

# LOVE IN ACTION

*finding freedom in Jesus Christ from sexual and relational sin*



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## New Year, New Life



*A Word From Tommy* : Happy New Year from the staff and board of Love In Action! We are already praying for the men and women God will bring to Love In Action programs this year. We would ask you to join us in praying for them and for our current residential clients, that they will find new life in Jesus Christ and freedom from sexual sin. As always, we count on the prayers and financial support of our faithful ministry partners to be able to provide these life-changing programs. If God lays it on your heart to make LIA a part of your charitable giving in 2010, know that you will be a part of something unique and exciting that God is doing in people's hearts. This month we get a privileged glimpse into a heart that God has revived in the testimony of Jeremy Burns,\* who finished his three-month *Source* program just a little over one year ago. I think after reading his testimony you will agree it's amazing what God can do in just one short year! Not only did Jeremy start his healing journey through LIA, but his wife was able to participate in the *4-Day Intensive*, which helped her begin her own process of healing. At LIA we are passionate about seeing individuals and marriages restored through God's power, and we are grateful to Jeremy for his willingness to share with us.

*In His Service,*

Tommy Corman, Director

## Finding a Safe Place to be Real

**an interview with Jeremy Burns\***

**LIA:** How did God get you to Love In Action?

**Jeremy:** I was doing an apprenticeship at a church I had attended since 2004, where I was involved in everything from youth ministry to deacon leadership projects. But in June of 2008, after being married for only six months, I had a sexual fall and it sent my world into a tailspin. One of the recommendations from the church elders was that I seek a restoration program, so I looked into four different programs. Love In Action was the one that struck me more than the others, so I came in September of 2008.

**LIA:** Were you raised in a Christian home?

**Jeremy:** No, definitely not. We went to church, but my dad was a staunch atheist. We used to get in arguments! My mom would drop us off at church and then go home.

**LIA:** How did you come to know the Lord?

**Jeremy:** I was saved at a Baptist church camp when I was 14. I don't remember praying a specific prayer that week, but I do remember deciding that I wasn't just going to play around, I was going to really try to devote myself to God. That was the start of my relationship with Christ.

**LIA:** When did your struggle with sexual sin start?

**Jeremy:** I don't know. As far back as I can remember. I do remember having fantasies around age 10, and experiencing same-sex attraction. I had this sort of "church" mentality that sexual sin was wrong, but I struggled with it very secretly and privately, and it definitely sank into a firm addiction. By age 13 I was addicted to pornography. It didn't move into other forms of acting out until I got to college; but when I did, I got caught up in it quickly and pretty severely.

**LIA:** What was The Source residential program like for you?

**Jeremy:** I had already done some restoration work, so to some degree when I got to LIA I felt like, "Oh, I've heard everything. What can they tell me that I haven't heard before? There's no hope." So I felt a combination of hopelessness and yet a hopeful expectation of something, I wasn't sure what. For me there were two key things about the program. One of them was that *The Source* really provided a space for me to get with God. The structure kept at bay my tendency to be distracted by a lot of busyness and chaos, and so I finally had a place where I could just come open with people and come open with God. It was really the first time I had been forced to confront my sin. My counselor Tommy was really tough with me, but it was good. He kept telling me I was arrogant, which I resented at first. But then I realized, "You know, he's telling me something I need to hear." Nobody had ever done that for me. People had tried to call me out on things, but I would just kind of

\*Name has been changed for confidentiality.

*(continued on reverse)*

## Jeremy: Finding a Safe Place to Be Real (continued from front)

entangle them in a web of defensiveness. Tommy knew how to cut through all that, and he didn't back down or let up! So eventually I "broke," and I was able to see my sin and my arrogance. And then I thought, "Well, I'm so sinful that God has left me." That was the first time I had been confronted with who I really am, and wow, it was really bad! I had taken peeks, but I had never just stared into it. I couldn't believe that God would still love me! And that's when I came to the realization of how big his grace actually is. That was the primary change that happened for me in the program. When I got home I felt as if I had been saved again, it was such a drastic experience. Now that I'm out in the "real world," I strive to keep my relationship with God in that place where I can see his grace and grasp it as well as I can.

Another important part of my program was the concept of confronting lies with truth, which is something I hadn't really understood before. I knew what the lies were, but I didn't know a method for confronting them. I have repeatedly used the training I got in The Source to face these lies and say, "No! That's not true! Scripture says this, God says this about my situation." Seeing God's truth overwhelm the lies is definitely something I've been working toward.

**LIA:** What has the restoration process in your marriage been like?

**Jeremy:** My wife went through her own *4-Day Intensive* program at Love In Action, and that really helped her by giving her a starting point. Instead of being entirely focused on me, in her *4-Day* she also focused on herself, and that helped me keep the right focus. At LIA they gave me the concept of restoring intimacy with my wife gradually, because I had violated it. I had to learn (and I'm having to learn) to get my strength and affection from God, to see my wife not only as this person who does love me, but who also often enough pushes me to find my fulfillment in God and not in her. The concept of turning to God, relying on him and then giving out of that to my wife, rather than depending on my wife, has been really important. When I got home we took steps to make space for each other, and we came back together gradually. So I lived in another place for a while, then I lived in the house but stayed in a separate bedroom, and so on. Emotionally, it's also been gradual. Initially, I had to constantly reassure my wife, "I'm not leaving, I'm safe, I'm doing these things to keep myself safe." And things have definitely changed a lot. We just celebrated our second anniversary this month, and she says she doesn't feel like I'm going to run away anymore. There is still trust being built, but her fear that I am going to abandon her has gone.

**LIA:** Was The Source program different than you thought it would be?

**Jeremy:** Oh, yeah! I thought it was going to be like a camp where we would do manly things, almost a military environment. And although The Source program did turn out to be really structured, at the same time it had a "homey" feel to it. Between God and all these people around me who I could be open with, it just felt so safe. I definitely didn't expect that. I tend not to trust people very much, and I tend not to like to be very open. I had done restoration programs in the past where I felt safe at first, and then I was used or manipulated, or their theology was a little off. But one of the things about Love In Action that made it feel safe was the fact that they've been doing it for so long. I trusted the staff because of their wisdom.

**LIA:** What about life after the program? Was that different than you thought it would be?

**Jeremy:** The first month, I was bent on trying to be a saint. I had made this comprehensive plan, and I was not going to fail: I was going to live my life with as much structure as I had at Love In Action, down to five-minute increments. It was ridiculous! And after a month or two I just crashed, and I remembered what they said in the program: "At some point you're going to take a few steps back." I had just spent three months at LIA, and I was almost ready to throw it all away. But then, everything just kind of calmed down. I hit a rhythm—not as uptight as the one in my original plan! I'm not perfect, but I have definitely gained some ground, and I can look back and see that.

Since my program, it has been a challenge to keep God's grace and his truth at the front of my mind. In fact, it feels like I've failed at it 80 or 90 per cent of the time. It's been hard to bring these things into the real world, where your boss is a jerk, where your wife is upset, where your temptation is just constant and there is access to pornography and fantasy. But on the other hand, that other 10 per cent of the time has been the best 10 per cent of my life! Being able to walk more steadily, being able to look back and see actual change, being able to see my wife become less fearful and more trusting... those have been unbelievable. My wife and I have decided to step back from ministry for five years, and this has already been really good for us. After everything we've been through, it's good to take some time to just experience God's love before stepping into anything as daunting as ministry.

One experience that just floored me after my program was when my church restored me to fellowship in an official ceremony. They let me apologize to everyone, and then people could come shake my hand if they wanted to. Well, the whole church did! We're talking like 200 people who came up, and they were so welcoming, they really called me out of the shame I had been feeling. Seeing the people I failed forgive me and welcome me has just been wonderful.

## 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

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