#### Announcer

Welcome to Transformed by the Word, a podcast about discovering how to live your life with gratifying purpose. God created you for a reason and the Bible contains the keys to unlock your transformed life. Now, here's your host, Debora Barr

Debora 0:23

Thanks for joining me for episode 49 of Transformed by the Word. Before we jump into this podcast episode, I would love to take a moment and thank a listener for leaving a review of the podcast writing. "Each episode walks you through a journey where you learn more and more of Christ's heart and his desire for you. With all that is going on in this world, it is refreshing to have this podcast in my playlist."

Thank you so much for taking the time to leave that review. If you would like to provide feedback on this podcast, please go to lovethepodcast.com/TBTW podcast or click the leave a review link on my website. TBTWpodcast.com.

My guest for today is a ministry friend and a fellow board member of the Restored Hope Network. Our guest is Jeff Simonds. Jeff is the Director of Tower of Light Ministries, a ministry whose focus is on helping those who struggle with same sex attractions. Jeff has been leading recovery groups for the past 19 years, speaking at churches and conferences and doing Lay counseling. He has a heart for those who struggle with LGBT desires, a heart for family members, and for educating the church on how to appropriately love those dealing with this issue.

Jeff is single and has enjoyed a life full of friendships ministry and adventure. After pursuing degrees in chemistry, computer science, and an MBA in finance and international business. He worked for a large company before taking a break from life and traveling the world for five years. He has been to 104 countries and continues to travel whenever time finances and opportunities allow. He was the president of the American Friendship Foundation, which is an international humanitarian organization. And at various times he served as the director of missions at a church, he led young adult single's ministry and oversaw the planting of two churches.

Stay tuned, we'll be back in just a moment.

#### <<MUSIC INTERLUDE>>

Hey, Jeff, thank you so much for agreeing to come on the show today and share a little bit about your life with our listeners.

Jeff 3:42

My pleasure for being here. Thank you for having me.

Debora 3:45

Absolutely. Hey, when this episode airs, we're going to both be in North Carolina at the restored hope network annual conference and I'm really looking forward to that.

Jeff 3:56

It will be so nice to finally be in person with people again, after two years of COVID.

Transcribed by <a href="https://otter.ai">https://otter.ai</a>

### Debora 4:00

Yeah, and I love Ridgecrest. It's such a beautiful place. Now we're in a series of podcast episodes about life transformation. And I know that you have a testimony of the power of God to heal and transform lives. Would you mind sharing with our listeners a little bit about your early years.

Jeff 4:19

I grew up in a Christian family. We actually have a history of faith in my family. My grandfather was a pastor for a while. And my grandmother was a prayer warrior. We all of his grandkids have memories of being at Grandma's house, praying for an hour in the evening, as she was definitely a prayer warrior, and my mother was a prayer warrior as well. She would spend a lot of time in prayer. My father was an elder in our church. My aunts and uncles are all Christians. My siblings are all Christians. My nephews and nieces are all Christians. That's it, really raised in the church.

And I accepted Christ in my heart too when I was six years old, and actually had a very personal relationship with God ever since he has been my rock, he has been my closest friend through my entire life. And it was with God holding on to God that I kind of really survived my childhood, holding on to God and my dog.

Debora 5:26

What was your dog's name?

Jeff 5:27

My dog was named Duke.

Debora 5:30

So I know that you experienced some things in your childhood that led you down a path that you might not have gone down, if things were different. Would you mind sharing a little bit about that with our listeners?

Jeff 5:43

My father was very narcissistic. I never felt any love from him. Our life was pretty much about him. He never took any interest in my life. He was very fearful and extremely controlling. Growing up, I had a friend over one time, I spent a night at someone else's house. Once I went to one party in high school, it was four doors away. And I had to be home at 10. Before it even really started. That was like my social life growing up. We weren't allowed to stay after school and participate in any extracurricular activities. I was just really totally isolated and really had no friends. So I grew up hating my dad, all my siblings ended my dad, I was close to my mom. But my mom was also very busy. She was a doctor worked a lot. And then my father insisted on homemade meals. So she would have to come home and cook food from scratch, maintain the household. And she said shut herself off emotionally as well, in order to survive with my dad. So there was very little emotional connection in my family. So I responded to that, by spending my life in my room, reading and studying, I became an excellent student. We had essentially

no toys. So I spent my time, my free time with the National Geographics, and an atlas, and planning trips all around the world, essentially trying to escape my life.

However, as a side effect of that I developed a deep love for foreign cultures. And when we hit puberty, we're attracted to mystery. And everyone's journeys look different. And the way this played out in my life, there was mystery about both women and men. So all my emotional attractions have been towards women, all my crushes and junior high. And in high school were on girls and actresses. I had visual attraction to women. And looking back, I don't know if I had an attraction towards guys, but I definitely had at least a visual curiosity about guys. I grew up extremely isolated. I never saw any naked pupils. So I was very curious about naked dice. But looking back, I don't think I was particularly aroused by it. However, in my early 20s, I was finally able to get involved with some young adults and get some friends. And one of those friends seduced me and opened up this window. And, you know, I was shocked and appalled by what we did. But I couldn't shut that door. And for a few months, we were involved, and then I cut it off. But that dramatically affected my thought life. Because that was my only sexual expression. And that became much more focused on guys. And then later, became addicted to porn. And that part grew as well.

Debora 8:45

How did you reconcile your Christian faith with what you were experiencing at this time in your life?

Jeff 8:53

So I was a Christian, and I loved God. So I was deeply torn up inside about this, I had tremendous shame and self hatred. Because I knew the scriptures on this. I knew God called what we had done an abomination. And I didn't understand the difference between behavior and attraction. I felt that just having these attractions and thoughts now was abominable. And it kind of made me an abomination. So deep shame, deep self hatred. And I responded to that by by becoming narcissistic myself, where, and my father grew that in me as well, he would shame me for any flaws that he saw in me because that would reflect negatively on him. If I got if I got a pimple, he would shame me in front of the family. If I put on a few pounds, he would shame me. So I and then with my same sex attractions, I felt everyone would reject me so I became wore a mask, and I became as perfect as I could be. To avoid any further shame

Debora 9:59

hmm, Did anybody in your family or your church know that you were experiencing same sex attraction?

Jeff 10:06

I wasn't really connected to anybody in church because we were again very isolated. My family, no, my there was, my father had no interest in us. So there was no introspection, there was no inquiry about what was going on in our lives. I think my mother was just trying to survive as well. So there was just me.

Debora 10:29

How did you manage to get out of this cycle?

Jeff 10:34

It was a long process for me. So initially, we after this happened with my friend who seduced me, I tried to get help. I went to Christian bookstores, there was nothing written on this topic available. I tried to find a counselor, I looked in the back when we had yellow pages. I tried to find a counselor. But no one said anything about this topic. I thought, well, Christians don't struggle with this because it's an abomination. Why would Christians struggle with this? So I really locked down a behavior. And then like I mentioned, when the internet came out, I got addicted to porn. I got accountability software going and that dealt with a behavior. I saw a counselor. But his solution was don't look at men. And after, yes, don't look at men don't masturbate after a week. He's like, why are you still here? After two weeks is like so why are you still here? So I gave up on counseling. I thought that's all the Christian world can offer me.

So then, at one point, I, I quit my job, I took a backpack. I traveled the world for five years. And then during that, though, I thought, well, maybe God would heal me. If I read the Bible more. So I read through the Bible twice, in two years, still had same sex attractions. I thought maybe he would heal me if I prayed more. So I increased my prayer life and still had same sex attractions. And then I hit my 40th birthday and had a midlife crisis. And my midlife crisis wasn't moving to Vegas and buying a Ferrari and a big gold chain. My midlife crisis was I can't live this way anymore. God, I hate me. And I thought, Well, I wasn't acting on any attractions. I thought, just having this I thought thoughts were making me an abomination.

And so I spent a few months just praying every day for God to remove these attractions and still had them. I would became suicidal for a few months, but I wasn't sure if I would go to heaven if I killed myself because I heard a sermon that said you wouldn't when I was young, which was bad theology, but I'm glad I remembered that because I'm still here today because of that sermon. Yeah. And so then I then I begged God to take me home every night for a few for a few months. And I would wake up every morning and go, dang it. I'm still here. Heart attacks, where in my family, I didn't even think I was asking for much. I'm like, God, this is just a minor ask, can you just please take me home? It's like, God, I don't know what to do. So I looked into researching things more, and I found a ministry, there was a ministry at that point. That was about an hour away. I called him and I said, you know, here's my story. Is there any hope for me? And he said, There was hope for me.

And so I made an appointment to see him. And so I hung up the phone and I made got a deal. And I Okay, God, if there is hope for me, I will do anything and everything it takes to get healing in my life. And I don't really recommend doing this, but it's what I did. I'm like, Okay, God, I'm not going to work for a year. I'm not going to do ministry for a year. I am not going to travel. It is going to be you and me working on everything that gets drummed up that I need to work on. I made it like my full time job to get healing in my life. Wow. So I would go to counseling every week. I would go to group every week. And my counselor told me I was the second hardest person he ever had to get into group. It's all of my shame about this. I didn't want anyone to know. And I finally said, Do I have to do this to get more healing? And he said yes. And I told God, I would do anything. So I'm like, Okay, I will go to group scared to death. I went to group and I actually grew to love group, because group was the place where I could be authentic. And as I would drive away from group, I would get this deep heart ache going because my heart I was driving out into my shallow plastic world again, and my heart was already missing. This authentic place where I can be real and known the real authentic me. So that was great information for me and great a place to be accepted and learn and work through some things. But I would then go home. And I would spend 20 hours a week with God. Pile of snot, working through all of the things that

was coming up. In counseling and group, I went back to all of different places of hurt and pain and wounding in my life. And give, invite Jesus into those places and give him my hurt and my pain and my bitterness and my hatred. And then just let him love on me. And memory after memory after memory. And he met me in those places, and he did a deep healing work in my life that year.

#### Debora 15:36

Wow, that's a huge dedication, and focus on healing. And it sounds like it's like layers of an onion that were being peeled away in you.

# Jeff 15:48

That's an analogy I use all the time. Because with my father, for instance, who I deeply, deeply hate it. I don't recommend doing this either. But it's what I did, I went back over all the memories that I could think of with my father, getting in touch with the hurt and pain, bringing it to Jesus, and then letting Jesus love me. And prior to doing this, I couldn't be around my father five minutes without getting upset. After doing this for a few months, I could be around him with good boundaries and be fine. Well, then, a few months later, I started getting upset again. And I'm like, oh, what's here? Well, there's another layer of my opinion. So I went and spent another few months going back over all my memories, again, getting any more hurt and pain and wounding out, and bitterness and anger and hatred and letting Jesus love me again. And then I was fine for a few months. And then I started getting upset with my dad again. So I did it again. And then with really good boundaries, I could be around my dad and be fine.

And then I was going through another program to be a leader. And it was a time to get in touch with pain from our fathers. And I said, You know what, I have spent a year of my life working on the pain from my father wound. I think I'm okay. And I just said one simple sentence about my dad. And I broke down for another 20 minutes. And I'm like, where did this come from? And Holy Spirit was just showing me you know, this is just a deeper layer of my onion. So from my perspective, I don't really ever consider it. Everything totally resolved. I want to be open to the Holy Spirit. Like if there's another layer here, of something in my life, show me. I want to get any more hurt and pain and bitterness and anger and hatred. I want to get that out. And it's always an opportunity for Jesus to come in love on me to.

### Debora 17:40

Why is it worth going through all of this? What would you say to somebody that's like, oh, that sounds like too hard. I don't want to I don't want to deal with that. I don't want to deal with the pain, what would you say to them?

#### Jeff 17:51

Couple of things. One, I think I want to live a life that reflects and reflects God's original intent for me, I want to be transformed into more and more of the image of Jesus and reflect to others who are hurting what God can do for them. And so going through this has helped me get healing and a lot of these areas that were impeding that. But one of the amazing thing that's happened, which was a completely unexpected side benefit was I used to see people who were so in love with Jesus, I had a personal relationship with Jesus, and I love Jesus. But I would see people who were so in love with Jesus, they would share about Jesus on the bus and everywhere because they were just spilling over with love for

Jesus. And I would see them and I would go, God, how come I don't love you like they do. I want to love you like they do.

And when someone once told me, you know if you want to love God more pray for that. So I prayed for that for years. God helped me love you more. So, you know, probably six, nine months of going through this process. I was driving down the road one day, and a new song came on the radio. I can only imagine by Mercy Me. And the only time I listen to music is in my car. So I was driving down the road. I was sobbing so hard in my car to the I had to pull my car over because I couldn't see the drive. And then every time that song would come on the radio, I would have to pull my car over. And I'm like, this isn't safe. That song has to come with a 30 second warning. So I kind of show my car over and I'm like God, what is going on inside me? Why does this hit me so hard? And the Holy Spirit showed me that he used this thing that I despised so much in my life he used all of that hurt and pain and a wounding in my life. If I were I could invite him to come into that place. And he could love all of those really deep, hurtful, shameful places. Jesus loved that eight year old kid, and that 14 year old kid and that 21 year old kid who was involved with that guy, and having him come in and love the most unlovable parts of me, throw his arms around me, the light in me, that developed a love for him that was greater than I could have even known to pray for. I know, I love him 50 times more, that I would have loved him if I didn't have this issue in my life. If I hadn't had to walk through getting in touch with all that hurt and pain and wounding and brokenness, and letting him love me there. I love him 50 times more than if he had healed me the first time I prayed.

#### Debora 20:57

Yeah, and this, this pertains to any areas of sin in our lives. This is not just people who are same sex attracted. This is people with any kind of life controlling issues. It's the same Jesus loves you no matter what, and it's phenomenal. Jeff, would you share a little bit about what caused you or what prompted you to start your ministry and tell us a little bit about that, and how people can connect with you there.

### Jeff 21:26

So because of all the shame I had regarding this issue in my life, nobody knew this issue existed for me, I lived in a completely heterosexual world. I had led them a humanitarian organization for five years, I was a missions pastor in my church. And the ministry that I had gone to for help myself, after I went through that for a year, they shut down. And they wound up eventually moving to another state. So there was going to be nothing in my state to help other people. And I went to a large church. And I, in my own church, where they had had five spouses leave their families for the gay lifestyle. And I went to a recovery director and I said, No, here's my story. You can't tell anybody. And if you know of anybody who struggles with it, you can send them my way. I'll try to find them help, but Secretly, secretly, no one can know. And so my recovery director goes, well, you have an amazing, amazing story. When can you start a group? I'm like, Absolutely not. Over the over like a year, she asked me that multiple times? Absolutely not. Never Never.

# Jeff 22:42

So then one day, one of the high school small group leaders of guys came and asked her and says, we're getting all these questions on homosexuality. We don't know what to say, can someone come and speak? So she came to me and told me that and I said, I will find somebody else. And then the Holy Spirit

just put on my heart, like, how much more would it mean to these kids to have their missions pastor come and talk to them. And I'm like, God, I know some of these kids parents. There's some of my friends, they can't know this about me. They can't know this about me. And so then I thought, Well, God, if i this will change my life if I do this, and I tend to be a very high responsibility person. But I'm not going to move forward on this without knowing that you specifically want this for me. And so I did what every good Christian does, when making a decision like this, I opened up my Bible, and I put my finger on the page. I'm just gonna, it's not what we should do. But that's what I did. And I went straight to the verse, what do you do with a lamp? Do you put it under a bushel? No, you put it on a lampstand. So the world can see what God has done. I'm like, Oh, my gosh, God, well, maybe I should do two out of three. But I'm like, Okay, God, you just gave me a word directly from you. This is I need to do this. And so I did, I went in to talk to them. And then the leader said, Oh, my gosh, you have to talk to all of the parents, they need to hear this. So then I did, I went and talk to our parents, which was our largest class in the church, you then you'd have to talk to our high school group, then you have to train the staff, then you need to do a seminar for my church, and it just snowballed from there. So God brought me into ministry, I was, you know, kind of an unwilling participant but willing to serve Him. And so he used that and now, I've been doing this for almost 20 years.

#### Debora 24:41

Wow, that's fantastic. And how do people connect with you for your ministry?

## Jeff 24:45

So my ministry is called Tower of Light Ministries, and I have a website, Toweroflightministries.org And I'm in Seattle. So that's where my ministry is based. So there's email on phone number on my website to contact me.

# Debora 25:03

I know you do a lot of travel still, and I'm very jealous every time I hear you're going on another trip somewhere in the world. But I know that that passion came out of actually hurt in your childhood in the National Geographic magazines. And I can relate to quite a bit of your story. But tell us a little bit about what you do now internationally related to same sex attraction and helping people.

#### Jeff 25:29

So God has blessed me with an opportunity to travel. So I've been to 104 countries, a lot of that has been for a personal interest in enjoying culture. But he's opening up the door for me to be able to minister internationally, as well. So two to three times a year, I get invitations to go overseas, and train at Youth With A Mission counseling schools, where I get to be able to minister to missionaries, which helps engage my passion for missions. It allows me to travel overseas, and I trained on a sexuality including LGBT, it's which combines my heart also for helping those who are struggling sexually. So it's a really wonderful opportunity that God's provided for me to be able to combine my three passions.

# Debora 26:20

Yeah, I love how that God does that for us. If we're willing and surrendered to Him, He will give you the delights of your heart, in the passions of your heart. It's a wonderful thing. Do you have a favorite scripture or a life verse that you hold on to?

### Jeff 26:37

I like Philippians 1:6. And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus. So even though I have spent a ton of time getting healing in my life, I know it's a lifelong process. So even this last year, the Holy Spirit during COVID had been kind of like stirring up my heart a little bit. I was wondering, you know what, I wonder if there's another layer of my opinion, on a couple of issues. And so I sought out a counselor, who kind of specialized in those areas. I met with her weekly for seven months, getting in touch with another area in my life where the Holy Spirit wanted to go a little deeper, and brought a lot more healing. So I don't ever consider the process done. Oh my god, there's more healing you want to bring? Can you began a good work in me will eventually bring it to completion when I see Jesus, and he'll do that for everyone else as well.

### Debora 27:35

Yeah, that's wonderful. Some people think they're shaming going for counseling. But truly, there is not that that is so needed. We are a broken people we're in we live in a broken world, and anything that can bring layers of healing is a good thing.

## Jeff 27:53

I don't think yeah, there's there should be no shame, and seeking out healing and helping our lives. I have been in counseling multiple times, and I have loved it.

## Debora 28:04

Yeah. Is there anything else you'd like to share with our listeners before we begin to wrap up,

#### Jeff 28:10

I would encourage people to have if this is an issue that you have in your life, that there is hope for you, that Jesus wants to come and meet you, and bring healing and restoration as you cry out to Him and process things with him. I would really encourage you to find a local ministry, if there's one near you, where you can get plugged in and get help one on one. And if not, there are online resources as well. If you're not in a place where there's in person help, I would just really encourage people to be able to start that process for themselves. And if they're a family member, they should be able to get help and support for you as well. And I know there's groups online that can do that, too. There's not one near you.

## Debora 28:56

Yeah, and if you don't even know where to start, check out restoredhopenetwork.org That's restoredhopenetwork.org There's a lot of ministries and pastors and counselors that you can gain access to on that website. Jeff, would you mind praying for our listeners, as we conclude our interview,

## Jeff 29:16

I would love to - Heavenly Father God I just thank you God for everyone who is listening to this podcast. God I you know, what brings them here you know, what they may be struggling with, or the family members that they are concerned about, or friends. God, I thank you that you are a God of hope, God that you are a God of restoration, and that you have good things for their life and for the lives of their

loved ones. God I just pray that you would be with them during the coming week or two after this podcast, God that Your Holy Spirit would just be helping them process any parts of this. That would bring hope and encouragement To them, I pray you would guide any future steps God for what you would have for them as they would look into getting help or support for whatever it is they're dealing with. Amen.

Debora 30:12

Amen. Don't go away. We'll be right back after this short break.

<<MUSIC INTERLUDE>>

Debora 0:56

We just heard from Jeff Simonds who share with us how through counselling, and episodes of inner healing prayer, where he invited Jesus to bring healing to the areas of wounding in his life from his past, how that has made such a tremendous difference in his life.

Jesus was there when you experience wounding, and he will show you his love. And you will experience His healing power, when you are able to surrender those areas of hurts and pains to him. If you have never accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and you don't currently have a personal relationship with Him, you can make a correction to that right now. If you sense that Jesus wants to bring healing to your life, you can pray a prayer like this.

God, I confess that I'm a sinner, and I need Jesus in my life. I repent of my sins and I turn to you. I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins. He was buried and he rose from the dead. And I accept this by faith and invite Jesus to be Lord of my life, to reign and rule in my heart. And today, I surrender my life to you. Take control of my life and teach me Lord how to live for you. Thank you for forgiving me and saving me. Amen.

Now, if you just pray that prayer for the first time to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, would you reach out to me through my website at TBTWpodcast.com. And click the link that says, record your decision for Jesus. Once you do that, I'll reach out to you and help celebrate with you and help you with your next steps in your Christian faith.

My prayer for you today is that you would surrender every area of your life to the Lord Jesus Christ and allow him to bring healing and transformation to the areas of hurt and pain that are hindering your ability to enjoy your life to the fullest. The Word of God says that Jesus came that we might have life and have life more abundantly. live the abundant life that God intended for you.

Stay tuned for our next episode of transformed by the word where we will hear another life transformation story.

Announcer 33:53

Thank you for listening to transformed by the word with your host Debora Barr, be sure to subscribe to our podcast on iTunes or Google Play and connect with us at TBTWpodcast.com. Until next time, be blessed.