



Staff Member Spotlight:

Taking Every Thought Captive

Staff counselor **David Jones** reflects on building missionaries, training warriors, and watching God at work in the human soul.



Interview by Joshua Tyra

Josh: How long have you been with Love In Action?

David: I started in June 2005, so about four years now.

Josh: What would you say is your greatest passion?

David: I would say my greatest passion is to see lives changed through the power of God's truth and his Gospel, and to see people set free from the bondage of fear, shame, guilt and idolatry.

Josh: How did you get into the field of biblical counseling?

David: Actually, God tricked me into it! I worked in secular mental health for about 15 years, in some very professional programs. But as a Christian I realized that the world is limited in the answers it can provide, especially in matters of the soul and the human spirit. Then I had an opportunity to join an organization that had a strictly biblical basis for their counseling, and I took it. That was 15 years ago, and I have not regretted that decision, and the opportunity to apply God's truth and sound counseling techniques.

Josh: Many people ask me what methods of biblical counseling we use. How would you answer that question?

David: Our approach focuses on dealing with falsehoods that don't agree with God; it's about dealing with the world's lies we have come to believe, and confronting them with God's truth; it's a renewing of the mind,¹ and it's learning how to conduct spiritual warfare.² It's taking captive thoughts and pretenses that set themselves up against the truth.³

Josh: How would you describe what you do here?

David: A lot of our clients are here because of emotional wounds from the past, whether self-inflicted or caused by someone else. So initially, Love In Action is a place for wounded believers to find healing in God's word. But LIA is also a training ground for warriors. I tell everyone who comes here, "When you leave, you'll have your own mission field. It may be just one person who needs to hear the truth. And not necessarily the truth about salvation, but about what it means to have a real and intimate relationship with God." If you're not having intimacy with God, then you can't have intimacy with anyone else, including yourself, because our intimate relationship with God defines us. Our goal is to equip our clients to be conduits of God's truth and examples of intimacy with him in their individual mission fields. To be an effective missionary, you have to be an effective warrior, so we also train people in spiritual warfare: to "take captive those thoughts and pretenses" that prevent God from using us. For example, a lot of our clients struggle with the spirit of fear, which doesn't come from God.⁴ Take the fear of rejection: when I realize the truth that I have God's approval through Christ, I can rest in that and stop depending on the approval of others. Then I can take captive that spirit of fear, step into my personal mission field, and speak God's truth out of love.

Josh: How did you get started doing the *4-Day Intensive*?

David: I saw a need. I saw intensives being done in group formats, and those are good and very effective. But I also saw people falling through the cracks. Every sexual struggler has a unique relationship with their sin. So doing an individual intensive allows me to meet people where they are through the direction of the Holy Spirit. I began to see that sometimes we use a "shotgun approach" in dealing with sin, we throw a lot of Scripture at it. But often people need to deal with their sin in a more specific way. And shame and secrecy make it more difficult for them to address their issues in a group format. They need another brother to help uncover the roots of their sexual sin, and to walk with them through their past wounds and hurts. The *4-Day Intensive* is an intimate way to do that.

Josh: Some people call us and say "I'm looking for a counselor with specific training in dealing with same-sex attraction."

On the other hand, you often hear in Christian circles that same-sex attraction is like any other temptation, and as such doesn't require a unique counseling approach. How would you resolve the tension between these two points of view?

David: I think there's justification on both sides, and the answer probably lies somewhere in the middle. In the beginning of your healing process you want someone to understand and to identify with where you are, because you need to feel heard and understood. There are some unique aspects to sexual sin and same-sex attraction, and it is legitimate to want your struggle to be understood. But there are also benefits to a more objective approach. One of the key things for same-sex strugglers is learning to relate to non-strugglers. If I'm only hanging out with people who are recovering from the same issue as me, then that limits my support system.

(continued on reverse)

¹ See Romans 12:2. ² See Ephesians 6:13. ³ See 2 Corinthians 10:5. ⁴ See 2 Timothy 1:7.

Taking Every Thought Captive (continued from front)

Josh: Many of our same-sex attracted clients also struggle with sexual addiction. But this isn't always the case: clearly, you can struggle with unwanted same-sex attraction and not be a sex addict, isn't that right?

David: Right. In helping a client, my first question is not "Are you a sex addict," but "Is your relationship with your sexual sin a problem for you?" And if so, then "Is this a repetitive problem? Is this a destructive, progressive problem?" Now we're moving toward defining something that's an addiction. But whether it's an internal struggle or a full-blown addiction, the techniques to deal with it are the same: accountability, honesty, taking inventory of our sin, and applying God's truth to our lives. It's not about putting labels on someone. We don't label people here; our only label is that we're a child of the King, period. It's about learning to walk in agreement with our real identity in Christ. Some people adopt labels such as "a recovering sex addict." But that's not who you are, it's something you're dealing with, something you're in recovery from.

Josh: Some people need a longer program than four days. How do you determine who is a good fit for the program, versus who might benefit more from residential recovery?

David: A lot of it has to do with the person's support system at home. If they're going back to a fairly healthy support system (friends, family, a recovery group), that might indicate that a *Four-Day* would be sufficient. They can learn some tools at LIA, then go home and apply them in the context of that system. On the other hand, if they need to step out of their lifestyle, if their lifestyle has completely revolved around their sin, then they need to come to a residential program where they can be soaked in God's truth, get away from the chaos of their life, and hear God's voice again. For a person like that, a *Four-Day* would not even touch their problem.

Josh: What can be accomplished in four days?

David: For some people it's a jumpstart to the recovery process. For other people it can be an accelerant to where they already are in the healing process. Many men have never been able to tell their story, they have never been able to talk about their pain. In a safe environment, they are able to talk about those things. Men tend to say "Well, that's in the past and I don't want to stir it up." But they need to talk about their pain, and they need someone to help them walk through it. The *Four-Day* also identifies their specific recovery needs and matches them with a specific "battle plan." If they identify a need to be fathered, they can pursue having a pastor or an older man mentor them. At their core, sexual struggles have nothing to do with sex. Underneath the addictive patterns are the core needs for acceptance, approval and validation. Many times my clients have a deficit of the masculine love that challenges us into manhood. In the *Four-Day* I help men identify their core needs so they can put themselves in healthy relationships with men who can meet them. I call these "men of grace." These are men who, like Jesus, are "full of grace and truth."⁵ These are men who will be truthful with you, who will talk to you man-to-man, but they're also going to point you toward God's grace. They're not legalistic in their approach.

Josh: What is the most amazing thing that you have ever seen God during one of your *Four-Day Intensives*?

David: It's hard to narrow it down, but it's always amazing when God reveals something to someone, such as a painful emotional wound that's been inside them for a long time, and you see that person become empowered to take that wound to their heavenly Father for comfort. They realize that they can grieve, they can forgive, and I have the privilege of witnessing God touch those wounds as only he can.

Josh: Who do you admire most, humanly speaking? Do you have any "heroes?"

David: My dad. I really didn't appreciate it until I became an adult, but my father lived out his faith and loved my mother as Christ loved the church. My mother became disabled when I was in the second grade. Dad loved her sacrificially for the next 35 years, and he didn't really get anything in return for that. In that regard, he was a tough act to follow. He was a man, not a saint. But he was a man of his word, a man of integrity. He never lied to me.

Josh: I know you have a heart for seeing the restoration of church leaders and other Christian workers who are struggling with sexual sin. How should the church react when the sin struggle of a leader or other worker becomes known?

David: Early in my career, I would have given a pat answer to this question. But there isn't one! I learned the hard way that there is no single formula for helping someone in ministry who is struggling with sexual sin. You have to weigh all the circumstances: Who are they? Are they at a point of brokenness before God? What is their position? Are they married? Do they have children? There are many factors to consider. The church should not be afraid to ask for help. It's not something that is generally taught in seminary, so it's best to ask for objective, experienced help. This doesn't reflect negatively on the church in any way, in fact it shows wisdom. A wise person asks for help. Hopefully there will be a restoration plan, even though the struggler may not be able to keep their ministry position. You want to avoid knee-jerk reactions.

Josh: What would you like people to know about Love In Action?

David: I tell people all the time that I have a great job because I get to go to real church every day. LIA is a place where truth is spoken and grace is extended, and it's a safe place where people can bear one another's burdens. People are not hurt or shamed here, they are encouraged and empowered, through the power that God gives us when we walk with him.

⁵ See John 1:14.

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
Within Reach Support Group	LIA Campus	Tuesdays, call to enroll	7:00 pm
Love Won Out Conferences	Metro Church of God, Birmingham, AL	November 7, 2009	8:00 am

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