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## John and Jesus

John had one of those effervescent personalities. He was the life of every party and I'm sure when he was in the gay lifestyle of his past, everybody loved having him around. He trusted Christ as a young boy. In adolescence, drifting, seduced, willfully choosing... I don't know, he ended up smack in the middle of a no-holds-barred homosexual lifestyle here in Chicago. For generations homosexuals seeking others like themselves and distance from home have gravitated to urban centers, creating yet another subculture unreached by Christians scrambling to get out of cities.

One of our members reached out to John and he ended up in a Bible study I led in a neighborhood known as Boys Town. I have rarely seen a more passionate, committed Christian. It seemed he wanted to make up for those lost years by pouring devotion into Christ and His work. AIDS ravaged John's body. He became increasingly debilitated, and finally bed-ridden. I'll never forget visiting him just before he died. The stench of what that disease was doing to his body filled the apartment and was almost more than I could stomach. The closer John got to death; the more passionate for Christ he became.

What bittersweet emotion filled us as we conducted his memorial service. One of the outstanding features was the attendance of many lost people John had reached out to, loved, and been a witness to. His boss, an unbeliever, asked if he could read a piece he had written about John. I was reluctant, not knowing what an unbeliever might say about John, and not knowing if the boss himself was a homosexual. I asked

him to send me a copy. What I read and allowed that man to read in the service, was nothing short of a God-glorifying, Christ-honoring testimony to the power of Jesus in a transformed John.

**"The light of Christ was reflected by John in so many ways; creative, sensitive, devoted to family and friends, an outgoing lover of people, hard working, conscientious, courageous, generous, and humble are some of the adjectives that come to mind." Also, "For the past few years, John confronted the dark shadow which finally claimed his mortal existence a week ago. Each of us encounters various problems in life (jobs, relationships, psychological issues, etc.), but John's was the ultimate life problem; the imminence of one's own mortality. The way John lived through this time was a testament to his character and to his faith in God." Then, "Lastly, John's faith in God deepened, and he gained the inner peace of knowing that, whatever the outcome, his life was part of God's greater plan. His was a believing, living testimony to Christ. Never loud or boastful, John walked the talk. Tonight, our brother John is singing and dancing in the company of angels. On earth, he was a genuine prince among men. I miss him very much."**

As the reading concluded, I looked through my tears at John's city councilwoman sitting across the aisle, wiping her tears away. Preaching John's funeral wasn't difficult. He had already preached it.

Following is a short piece John wrote two days before he died.

"My Lord, through the darkest of my hours that I have been suffering, I must be honest and wonder if You hear me. I also have prayed and prayed if there be something more I need to confess from the cobwebs of many years, that I could ask for forgiveness. There was so much, but I really felt like it needed to be confessed, even though I have already been forgiven; my search for a clean soul was and is important to me. And it was a sincere part of my prayer life.

For years, in my heart, there has been a longing for your ministry in my life. Somewhere along the line, I missed it or You felt maybe I wasn't ready. I think if the truth be known, I needed to get to a point where through the pain and suffering of it all, there had to be just us. You well know how many times I have asked You to 'take me home' because the sickness so overwhelmed me. Then I sleep, hoping to arise in Heaven, but I wake in my bed usually in pain to another day of a sort of non-existence. I want to live my life victoriously for you. I deserve nothing. You deserve my all.

Lord, healing from You is to You an opportunity to show others You are all powerful!! In this sin-filled, God-less world, Your presence in my illness is a dramatic and all-powerful message. You don't have to heal me to prove to me You are God. Faith is believing.

Please help me in these hours, days, and weeks of weakness. Have mercy, let wonderful truths flow from me like a heavenly fountain. You are my hope and hope will not disappoint."