



# Out of the Shadows

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Founder of TruthSetsFree.net

It was three years ago and I was a freshman at Earlham College, a Quaker liberal arts college in Richmond, Indiana. Like every other freshman, I had mixed feelings of excitement about all the new people, clubs, and the independence, as well as a little apprehension about so much newness and so much unknown. What I did not know, however, was just how much I would discover that year.

National Coming Out day rolled around, I forget the date, but we all knew because of the chalking on the sidewalks that the campus' GLBTQ group had done the night before. You know, catchy phrases like, "2, 4, 6, 8. don't assume your grandma's straight." The following Friday in the school's newspaper a conservative Christian student had written a letter to the editor in which he harshly condemned homosexuality using Leviticus 18:22 as his basis.

Having been raised in a Christian home, and having felt a calling towards ministry since the eighth grade I was quite aware at the time that his usage of the Leviticus law was quite ironic since Leviticus also condemns shaving one's beard, eating shrimp, wearing clothing made of two fabrics, etc. As I was writing a response, I recognized that the reason I felt compelled to respond was not simply because he was misusing Scripture or because I wanted to defend my gay friends, but I realized I was defending myself. It was in writing that letter that I realized I was gay.

I finished the letter, pointing out his hypocrisy in using Leviticus, but I knew very well that there were so many other verses in the Bible used to condemn homosexuals. That week began what turned into three years of personal Bible study. I wanted to answer the question, "What exactly does the Bible say about homosexuality?" Nobody knew at this time that I was gay, and when the next issue of the school paper came out my mom even asked me on the phone if I was gay, and I remember lying to her.

Through my studies I found numerous resources on both sides, but I didn't want to jump to a conclusion based on a little 2-page leaflet that

"proves" the Bible doesn't say anything about homosexuality. I wanted whatever conclusion to be a true conviction. What I discovered through in-depth Bible study did, nonetheless, begin my personal journey out of the shadows of self-hate and lies, into the Light of self-acceptance. Never did I imagine that I would be sitting here writing a letter about my story to be published in a newspaper. I had come to see that there was no blanket condemnation of homosexuality, but rather homogenitality was only mentioned within the context of rape, prostitution, pederasty, etc. all practices common in biblical times which I too would condemn.

A few months after coming out to my family and some close friends I wrote a study in which I examined the six verses commonly misinterpreted to condemn homosexuality. Eventually my Bishop and two others came beside me to financially support the printing and publication of this study. I eventually established [www.TruthSetsFree.net](http://www.TruthSetsFree.net) as a means of sharing my study with those in need.

Since I launched TruthSetsFree.net I have been interviewed on the Michelangelo Signorile Radio Show on SIRIUS radio and am arranged to be interviewed on Canadian gay rights activist Cheri DiNovo's radio show "Radical Reverend" on May 26th. I have even recruited a media coordinator and fundraising manager, both of whom are amazing gay Christians!

My study presents the Truth that set me free...not free to do whatever I want, but free to step out of the shadows of lies and self-hate to a place where I can truly embrace myself. As I am writing this I am mindful of the fact that there will be an article about my emerging ministry in my hometown paper, which serves a very rural area in the thumb of Michigan. I know, however, that there is nothing to fear, for Truth has brought me thus far, and what an adventure it has been!!

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Check out Justin's study on his website: <http://www.truthsetsfree.net>