

Desert Hope

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Mother's Day, 2011

Dear Friends,

Because so much of Desert Hope's current focus is on mothers (and parents) of lesbian daughters (and gay sons), we wanted to dedicate this issue to all of the mothers and fathers we have worked with over the last 15 years. I continue to be amazed at how God has used Desert Hope to help them build stronger bonds with their kids. But I am even more amazed as I watch them journey into God's unconditional love and in turn, love and bless their children as the special gifts they truly are. **We want to openly acknowledge, honor, and bless these wonderful mothers.** Following are a few stories of moms who have been to one of our healing retreats.

Desert Hope's purpose is to extend God's love, truth and healing to people struggling with relational, sexual and identity issues. Our **goal** is to bring a fresh and relevant message of hope and renewal through conferences, retreats, speaking, writing, and international missions.

Desert Hope is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation and operates solely on the contributions of people such as you.

All donations to this ministry are tax deductible and will be recognized by a receipt.

A Mother's story

Today is the first day of spring; normally, my favorite time of year. I love to be warm, go for walks and "just breathe." Beautiful blooms are beginning to show their face. It's a great time for reflection.

I have passed the one year mark since my daughter told me that she was in a relationship with another woman. Thinking back on that time is still hard to do. The first night, I could not even stay in my own home. I got in my car and literally fled to the interstate and cried my eyes and heart out to God. I was broken and totally devastated. How could my beautiful strong and independent girl make such a choice? I was overwhelmed with pain and over time, began to admit shame. I had so much PRIDE as a mother that had given birth to three beautiful children. We had had some struggles along the way, but nothing like this. For days I would lie in bed in a fetal position. At night, all I would want to do was drink; and sometimes I did. Oblivion was all I wanted. "Just erase the pain and make it go away."

My daughter and I went to family counseling. This too was very painful, as we seemed to not get closer but further apart. The final straw came when I admitted that I did not know how to love my daughter in this situation. The counselor looked at me and said, "Well I guess I can't help you until you figure that out." Another slap in the face. I thought I was seeing her so that I could be honest and LEARN how to work through this situation. I felt so alone. The last thing she did however was hand me a copy of Janelle's retreat brochure for mothers. This became my lifeline.

As I called for more information, many thoughts ran through my mind: "Here we go again, spending more money on this child, how will I tell people where I am going, how will I feel when I get there, how will I not make a blubbing idiot of myself in front of strangers when I cry?"

Needless to say, I went. It's hard to describe "the bridge" from there to now. ALL of the mothers in that room SHARED MY PAIN. We were broken, shocked and totally lost on how to deal with this situation. Janelle was the Master Shepherd in our lives, gently gathering us, putting healing arms around us, and leading us to safe ground; not leaving one of us behind.

I came home with more confidence than I left with. I at least had the strength to go on. During this time I have learned to look at my daughter in a new way. I have worked to reconnect the "bridge" in our lives by focusing on the things that we do have in our relationship, and not highlight what is awkward. We each still have our boundaries, but at least we both know that we want a relationship, in spite of our differences. Her situation has not changed, but mine has.

My search now is to find and operate in the mind of Christ, which is brand new for me in this area. I must trust. What I can participate in is holding another mother's hand as she finds herself on this journey. By supporting this ministry, I am doing just that. **We MUST keep people like Janelle and Gretchen and their team in the forefront!** I cannot say enough about this retreat: a true lifeline. And I cannot imagine going through this journey without professional understanding and guidance. This is what Desert Hope provides. **I hope that my contribution does for Desert Hope what Desert Hope did for me.**

Another Mother's story

I attended the November 2009 Mother's retreat, exactly one year after I found out my daughter is gay. I spent that first year experiencing the various stages of grief. I did a lot of reading but was very much alone, in part because I live in a small town, and in part I because I was ashamed of my child. It took me a while to admit that and to begin to work through it. I had told some Christian friends about my daughter; they were all sympathetic and encouraging, but I felt they did not really understand.

What the retreat gave me most of all was the knowledge and experience of sharing with other mothers who had experienced the same things as I had – *I was not alone*. I knew I needed something like the retreat before, but did not know where to look. I returned from the retreat with resources that were extremely helpful, but also came home with guilt, aware of my imperfections as a mother. Those feelings of guilt have resurfaced as the months pass, and although they come less often now, I feel that they may always be there.

It is hard to document my progress over the past 17 months. My daughter is in a relationship with another woman and is engaged to be married. I am still overwhelmed and still feel heartache and grief, but the follow-up teleconference calls that Janelle conducts for retreat attendees provide me with encouragement and support. Over the months, my heart has begun to heal, and I am moving forward on the journey, but I know I still have a long way to go. Please consider supporting Desert Hope so that Janelle and her team can continue to support and guide other mothers like myself.

Consider Helping Other Parents in Pain

Over the years, many families have been helped by the healing retreats, resources, and emotional support provided by Desert Hope Ministries. Maybe you know of someone who is hurting and needs our services. Would you be kind enough to share this information with them or consider sponsoring them so that they can attend a retreat? Will you prayerfully consider supporting Desert Hope in an ongoing fashion so that we can continue to offer the resources and help that so many parents need. And for those of you who are already giving your time and money, we cannot thank you enough. Through every prayer and dollar given, we feel supported and encouraged to continue with this important work.

Calendar of Events

Healing a Parent's Heart Retreat	July 22-24, 2011	Westminster, Colorado
Level II – Healing a Mother's Heart Retreat	August 19-21, 2011	Westminster, Colorado
Healing a Mother's Heart Retreat	November 6-8, 2011	Westminster, Colorado

For more information on the retreats, please call (303) 429-2100 or visit www.deserthope.com

Help for Parents – available at the Desert Hope store – www.deserthope.com

CD – **A Mother and Father's Journey: Growing in Love.** Parents share their journey of hope and deep compassion in the midst of facing a daughter's homosexuality. All parents, whether new or seasoned in this journey, will find encouragement and strength as they listen to this story.

CD – **Practical Help for Parents of Gay Identified Children.** Janelle helps parents to gain a broader perspective of their child's life and offers practical communication skills that can strengthen emotional bonds and stabilize the parent-child relationship.

CD – **Supporting Parents of Gay-Identified Children.** This is for counselors or pastors helping parents face the reality of their child's homosexuality. Janelle addresses the common pitfalls that should be avoided when working with parents and provides practical suggestions for offering them a safe and supportive environment.

Book – **Gay Children, Straight Parents** by Richard Cohen – A must read for every parent!!!!

Book – **The Heart of Female Same-Sex Attraction** by Janelle Hallman – A must read for parents of lesbian daughters.

Book – **Love is an Orientation** by Andrew Marin – A challenging book that will open parent's eyes to the spiritual experiences and needs of many gay and lesbian men and women.