

## The French Lesson

My first desert experience occurred shortly after I became a Christian. Having moved back to my parent's home from the gay ghetto of Long Beach, I grew bored. Fast. So I moved back to the beach, only this time to a family of French folks who were renting out a tiny 20' by 8' room in the back of their large home.

Not a good idea. My motives were impure—I wanted to have fun again, and the peculiar Christians I had met were not fun. Needless to say, I immediately returned to my old habits. Only this time it was not fun. I found myself guilty, ill at ease with new 'friends', feeling and acting false. I was not being true to the stream of new life coursing through me. I had to stifle the Spirit in me to dance with other spirits.

I loved the French family. But they did not know what to do with me. What must they have thought: Was I gay? A member of some fanatical American cult? They were typically liberal, with many gay friends and relatives. I partied with them; I amused and confused them, and failed to give a clear account of who I was.

In this desert, I was only confused.

Desert life was awful. I remember one day I asked the Lord to leave. I pleaded with Him to remove the life-spring inside me.

The day went from bad to worse. I worked with mentally challenged kids (fitting for one morally challenged!) and the entire classroom broke out into sustained chaos. On the bike ride home, it poured rain. My tiny room had neither kitchen nor heat; I sat there, a wet, hungry lump. There was a knock on the door: my beautiful friend Ted, the only Christian I knew in the area, had come to just encourage me. God had not answered my prayer for Him to vacate.

'Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there; if I make my bed in the depths, You are there.'

(PS 139: 8, 9)

Things started to change. Ted was my real friend. Jesus was the real Source. I found I could summon the 'waters' by hanging out with Ted, by singing the dumb songs we learned in Church, by reading Scripture. I began to realize that I was not genetically 'gay', just foolish and addicted and lonely, and that my choices could help determine my destiny. I had purpose.

At my next (and last) French party, I was sober, clear, and grateful for these wonderful people who had accepted me in all my confusion. The sister of the owner, unusually sophisticated and sharp-tongued, asked me what I was about.

At first I gave her the usual Christian schtick. She was unimpressed, certain that I was in a cult. Then I told her how Jesus was actually helping me to overcome a lot of destructive things tied to my homosexuality. He was giving me an identity that surpassed the old gay self.

Her eyes filled with tears. She couldn't believe it. 'He helps you with that?' I explained more. She took me down the hall and confided in me that her son was gay, and troubled—in and out of mental health clinics. I promised to talk with him if he wanted to. (Although he did not, his older lover, a Catholic, did. I encouraged him in the Lord; we prayed together and agreed that Jesus is the answer.)

Jesus met me in the desert of my wandering and proved Himself to me as the Source. He even used me to release water there to others. He makes the burning sand a pool of mercy.

'As You have shown us mercy, O God, in the desert places of our lives, would You show mercy to the beleaguered state of marriage in the USA? As the Perry vs. Schw. case wends its way to the National Supreme Court, prepare for Yourself a victory. We shall render to Caesar what is Caesar's but we shall prayerfully fight for what is Yours, O God. Prepare the hearts of each justice, especially Justice Anthony Kennedy, to uphold marriage according to Your merciful design. Remember mercy, O God.'