the best-case scenario (from my family's perspective) if I were never to act on my gay feelings again, I'm still not sure I could be in a

straight relationship. The choice, as it becomes clearer to me, is not between gay and straight, but between gay and celibate.

Either way, I feel tainted. Rejected by some grand cosmic scheme. Mourning for the children that I will probably never bear.

THE REASON I READ FLANNERY with such fervor is because when I am done, I do not feel alone. Everyone is messed up. We all have wells of the disturbing, the frightening. We are all mutilated by our fears and neuroses.

But however mutilated, we are still the image of God.

I do not feel like a good image much of the time. And even after I've put down the book I still don't have any answers, and am offered no conciliation. No *Deus ex machina* takes me to Starbucks and explains everything over a venti latte.

But I remember that there are other freaks, other people of ill repute. And that we are all looking for the same grace, wanting to be blessed. We are, all of us, just trying to make the best of it.

## FOUR



When

I ARRIVED at Gordon as a freshman,

I knew deep down that I was gay, but I had never uttered the dreaded words to myself, even in the privacy of my own brain. "Well, I'm attracted to guys," I would say to myself, "but I'm not *gay!* There are just certain indescribable

qualities intrinsic to men that I find appealing."

This was a flight of fancy, but not the only one in my life; in fact, I lived in a sort of post-modern re-editing of *The Wizard of Oz*. The details of my surroundings were projected in crisp but fairly unexciting black and white: birds, trees, flowers, women in reveal-

ing camisoles, dorm buildings, desks. Men moved past me differently. They were a little more cutting edge and benefited from Technicolor technology which rendered their every movement interesting, eye-catching and worthy of note. But of course I wasn't gay.

My denial continued. Freshman year passed pretty uneventfully as the business of college life kept my mind off considerations of romance. Then sophomore year rolled around, and I fell head over heels for this really cute boy who lived down the hall, only to see him snapped up by a beguiling and sex-obsessed girl from our "sister-floor." I shouldn't have let it get me down – we didn't have very much in common and it probably wouldn't have worked out between us (Problem #1: He's straight) – but you know how disheartening it is to see romance snatched from beneath your nose. It was very depressing to walk through the lounge and see them spooning on the couch, engaging in back rubs, etc. – especially since my friends all noticed how moody I had become. I had to toss it off with the old "Worn out from schoolwork" routine, which was not the case at all.

In the wake of all this, though, I took an important step, and secretly in the whispers of my mind began to utter the words, "You are gay." They made me feel so worthless.

BY MY JUNIOR YEAR I HAD BECOME obsessed with my gayness. I was desperately lonely despite my crowd of friends, simultaneously petrified that someone would find out, and wishing that they would so that I would at least have someone to talk to. All I could think about, day in and day out, was who I could tell, what they would say.

Finally, three days before Christmas break, I IM-ed my friend Lillian and

told her I needed to talk to her. By the time I met her out by the quad, I was not only shivering because it was about 20 degrees out, but trembling because I was so mind-numbingly nervous about what would happen. This was a topic that I had been studiously avoiding discussing with anyone for about ten years.

I didn't think I could bring myself to speak, but finally the silence got *really* awkward, so I stammered out, "I think I'm gay." And she just smiled at me and gave me a big hug, and she said that she didn't care at all and that she would always be my friend. I was twenty-one years old, and it was the first time I had ever felt like anyone really loved me for exactly who I was.

It was the best thing that has ever happened to me. Telling Lillian saved me from going crazy or probably committing suicide or who knows what, but I've always regretted a little bit that I said, "I *think* I'm gay." I didn't just think it, I knew with every part of me. I wish I'd just said, "I am gay," and I wish that I hadn't been crouching behind my hands as if someone was going to punch me, and I wish that I hadn't whispered it raggedly into my mittens. I wish that I could have stood there and smiled while I said it clearly into the night.

I THINK A LOT OF STRAIGHT PEOPLE don't understand the concept of gay pride; I didn't used to understand it either. "How could you be proud of being gay *or* straight?" I used to wonder. It's just the way you are, as silly as being proud of having red hair or being from France or America. You don't choose these things. (Yes, you read that right. I didn't sign up for this, nor was I recruited to The Cause through a shadowy political lobbyist group.) Once at

church I overheard a minister discussing a rainbowed gay pride umbrella that had turned up in lost and found. “Well, I wouldn’t mind people knowing I was gay, if I was,” he was saying, “but I wouldn’t want them to think I was proud of it.”

Well, I am proud to be gay. If people can be proud to have been born, through no effort of their own, into a large North American nation, then I can be proud of how I have learned to stand up for who I am, something that takes a lot more gumption: telling a professor of mine what my life is *really* like when he asks, “How are you?”; speaking up to my two conservative roommates when they were ignorantly making my life a hell through their constant insensitivities and put-downs; coming out to my brother even through the fear that a person who I have lived with for eighteen years could turn against me in a second as the words slipped off my tongue...

Dumbledore says it best at the end of *The Sorcerer’s Stone*, when he tells Neville Longbottom that “it takes a great deal of courage to stand up to your enemies, but even more to stand up to your friends.” This is what gay people have to do all the time. Coming out is a process that takes a long time, and demands constantly being vulnerable and open, just to remind those you know that you are a person too. My roommates have known that I am gay for almost a year, and as if telling them in the first place wasn’t hard enough, I’ve just finished the heartaching process of telling them all over again, having to explain myself again, letting them know that they cannot treat me the way they do.

Being gay, especially being gay and Christian, is hard.

It means constantly having to explain yourself on points that straight people

never get called on. It means having my roommate remind me not to bring people home for sex, a caution my other (straight) roommate never receives. It means having people assume the worst about your moral character. It means requiring of yourself the strength to stand up for your convictions or at least for your circumstances every time the topic is broached, because probably no one else will. (But when they do, it’s the

*I was twenty-one  
and it was*

best feeling in the world!)

If putting up with all this and staying sane and fairly happy and remaining a pleasant person to be around (which I hope I am for the most part) is something to be proud of, then I’m proud of myself and I’m proud of everyone else who’s gay with me. We rock.

BEING AT GORDON HASN’T BEEN all bad, as far as being gay goes. There have been a few people I can talk to, and overall, all my coming out experiences have gone fairly well. No one has tried to exorcise me or pack me off to gay therapy. (But I haven’t told my parents or my fundamentalistic sister yet...)

For instance, it always gives me a warm feeling when the Day of Silence posters go up – they invite students, gay or straight, to refrain from speaking for a day, to meditate on and repre-

sent all those who have to go through life without being able to honestly express appreciation for a well-turned calf, beautiful brown eyes, the flutter in their heart when the attractive Lane server compliments their T-shirt. The Day of Silence expresses solidarity with those who can't tell anyone that they've gone to the tennis courts where only the cars coming off 128 can hear them, and crouched in the damp grass and

straight people who read this to try to put yourself in the shoes of me or any of the other gay people who presently, maybe unbeknownst to you, walk the same ice-slicked campus paths. Try it, because Gordon being as small as it is, you probably know a gay person. You probably know me – but not as well as you think you do.

So here's my experiment for you: Spend a day, in your head, imagining

*years old,  
the first time I had ever felt  
like anyone really loved me for  
exactly who I was.*

sobbed every day for a week, because they feel like God has abandoned them and they wonder, if their mother knew, would she hug them and say she loved them, or would she back away and wonder when the Devil had crawled into her child's heart and turned them into a pervert? It's a great idea and I always look forward to it, wondering who will participate.

Then the Day of Silence comes and I walk through Lane, through Jenks, and everyone is talking and laughing, maybe holding hands with their boyfriend or their girlfriend, and no one is thinking of the claustrophobia and fear that seals my lips every day.

I DON'T HAVE A THESIS STATEMENT here. There is no conclusion because this is my life, and it's far from over. The best I can do is to ask you

that people look on straight people the way they look on gay people, and adjust your behavior accordingly, to keep anyone from finding out where your desires lie.

Stop yourself every time you are going to comment aloud on the merits of the opposite sex. And when you are only thinking it to yourself, imagine that your whole life people have told you that the thoughts you are thinking are evil and hellbound. If you have a significant other, spend a day without them. Don't contact them in public, or let anyone know how much you love them. Don't let anyone know if you are thinking of entering into a committed, monogamous relationship with them (being gay means having to specify up front that your relationship will be committed and monogamous), and don't let anyone know how safe and accepted

and loved – how whole – their presence makes you feel. Because if people knew, who knows what they would say or how they would treat you from then on.

But don't try this experiment for more than a day, because you will probably start to feel lonely, depressed and isolated, and there's no need for that. You're straight.

WITH ALL THIS IN MIND, TAKE

but I never asked to be able to understand the incredible allure of men. It's just an innate ability and drive which I have. It's not that I haven't tried to be straight in the past. I've prayed myself to sleep, hoping that God would take away my thorn in the flesh. I've tried really hard to like girls – I mean, most of them are pretty nice and practice better personal hygiene than guys, and I have a lot of respect and esteem for them as

*Remember that out of being gay  
and being Christian,  
only one is a choice.*

some time to think about how you will react when Soulforce comes to town in April.

If you are one of those who is confused about who they are, because it's "impossible to be gay and Christian," that's OK. Learning and adjusting to new ideas takes time, and I used to be right there with you. But please keep an open mind and be prepared to listen to what the Equality Riders say when they come. Remember that though they will be the visible representatives of the gay community, your actions towards them are symbolically actions towards the gay people, invisible at your command, here at Gordon, and towards those who you will surely encounter throughout the rest of your life. Your actions on April 16th will have a significance beyond that day.

Remember that out of being gay and being Christian, *only one is a choice*. I asked Jesus to be my personal savior,

people. Isn't that romantic? I've even tried to like football... OK, that's a lie. I've never wanted to be straight that badly.

But in spite of all this, I'm still gay. God hasn't changed me – and I don't think he wants to.

So consider that when you say you can't be gay *and* Christian, you're not making people straight. It's more likely that you're driving them away from God's love, and from the Gordon community.

AND FINALLY, TO ALL YOU GAYS and lesbians here at Gordon, who I'm sure will pick up this collection of essays as eagerly as I will, and will probably try to read it as nonchalantly, hi. I wish we knew each other, because we would probably all be a lot happier and healthier if we had a support system. Hopefully someday, even here at Gordon, we will.

# FIVE



*The Lord made me hard to handle*

*I am* NOT WHAT YOU THINK I am – you see me shuffling down the sidewalk, chatting on my cell phone while on my way to chapel. I am, by all means, quite normal on the outside. A little more plain than I would like, but I am, overall, content with the physical characteristics that God has given me. But, there is unevenness to me that I can't even begin to understand.

My contradictions began to develop around the age of six. I was the little girl running around the school playground, chasing after boys and if luck wasn't on their side smothering them with kisses. And I was the little girl with her heart on her sleeve – in tune to every shift of her emotions. By first grade, I noticed a distinct change in the objects of my affection. I still professed my love to every boy in my class through sloppy love notes and quirky smiles; however, I found that whenever I played “house” with my friends I always wanted to be the dad. It may seem a very trivial observation but I have come to understand it was at that time that I felt different from other girls.

I never gave it much thought until I was ten years old. I began to have horribly debilitating anxiety attacks over a slew of different topics, including my sexuality. I couldn't for the life of me figure out if what I was feeling was normal. I was absolutely petrified of being a lesbian as if it meant that I was a bad

person, and so I would try to do “spells” or anything really to drown out the overwhelming pressure that was building up in my head. I was lucky though in that I was able to confide in my father all the horrible things I was feeling. I even at one point exclaimed that I was in fact a lesbian. With that said, my anxiety was temporarily alleviated.

By age twelve I was, for the most part, immune to the severe anxiety attacks, although my feelings had not changed in the least. I was very much interested in the male sex, constantly trying to impress them with short skirts and cotton candy scented perfume. But I was tormented by nightmares of myself performing homosexual acts, and tormented even more when I found that I was extremely aroused by them.

It sickened me and it still does. Though, I have come to the point where I am at peace. Still, there are days when it seems intolerable – when I am constantly reminded of how I am everything that God abhors.

Perhaps I am merely rationalizing, but I am not my sexuality. I do not find my identity in it nor do I take pride in it. Yes, I may feel attracted to the same sex, but I will not use that as an excuse to fulfill my unnatural desires. It is an affliction, much like depression which I and the majority of my family also struggle with. And like any other family we differ greatly in our views of both depression and homosexuality.

As a child of Christ my body is not my own; I was bought at a price and by falling on my face in front of Him I am continually made aware of His heavenly love – a love that called to me even

when I was struggling with feelings of homosexuality, thus illustrating that it is ultimately not what we feel that is sinful, but the very act of living a homosexual lifestyle.

## SIX



### An interview

Q:

HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY yourself sexually?

I don't. Furthermore I don't consider myself gay, bi, or straight. The most I will define myself as is "questioning." It's not right to put one's sexuality in a box, because it is not a black-and-white issue, similar to many other things in life. If most aspects of life are found in gray areas, why would sexuality be any different? The stigmas that are attached to being "gay" or "bi," or even "straight," for that matter, assign a set of values, opinions, and traits to members of said groups that should not have to be the rule.

Sexuality, though important, should not be the first thing thought of to pinpoint the identity of one individual or another. There are many other important aspects that go into making up a person's being, and it is no more right to identify someone by saying, "You know, Andy? The gay one," than it is to identify that person by saying, "Andy, the black one."

*When did you first begin to realize you were attracted to other men?*

The first time I realized I was attracted to men was in middle school,

in the locker room before gym class, when I noticed that other guys' bodies were developing sooner than mine, and this initial admiration turned into a sexual attraction (in the locker room and out).

*And then what was it like to realize that*

*It's hard when  
all your*

*you were still attracted to men while at Gordon College, as opposed to maybe another setting?*

Well, at Gordon, you have to worry more about religion of course, and that brings into play what you believe about the Bible and how that's interpreted and it really doesn't affect just your sexuality but your faith as well. So it's a matter of seeing if you can reconcile these sexual feelings with the faith you've been brought up in... and also the fact

that you can't really be open about what you're going through. People are more open about things that are perceived as sinful like lying or slander than they are about things like sexuality, because sexuality is just a taboo subject among Christians in general.

*And have you been able to reconcile your sexual feelings with your faith? How have you worked through that?*

Well, it's not worked through at all. Where I'm at in my faith journey at this point is that I believe in God and that I'm alive for a reason, but other than that everything's up in the air and I don't know what I believe. It's hard when what you've been raised with all your life seems to be contradictory to a lot of your personal experience... it's difficult to deal with that. I'm not sure if the two will ever reconcile themselves to each other. I want them to. I want to be a strong Christian on one level, but

I attend church regularly, every week, though I feel at this point it is more for the community than for the spiritual experience. But I'm not sure if the church changing its official position would make a difference. The war within yourself still goes on because of what you were raised with, and what you're dealing with. Your religion's holy book says certain things and how do you interpret those? It would still be difficult.

*Have you told anybody else at Gordon that you struggle with this?*

There are about a dozen people who know.

*What were their reactions like?*

Well, I choose my friends carefully so every single one of them have had supportive reactions whether or not they think being gay or whatever is okay. Even the ones who don't think it's okay are still supportive of me and my struggle.

*what you've been raised with  
life seems to be contradictory to  
a lot of your personal experience...*

on another level I can't deny what I'm going through and I can't deny the fact that most people who identify themselves as Christians disagree with it, often adamantly.

*If the Christian church were to stop saying homosexual activity was wrong, would that make it easier for you to reconcile your faith and your sexuality, and be part of the church? Or would that not make a difference?*

gles in going through it. So I selectively choose my friends and I'm even more selective about the friends who I tell.

*Have you gone to the Counseling Center or talked to anybody in administration about this?*

I went to the Counseling Center and talked about it once, and was told it was too much of a long-term problem for them to be adequately be equipped to deal with it... I eventually became di-

agnosed with depression, got a referral from the counseling center for that and have since talked to a psychologist and a psychiatrist about it, and am in the process of searching for a therapist.

*Have you told your family?*

My family found out when I was fifteen that I had a boyfriend, because I had told my best friend about it, and he told his dad and his dad told my dad. And my dad eventually cried, saying, "Where did I go wrong? Where did I go wrong?" And from that point, I was kind of coerced into going to a counselor to be ungayified, and at one point I was even exorcised... and yeah, the feelings still persisted.

So I was like, OK... they tell me that it takes a lot of work, but will that work achieve an end that really will change something, or will it just be a covering up and denial? And I guess one would never know until one gets there, and what's to say that one will ever truly get there, you know?

So I have been rather vague with my parents since then. I proceeded to be secretly involved with a couple other guys during high school until the point senior year when I thought, "maybe I should reconsider this Christianity thing."

Since coming to Gordon I tell my parents that, yeah, I'm still attracted to guys on a certain level, it's not going away, and they pray for me (I'm sure) to be not attracted to guys. But I don't talk about it with them in any detailed level, and I only talk to my dad about it, because I feel like my mom is too sensitive to handle talking to her about it at all... I have an 11-year-old brother who I of course have not spoken to at all about it, because he's not even sexually developed himself so it wouldn't matter at all.

*Have you pursued any relationships with other men while at Gordon?*

I am currently. Oh goodness this is getting complicated. I am very much, I guess you could say, in love with one of my friends at Gordon, but also with the same person by my side I have flirted with and pursued another person outside of Gordon, kind of somebody random.

*What is it like pursuing a relationship with another man while at Gordon, when obviously that's something that it's difficult to be open about?*

I'm very open about it with a few of my friends, and at this point I've just started to stop caring what other people think, because I'm going through what I'm going through, and you can't tell me that what I'm going through is right or wrong because it exists.

*How can Gordon students better love you, or better show love to other gay or bisexual students?*

Seek them out with the intention of becoming their friends. Because you kind of gain a whole new perspective on an issue when you have a close friend who is going through it. I am pretty certain that some of the people who I am friends with who had little to no interaction with this particular issue before they met me have a different perspective on it now that they know someone who's going through it.

*What is one thing you wish straight students knew about being gay or bisexual at Gordon, or what is one thing you would want to say to them?*

Don't instantaneously condemn that which you're ignorant about.

It's not as simple as people may perceive it, because it's not purely a physical thing, it's very much an emotional

thing too, and there may be different environmental, experiential factors that play into an emotional attraction to a person of the same gender as well.

It's generally more complex than it's perceived. I feel like it tends to become oversimplified.

I feel like sexuality is just a political

issue with Christians. It is something they have to think about because they have to vote about it, not because it actually affects them.

There's a tendency when things don't actually affect you to not think about them as carefully or as sensitively as necessary.

## SEVEN



*Or I will no longer be human*

*A fellow* STUDENT calls me a girl.

Students smirk and whisper as I walk by.

I turn red as the guys on my floor call someone a "f\*\*\*ing queer."

Someone compares my love to a cat... a cat.

I sink lower in my seat as a professor argues that the Bible is unequivocal on the issue of homosexuality.

Professors blame the disintegration of the Anglican Church on me.

SO, I TELL MY PARENTS I'M GAY.

The first thing they ask me is if I'm dying of AIDS.

"No."

The next thing they ask me is if I hate God and Christianity.

"Don't worry, I still love God and am a Christian."

"Oh. Please don't tell Grandpa, he votes against homo rights. Or Grandma, she's too sweet. Or Uncle John. Or Aunt Mary. Or the kids, they are too young. Actually, please don't tell any-

one; it would embarrass us. And what about that nice girl friend of yours back at school; have you tried dating her?"

Right. Great idea: "Excuse me, allow me to use you as a cure for my homosexuality. It's my parents' idea and God's plan."

SO, I MEET A GUY.

No one has ever taught me how to date a guy; they don't write Christian self-help books about that to stock in the Gordon College Bookstore.

He attempts to rape me.

I don't report it for fear of what the administration, my friends, or my family would say.

I am attacked by anti-gay assailants but don't tell my friends out of shame. They wouldn't think I was a man. They would say it was my own fault.

Or, perhaps worst of all, they would pity me. They would say I need a cure, a Christian solution, or extensive counseling.

I CRY MYSELF TO SLEEP WISHING I were straight; wishing I were ac-

cepted by my friends, my family, my school, my faith.

Trust me, this is not a choice. This is who I am.

And everyone has taught me to hate me.

BUT I WON'T HATE MYSELF. God doesn't.

God knows that I am not immoral, that I am not out to ruin the Church or the Christian faith, or American society, or this college.

God knows that I am just looking for the same thing everyone else is: a little

love in a cold world.

I WON'T FIND THAT LOVE IN my family, my friends, my school, my church, or some random guy.

That love comes from God and is the only thing I have left to hold on to. Don't try to take it away from me. You can take away my self-esteem and my dignity; you can kick me out of church and deny me rights; you can physically beat me or call me names; you can laugh at me and you can pity me; but you can never, never take away my God.

Or I will no longer be human.

## EIGHT



*I was* A CREATIVE child for most of my early years. Reading and writing came very easy to me, and by first grade I was writing four- to ten-sentence stories and drawing pictures to go with them. By second grade, I was so far beyond where I needed to be in language requirements that my teacher would send me out of the room to type stories, now a page or two in length, in the library.

In third grade I produced a few comic books and several serial drawings about a superhero I had created. My mind continued to become more and more alive through fifth grade. By that point I had a repertoire of characters and stories, was reading far beyond my grade level, was top in my class and was loved by every teacher for my kindness, creativity, and hard work.

In fifth grade my four-year-old cousin

died of pulmonary blastoma, a cancer in the lungs. His parents, my mom's sister and brother-in-law, were self-professed Born Again Christians as were my mom's other sister and husband. Our family was shaken, to say the least, by the tragedy of this death and was confronted by questions surrounding life, death and God, as is anyone in such a situation.

We turned to my mom's sisters for guidance – vulnerable, confused and certain that there must be something more to life. They were very assertive in their religious beliefs and certain that what our family needed was to become born again by praying to God to accept Jesus Christ as our savior.

I remember saying that prayer lying in bed one night with my mom. To be honest, I didn't say it because I understood the premise, but because my mom told me that there was someone

who loved me more than she did. This was previously impossible in my mind – there was no one better or more loving than my mother. If what she told me was true, this love must be supernatural, and so I said the prayer.

Our lives began to change a little at this point. My parents were told they needed to become part of a church, and so my mother and father each began attending the churches they were most familiar with. I joined my mom at the Catholic church and my sixteen-year-old sister attended the Methodist church with my father. My aunt began giving my mom advice that she (thankfully) disregarded about what I should and should not watch and read.

I was still doing well in school and was enjoying reading, drawing, writing stories and entering into wholly other imaginative worlds.

BY THE TIME I ENTERED JUNIOR high and was beginning to mature physically, mentally and emotionally, I noticed something strange and immediately realized I was different than my peers. I was not attracted to women; instead, to other men. It is ironic looking back now that only a couple of years prior I had lain on the dining room floor with my four-year-old beagle listening to my mother and sister talk about the school librarian who was a lesbian.

“Mom,” I began, “what’s a lesbian?”

We began to attend church more regularly and as a family though the church changed several times. The two churches I spent the most time in were a small Baptist church with my parents and eventually a Christian and Missionary Alliance church with my sister. I spent the whole of my formative teenage years in hyper-heterosexual, conservative evangelical contexts: homosexuality was a sin, gay marriage was

wrong, and all of my peers were going on dates, getting their first girlfriends and boyfriends, having their first kisses and I was left being very sure that there was something wrong with me.

Nearly every night before I went to bed I would pray to God and apologize for being attracted to men. I would ask forgiveness for what I was. Many times I would get angry and cry not understanding why I was this way when it was so offensive to God.

The options were clearly spelled out by those around me, though none of them knew that it was me, one of their own, that they were speaking to. I could be a Christian and follow God, or I could give in to my sinful desires and walk away from my faith. And since walking away from God most certainly led to eternal death – separation from God – the worst form of death and pain, I was not going to give in to my sinful nature. So, I began to repress it and deny that it was real.

I continued all through high school to repress my sexuality. I turned to conservatism to protect my secret. I learned the proper balance in expressing myself: too strong of an opposition to homosexuality, too strong of an outspokenness would show that I was trying too hard. Too lenient of an attitude toward it might show that I was defending myself. I worked hard to temper my personality and characteristics in order to deflect any sort of suspicion. Becoming very evangelical was essential to this process of deceiving people; I was in many regards the ideal Christian teenager.

All this time, there was voice inside me that spoke against all of this – against the repression, against the evangelicalism – I knew something was wrong. This voice became quieter and quieter the older I got, and was espe-

cially silenced at Gordon.

GORDON PROVIDES FOR ME A paradox in my journey: it is simultaneously the place I have felt the most oppression and hatred and the place that I have been honest with friends and repented of the damage that has been done to me. However, the latter did not come until this year.

For my first two years here I became very involved with all sorts of activities. I was the model and standard of what a “Christian leader” is. Many people heralded me for my commitment to God and strong spirituality. It was all a sham though, because I believed in a system that wasn’t loving me or allowing me to be honest with anyone, most importantly myself. When my conservatism, particularly my political and social conservatism, began to be challenged, I started to be pushed to deal with my sexuality and God.

I started questioning evangelicalism in my sophomore year. I was initially encouraged by my “mentors” in this examination, but when I started to ask even tougher questions, and when I wasn’t returning to systems and structures that they encouraged me to, they began to “become concerned” about me.

I had several intense conversations with one particular mentor in which I argued very articulately and intelligently my issues with church and American Christianity, and I was left to feel as though I was about to commit an act of apostasy.

This year, I was spending some vacation time with three friends who are very creative. It was in our time together that I began to feel incredibly depressed – I couldn’t speak, I couldn’t move – I was paralyzed. I was tired. I was bitter and angry and hostile.

I can now recognize this point as a

*The American Evangelical God is for  
heterosexuals, not for homosexuals,  
not for blacks, not for  
He is exclusive and hateful.*

I had been told my whole life that for me to be attracted to and love another man is a sin. I had spent a good nine years repressing those feelings and hating myself. I had spent the same amount of time or longer praying almost every single night to a God that told me I was a sinner – a God who wouldn’t do a damn thing to change it.

This God was starting to become sus-

wake up call. The creative person I was had effectively died through my repression, and this was made evident to me by spending time with very creative friends.

I went to the counseling center planning to talk about something, something I don’t even remember now, when the first thing out of my mouth was that I’m not attracted to women. I was

put on antidepressants and struggled throughout the rest of the semester feeling ashamed, fearful and unknown by anyone. The repression and self-hatred had effectively made me become depressed and incredibly unbalanced. If we want to talk in terms of Hebrew philosophy, shalom was ruptured. I had pitted parts of myself against other parts and was destroying myself.

The worst part of it all was that I knew this – I knew that I was incredibly unhealthy and my God-created person was being destroyed – and all of my exterior, “Christian” influences were praising me for what a mature, strong “Christian” leader I was; my spirituality was highly respected.

SLOWLY I HAVE MOVED OUT OF that phase of my life. I have studied the way Christianity has been used to be divisive and exclusive, the historical and social context surrounding scriptural

*white  
not for women,  
immigrants.*

statements about homosexuality and marriage, and most importantly who Jesus really was and what he said. My ideas about God, sin, Jesus and all of our language and theology surrounding humans have drastically changed. The American Evangelical God is for white heterosexuals, not for homosexuals, not for women, not for blacks, not for immigrants. He is exclusive and

hateful. He is concerned with black and white, right and wrong, good and evil. He is not concerned with love, redemption, inclusion, justice and peace.

For the first time I am at a really healthy place in my life. Where I used to feel judged as immoral here, like the scum of Gordon College, like a sinner, like I was inferior, I now feel empowered. I feel enlightened and aware of God and Christ in a way that others who do not share my experience may never know. I feel loved and I feel like I am a creation of God. This is even despite those who had previously approved and praised me now questioning and disapproving of me. They do not know that I am attracted to other men, but they can tell something is different, and they communicate in many ways that they do not approve.

And, not coincidentally, I am creative again. The person I was when I was young that should have been fostered and supported by community that calls itself Christian has now been allowed to return to life and grow.

I have begun to share what is going on in my life with selected friends. It should be noted that these people who I have told and who are loving and caring for me incredibly well are not the people who are favored at Gordon. They are not the people who are raised on a pedestal for their “Christian commitment”; they aren’t the model “leaders.” In fact, they are the people who are probably believed to be in the most need of “maturing,” of becoming “stronger in their faith.” They are, however, the ones that have been true Christians throughout this whole process.

It’s a lonely, scary road to be homosexual and a Christian, and it is especially difficult at Gordon College. There is no community for the individual victim.

# NINE



*You think I'm strange, but unlike you I'm not pretending*

*All* MY LIFE I HAVE BEEN told that when I grow up I will find the perfect male to marry, a soul mate, a man whom I will love for the rest of my life, a man whom I will cherish. And all my life everyone has embedded in my mind that this image of a marriage between a man and a woman is the only way to fall in love. But is it?

I recently found myself questioning my sexuality, wondering if my soul mate was indeed to be a male. I thought to myself and looked back on my life and knew that I in fact was a lesbian. I mean, I always was attracted to other girls, but I was always told it was wrong, that I should never act upon it. So I never did. I kept this feeling inside me, not letting anyone get to know who I truly was. I couldn't. What I was was immoral and I hated myself for it.

Do you know what it is like to hold this kind of feeling inside of you?

To have a secret that no one would ever understand or even try to understand or even want to understand. To hate yourself because you're not normal. To no longer want to live because you cannot bear the thought of being rejected by your best friends. You fear that they will judge you and forget the years of friendship you once had together. You can't sleep at night because the one thing on your mind is how much you want to tell the truth, to let

everything out to everyone. You feel it is not worth it, but it still eats you alive, slowly. You have disease and there is no way to cure it, except to lie, to lie to your friends, to your family, to God, and to yourself.

These are the constant thoughts inside my head, every day, slowly exhausting me, and I am too tired to go on. I no longer want to lie about who I am. I am no longer pretending. I am a lesbian and I am not hiding anymore. I am Lesbian. I am a Lesbian. I am a Lesbian and I have learned to love and understand

*Do you know what  
hold this kind  
inside of you? To  
because*

that I do not need help. I do not need to be cured and I certainly do not need to be prayed for.

I just need your support. We all need your support. You are all Christians right? Then stop judging me and learn to respect me. Stop staring at me and learn to embrace me. Stop hating me and learn to love me. That is all I ask. Thanks.

# T&N



*I am* JUST LIKE A LOT of you and that is OK. I am a Gordon student. I love both of my parents and have excellent relationships with them. I have good friends of both sexes and really appreciate them. I think Woodland Parking Lot is too far away and the Bookstore is too expensive. I like going to Singing Beach with friends or spending a day in Boston. I am a Christian. I partake in the elements at the Eucharist, go to the required number of Gordon chapels (usually), and pray to God.

I am different than a lot of you. That is OK too. I am a man. I like men. One of my favorite TV shows is *Will & Grace*

*it is like to  
of feeling  
hate yourself  
you're not normal.*

and I always cry watching *Brokeback Mountain*. I desperately hope Massachusetts will continue to affirm gay and lesbian marriages. I also hope to someday stand in an Episcopal Church, or a United Church of Christ, or a Presbyterian Church and marry another man. I hope my family will be there; and maybe some of you will be too... if I ever tell you that I am gay.

Being gay at Gordon College initially destroyed my self-esteem. Prominent faculty and staff members discredit the morality of homosexuality, students laugh and blush when the subject comes up, and gay students draw deeper into themselves, gradually developing immunity to the discourse. For this reason, very few of you know my orientation. That is not OK.

My sexual orientation, while not exclusively defining me, is still a central aspect to my identity. It not only gives meaning to my relationships with other gay men, but also affects my relationships to my straight male friends and my friendships with women. In this sense, even though I am not sexually active, I am very much a "practicing homosexual." With gay men, my sexual orientation serves as a point of common experience and potential romantic involvement. With straight men, my sexual orientation serves as a point of reflection on the multitude of ways that masculinity can be healthily expressed. With women, my sexual orientation serves as barrier to romantic involvement and can thereby open up exciting new friendships. For many at Gordon College, however, my sexual orientation merely signifies immorality, a confused childhood, or a sinful deviation from God's plan.

I do not want to ignorantly stigmatize all Gordon students as intolerant in the same way that they have often, I believe, ignorantly stigmatized me as immoral. Rather, let me do something

much more radical: allow me to tell you how Gordon has positively influenced my gay identity.

FIRST, GORDON BROUGHT ME to Massachusetts at a pivotal moment in the history of gay and lesbian rights. I have been able to witness *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, which held that denying same-sex marriages was an infringement of gay Americans' constitutional rights. Witnessing the subsequent same-sex marriages in this state has served as a powerful symbol of human love in general and the normalcy of gay love in particular.

Secondly, Gordon has given me thick skin. While studying, working, and living at Gordon, I have heard my professors, co-workers, and Residence Life staff make incredibly homophobic remarks. Let me define homophobia. On its most superficial level, it is the fear of effeminate men, empowered women, male lisps, limp wrists, or other gay stereotypes which have little basis in reality. On its most profound level, it is the fear of same-sex intimacy. By this I mean the fear of gay people sharing their lives, hearts, dreams, beds, and faith. I could care less whether or not I fit the superficial definition of a gay man. I probably fit some stereotypes but defy others. However, what really has hurt me is that members of the Gordon community want to deny me deep and meaningful romance and commitment with members of my same sex. This denial has caused me to closely examine myself and has given me the thick skin a gay man needs to survive a Christian college, a socially conservative country, and a world where the death penalty or life imprisonment is occasionally the cost for my love.

Thirdly, Gordon has given me in-

credible friendships. I have developed incredible friendships with straight men at Gordon. They have modeled to me both the kind of man I hope to become, and also the kind of man I hope to someday marry. Even more astonishing, I have "come out" to some of these friends and, occasionally, my revelation has only deepened our friendships. This assures me that there may be a disparity between official college policy and the hearts and minds of its students. My friends love me and homosexuality is as much a part of me as heterosexuality is a part of the majority of Gordon students. I resent the catch-phrase, "hate the sin; love the sinner"; I can do without that kind of love. Some of my friends at Gordon, however, have not made the artificial cut between me and my sexuality. Rather, they embrace me as a whole person.

This year's Symposium is dedicated to "authenticity." Through my authentic friendships, many of my Gordon friends have embraced me: as a fellow student, a friend, a gay man, a human, and as a child of God. This has been a gift that has far outweighed the oppression I feel from Residence Life homophobia, conservative biblical exegesis from faculty members, and overall student immaturity in matters of sexuality.

THANK YOU, GORDON COLLEGE. You are located in a wonderful state. You have toughened my resolve to love myself, my future spouse, and those with whom I disagree. Finally, and most importantly, you have produced some critical thinkers and Christ-like lovers who have accepted me as I am.

For this, Gordon College has been a place where I have matured and become proud of my intellect, my faith, and my homosexuality.

# ELEVEN



*I knew* THAT I MIGHT be homosexual when I was twelve years old. I was in 7th grade, and I had a fascination with this one girl, everything about her. It was more than a fascination with like her clothes; it was more like I had a crush on her, so I kind of knew then.

I didn't start coming out or acting upon it until about a year ago. I came out to my mom, and *immediately* she sent a guy over to take me out on a date. And it was kind of like "what the heck?" but it was also kind of hysterical. I came out to my grandparents, and my mom and my brother and a couple cousins and extended family... my grandmother already knew, because she was asking me when I was a teenager. My mother, she knew because she always made remarks about it and how horrible it was.

When I came out I lost most of my straight friends – lost them. It's not like they said they weren't going to be my friends; they just stopped talking to me. I had a best friend, she had been my best friend for about 18 years, we used to talk every day, and now I haven't talked to her in about seven months.

I got outed at work. I was on a date with my girlfriend, and a couple of guys from work walked into the bar, and when I was in the bathroom they asked her how she knew me. She said she was my girlfriend. The next day everybody at work knew that I was gay, and the whole atmosphere changed. I've worked there three years, I've been a great worker, and I've never had guys or anybody else

give me problems, and the very next day I had guys coming up to me at my desk and asking me to go on dates with them and their girlfriends, and just horrible disgusting stuff. I also had a guy sit me down in the cafeteria and want to talk to me for half an hour about how I'm going to switch back to men and how he's going to be there for me when I'm ready. So pretentious – like he's the one for me. It was just crazy.

I used to go out with my coworkers about once a week, but now I can't, because when I go out with them to bars they try to get in my pants because either they think I'm easy (which is definitely not the case) because I like women or they just want to screw around with me because I'm gay and they just want to be jerks.

So recently I've just been sort of hibernating in the gay community. They're very understanding and they're very open and they've gone through a lot of the things I've gone through. It's just a very safe place for me to be right now.

It has been a real struggle because hardly anyone in the gay community is religious and hardly any of them have any spiritual connection to Jesus Christ or God, so it's harder in that aspect because I know Jesus is real and I know God is real, and I'm not willing to give that up.

I think to be a Christian and to be gay is probably one of the hardest things in the gay community, or even any sort of religious stance that you hold, because

everything in the gay community is so gray. It's so lukewarm, everything is OK, nothing is black and white – which is not OK. I don't have any Christian gay friends. I have ex-Christian gay friends. It's a struggle. I do live sort of a double life: I live here, and this is my Christian life and it can't connect with my gay life. I do a lot with the gay community in Boston, but I can't mention that I go to Gordon College because it will get around. It's like being schizophrenic, like having multiple personalities.

I had sort of kind of hinted to one of my friends at Gordon that I was friends with a lot of gay people, and I got a totally horrible reaction, like “that's disgusting,” and so I decided to just cut my losses and not talk about it. I'm not at a point in my life where I can give up all my friends. I understand that I shouldn't have to, but if NOT talking about being gay with Gordon friends is the only way I can keep them right now, then I'm willing to make the sacrifice.

I always felt guilty about being gay because I've always struggled with it. Being gay isn't just something that pops up out of the blue. With my faith I always felt kind of guilty about it, but at the same time I know God knows my choices and why I make them. He knows what's going on in my life, and he wouldn't give me anything to harm me. He knows my heart. I believe our God is a loving God, and that's it. And if I'm here and I can live my life and be happy and have a normal satisfied life as a gay person then I think he would

want that for me, rather than to struggle my entire life with the weight of guilt.

I think the biggest thing Gordon struggles with is their lack of understanding about the gay community. Gordon really needs to tackle the “gay” issue and embrace homosexuals even if they don't embrace homosexuality. The gay community knows that Christians believe us to be sinners, but in order to really understand me or any other gay or lesbian person I would have to say that they need to love the sinner and hate the sin. If Gordon College students understood what I have to do on a daily basis, and how I have to cover my ass all the time because I can't talk about who I'm dating and I can't ever talk about what I do, I think they would be shocked. Even my network in the gay community is shocked.

Whatever you believe, whether you believe being gay is a choice, or believe being gay is not a choice, whatever your stance, don't lose sight of the person between the whole mess.

That would be the one thing I would say to the Gordon College student, is don't lose the person in all of the right and wrongness. There are great people inside there who are just dying to be known, and you could be great friends whether you believe what they're doing is wrong or right. To be a Godly person is to understand and to know someone's heart, and to be able to touch someone's heart, and I think that's what Christ would want.



# TWELVE



[This story was misplaced by the editors and did not appear in the print edition.]

## Beginning

IN MIDDLE SCHOOL, I STARTED feeling an attraction to guys. (I'm a male.) I was very concerned and I knew it wasn't normal, but I never told anyone. From what I could find in books and on the internet, I thought I might have been going through a stage of "hero worship." It was my sincere hope that the attractions to other guys would fade away.

Unfortunately they persist to this day. I am still attracted to girls, although not as often as I am to guys. I've had two girlfriends, both of which I was very much attracted to. During those times that I was in a relationship, it was easier to shrug off the gay attractions, but now being single again is hard because I fear not getting into a relationship with one of the few girls I happen to feel an attraction to. I don't think my feelings are sinful in themselves. However, I wholeheartedly believe that homosexu-

al acts and relationships are not biblically sanctioned. Remaining chaste in my thoughts has been a struggle at Gordon, living with a bunch of other guys – especially on Thursdays when clothing is optional. I'm not sure whether my feelings are a result of genetics or my upbringing. I think genetic causes are possible. That does not mean God created me this way – it means that all of creation, down to our every molecule is fallen and corrupted.

I guess if I had to label myself, I'm bisexual in my physical attractions but heterosexual in the desires of my heart of hearts. It is my fervent prayer that God will provide a wife for me that I can be in love with and attracted to. It is VERY hard to trust God in this, but I know trust is what I must do.

The only person I've ever told this to is my pastor... it's definitely something I'm ashamed of. I hope that someone will be comforted that they are not alone when they read this.

— GORDON MALE

