

A Return to Peace and Joy
By Michael Martinez
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My name is Michael Martinez, a 38-year-old born-again Christian residing in Ontario, California. I grew up in a church where I felt a deep sense of security, love, and peace that only God could provide. I had a genuine, loving relationship with my heavenly Father despite some difficulties at home—an introduction to pornography at a young age, coupled with my father’s mental and verbal abuse of my mother. My grandfather, who did missionary work in Germany with my Oma (grandmother), was the only strong male spiritual figure in my life.

Around age twelve, I rebelled against my spiritual upbringing. I found a connection and escape at the Los Angeles underground rave parties of the early and mid 1990s. During that time, I was increasingly attracted to the LGBT lifestyle. I had experimented with a couple of boys in my early teens. I thought I liked, that I wanted the sexual experiences with these guys, who were mentally and physically two to four years older.

In time, I came to believe I’d been born gay. In my early adulthood, I chose destructive lifestyle choices and unhealthy sexually driven addictions, accompanied by addiction to marijuana, meth, and alcohol. My spirit was taken over by the manipulation, lies, and betrayal of the Prince of Darkness himself. I had countless, nameless one-night stands via the internet, adult bookstores, cruise spots, public restrooms, and truck stops. At the end of it all, I was alone and empty, still searching for love and happiness.

Fast-forward to May 2018. I was utterly unhappy. For twenty plus years, I’d been an expert at laughing (while inwardly hurting), smiling (while inwardly crying), lifting other people’s spirits (while killing my own), keeping it real (while being the biggest fake), and standing up for pseudo-truth (while living a lie).

My family, however, never stopped praying for me. My Oma and my mother even attended some Restored Hope/Renewed Hope meetings in Rancho Cucamonga, California.

When I thought life couldn’t get any crappier, I reached rock bottom, littered with empty whiskey and vodka bottles. I had never seriously considered suicide, but in May 2018, I was actually okay with dying an alcohol-related death. The devil had me ensnared in such a self-destructive mindset that I bit pieces of Clorox bleach tablets to fulfill cravings brought on by the deficiencies in my body.

In that place of darkness, I surrendered everything to God. When I called on him, he answered. I was literally delivered overnight from the alcohol addiction. That encounter with God led me to desire a life centered on his true purpose for me and my true identity. Separation from my homosexual identity is still new to me. I don’t identify as heterosexual, and I do not identify as homosexual. I choose to identify as a child of God. Only God knows my future, and I have peace with the decision to fully trust him.

God is so awesome. The peace and joy I have come to know again is beyond words. It is a blessing to share my testimony with the Restored/Renewed Hope group that prayed for me years before I knew them. The most blessed part of my testimony is the discovery of my purpose in serving others and helping to win hearts to God's kingdom.