

LOVE IN ACTION

finding freedom in Jesus Christ from sexual and relational sin

December 2009

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Christmas, A Season for Gratitude



A Word From Tommy: Christmas is a wonderful time to thank God for the gift that Jesus Christ is to each of us individually—for the redeeming work that he is carrying out in each of our hearts. In that respect, every day is sort of like Christmas at Love In Action: there is always some amazing breakthrough to thank God for in our clients' lives. In this volume, a Love In Action client named Jim wanted to share some of what he has been grateful for since going through the 28-day *Source* residential program. Due to various personal concerns, Jim did not feel comfortable using his real name in this forum; but we were so excited about his story that we were more than happy to include it anonymously. It is worth noting that the New Testament contains many anonymous witnesses to the transforming power of the Gospel, among them the famous Bethlehem shepherds and mysterious Magi. But their testimony is nonetheless powerful without their names attached to it; and we are certain you will feel the same way about Jim's story.

We are so thankful to those whose sacrificial gifts helped Love In Action through the difficult months of 2009. If after reading this newsletter you feel moved to consider LIA for a special year-end gift, we would be all the more grateful. There are many people out there like Jim, Christians who have “tried everything” to heal from sexual brokenness and need an intensive program like The Source. Your tax-deductible contribution will allow us to continue helping men and women find freedom in Jesus Christ in 2010, and for many years to come. For more information, please give us a call at 901-751-2468 or e-mail us at info@loveinaction.org.

In His Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tommy Corman".

Tommy Corman, Acting Director

Jim's Story

He arrived at LIA feeling hopeless and unforgivable—what did God have in store?

I felt like I had tried everything: Scripture memory, Christian counselors, secular counselors, 12-step programs, new age programs, men's programs, coaching and a year in Bible school... The ever-present pull of same-sex attraction and sexual addiction had kept me wrapped in chains of bondage for decades, and I was struggling to free myself from obsessive thoughts of a person and behaviors that controlled me. I was truly powerless to stop and emotionally a walking disaster. Although my sin had cost me dearly (I had lost my wife, who left me with our children because of my behaviors) I was still turning to inappropriate sex to achieve a connection that could only be counterfeit, exchanging the truth of God for a lie—a lie that smothers, controls and kills. I wanted to die because of the intensity of the emotional pain. I asked God to show me His love and reveal Himself to me, because I was like the Star Wars character Obi-Wan Kenobi: “Help me God, for You are my only hope.”

Coming to The Source program at LIA was not an easy decision. Before I came, I only had one question for the staff: “Will the program work?” They never gave me a direct answer, but instead they shared hopeful testimonies and their own personal experiences of how God had worked. That response didn't register with me in my emotional/spiritual condition at the time. Not until I was ready to leave LIA did God show me I had been asking the wrong question. It isn't “Will the program work?” but “What is God looking to do in bringing me here?”

When I arrived on the campus of Love in Action, I was walking in darkness and distress, feeling hopeless under piles of shame. Deep down, I felt hopeless and realized something in my life was clearly not working. My agenda in entering The Source program was to get rid of the agony, pain and behaviors that beset me. God's agenda, as I was soon to find out, was to break me, open my eyes to see, my ears to hear and my heart to receive. He wanted me to understand the depth of my spiritual and emotional bankruptcy that were killing me: not to punish me, but in order to take me on a new journey.

The first two weeks at LIA were a journey through “Painville.” I spent hours in tears, grieving the loss of counterfeit idols—the lies for which I had exchanged God's truth—and the emotional pain wracking my body. But God began to work in my life through the people and circumstances around me from the moment I walked through the door. He started to show me things about myself that were not always easy to face. I quickly developed a negative attitude towards one of the counselors, a resentment which I tried to hide. Another counselor pointed out that anger was my default response to people, God, and situations when I didn't get my way. At first, I rejected the idea and got angry about him bringing it up. Then I burst out laughing as God showed me the truth in it! I realized that this anger and resentment have historically been fuel for my sinful behavior. From that moment on, God has continued graciously showing me my anger. I had been crushed under the weight

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Jim's Story (continued from front)

of those feelings, but I am learning I can surrender them to Him, for truly His yoke is light!

As I applied the spiritual tools I learned in the program, God's Word became ever more precious to me. Before I arrived, I could quote many scriptures, but I believed few. As a teenager and young man I hurt a lot of people and committed acts of sin which I believed were too heinous to be forgiven. The one thing that I was absolutely sure of was this: my sins were greater than God's grace and willingness to forgive me. I was beyond hope. In Psalm 66:18, we are told that if we harbor sin in our hearts, God will not hear us. That was my life verse—one of shame, not being heard, not being accepted, unworthy of being forgiven... But at LIA during one of my quiet times with God, I read the next verse: "but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer." The light went on. I had claimed a lie which was keeping me from God!

For the first time, I heard (though I had often listened to the words before) that if Christ's work of redemption, was not sufficient to cover my wrongs, then what He did was not enough. The God of the Universe, my loving Heavenly Father, showed me that it was His son who came down to do what I could not. God was turning my heart from hopeless to hopeful, because He was revealing Himself to me. Beginning to walk with God, I saw how much God loves me, and nothing I do can add to or take away from that love. Christ did it all.

I discovered a book about praying through Scripture in the small bookcase, which I devoured. I took personalized prayers and created three-by-five cards which I carried with me everywhere. When I was tempted, when my mind was turning back to obsessive thoughts, or when I just felt lost, wherever I happened to be I would pick up a stack of these cards and pray through them over and over. The scripture helped calm my mind and spirit. I loved that book and was planning on buying one when I went home. On my last Sunday at LIA, another copy of that book appeared on my bed. I cried to think how I had been so touched by a book someone had donated to LIA years and years ago; and how, years later, someone else who had a copy had given me theirs! It was another remarkable example of an awesome God who wants to heal even more than I want to be healed.

I began to feel hopeful. Becoming broken before God was painful for a season, but I entered a new phase of the journey as God opened my eyes to see Him in all of my life and His word was suddenly feeding my spiritual poverty. As I cried through the nights and days, my Father was creating a new song in my heart. My heart was singing with joy as I realized God had turned my darkness into light and lifted me out of my despair. I had never been through anything like this before! One night after doing some Bible study and work, I suddenly started singing. I sang several songs in praise to God out loud, then suddenly realized what was happening. The night was over and the joy of His salvation was being given to me as I had asked! As it says in Psalm 51, God was restoring to me the joy of His salvation. (Ps. 51:12)

Today, not a week goes by that I am not more grateful to God for carrying out His agenda rather than mine during my program. When I consider how rebellious I was, yet how much love God showed to me through the hardest times in the program, it makes me think of another Psalm: "It is good that I have been oppressed, as I have learned your ways." (Ps. 119:71) I sincerely believe that if God had not taken me into his spiritual woods behind the shed and gently broken me, I would not be alive today. After grieving for my sin and the vanity and futility of it all, God showed me His love, His ways, and how He wants to transform me into His image. So many things keep coming up which make my heart jump with joy or make me grateful for how God takes care of me. He is even using me to minister to others, as I share my testimony and He brings people across my path who need to hear what God has to say.

It isn't all easy now, and the temptations are still there. But now my relationship with God is one that I don't want to break, and I don't want to go back to the pain which can kill me. At the end of my program I cried to leave a community where such love abounded, but I knew it was time to go home. I was worried about life after the program, but God reminded me that He did not bring me out of darkness to abandon me back to my lust and sin. He brought through to be a conduit of his grace, mercy and love to others. As the LIA staff told me when I first arrived, I was a wounded warrior who was here for healing in order to go back out and fight the good fight. God would take my rebelliousness, waywardness, sinful thoughts, and garbage and exchange it for Himself, which is more than adequate! You can see where I am today from this e-mail I recently sent to my accountability partners:

"I write to tell you how great our Lord is. This week has been one of the most stressful work weeks in a very long time. Historically, I would have overeaten and spent hours doing things which grieve the Holy Spirit... that is, of course, after getting angry at everybody who crosses my path. But I have such a peace in the midst of the chaos and God is showing me how much more than adequate he is. I have been laughing and having fun in the process and able to see clearly what needs to be done, right beside co-workers who are very upset! Truly this change of heart is nothing I have done, but the work of God—now I see more clearly how good it is that I was broken, that I might learn the glorious and abundant ways of God."

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Event	Location	Date	Time
Source Residential Move-In Dates	LIA Campus	Call to Schedule	1:00 pm
4-Day Intensive	LIA Campus	Call to Schedule	9:00 am
Family Freedom Intensive	LIA Campus	Flexible dates, call for details	
Within Reach Support Group	LIA Campus	Tuesdays, call to enroll	7:00 pm
Love Won Out Conferences	Skyline Church, San Diego, CA	March 6, 2010	8:00 am

To make a donation, please call 800.201.4129 or donate online at www.loveinaction.org.