



Client Story:

Becoming a Man of God

by Jason Ault



The pills and alcohol were taking effect. The next thing I knew there were paramedics at my house escorting me downstairs. I was placed on the stretcher and they put me in the ambulance. I was fading; I was so sedated that I believed I was going to die. I remember praying and telling God to please forgive me for my sin and being such a coward. But I was tired and I was ok with my demise. When I finished that prayer everything went black.

My next moment of consciousness was in a hospital bed. I was on a respirator and very dizzy, and I was enraged to be alive. I really didn't want to go through this. I didn't want to continue through the obstacles in life I had created. There was so much debt, shame, and addiction that going on was too exhausting to imagine. I didn't understand why God just didn't let me die.

I was a person who operated in a state of continual crisis. I lived my life from tragedy to tragedy thinking and believing that was what it meant to live. This pattern was established early in my life: by the time I was 3 my parents' marriage was over. My dad was absent and showed little interest in supporting his family. Two painful divorces and two dysfunctional stepfathers—one disinterested and one abusive—set me up to become starved for the masculine love and approval I was missing. So, when I was sexually abused, I was easily convinced that it was okay and even enjoyed the attention. I was exposed to a euphoria that I couldn't get enough of, and I decided that the only fulfilling love was to be found in sexual contact with other boys, which I sought out as often as possible. In the times when male attention was absent, from as young as age five I also learned to find comfort in food, even eating until I was sick. It didn't take long for this addiction to show outwardly as I began to gain weight and was obese by the time I was in third grade. I entered by far one of the most difficult seasons in my life. I was an overweight kid who was absolutely socially inept and subsequently tortured in school by my peers. I had no friends. I was also abused at home by my stepfather and all but ignored by my mother who just didn't know what to do with me because of my erratic behavior. When my real father half-heartedly reappeared in my life around my middle teens, my mom decided it was his turn to deal with me. So I went to live with my father, but I was struggling full-on with my sexuality by this point, and my inner conflict continued to show up in my difficult behavior. We clashed as well and he kicked me out after a few major fights.

Alone in a hotel room, homeless, with nothing to my name, I was more hopeless than I had ever been. I was watching TV and I stopped on an early morning broadcast on a Christian station. I had grown up attending church but was so conflicted with God because of how my life had been that I believed he hated me because of my sexual perversions. But I saw a little hope for the first time. I felt God's presence but I was unwilling to accept that he loved me.

My grandparents graciously took me in, and I started going to church with them, soon becoming a Christian. But eventually I moved out on my own, and in this freedom I began to stray from God. The next several years were a tailspin of cyclic drug and alcohol abuse, homosexual behavior, food addiction, cross-dressing, financial irresponsibility and even occult involvement. I made attempts to change my behavior, but not even gastric bypass surgery and much-needed weight loss could keep me on track, since the core of my addictive struggle was my lifelong search for male affection and affirmation. In February of 2008 I hit the rock-bottom of my rock-bottoms and decided I would commit suicide. I downed two bottles of pills with alcohol, but luckily I called a friend who took my cry for help seriously, and she called 911.

After a week or so in the hospital I was released and I began researching rehabilitation programs. No matter what I did I couldn't shake the memory of my prayer I had said in my perceived last moment of life. I knew I needed God in my life but I was so far from Him that I didn't know how to go from where I was to where I needed to be so I could be a Christian. I revisited the possibility of a rehabilitation program I had looked into years before and never gone, Love In Action. I applied to the program half expecting to be denied. How could I get accepted to a Christian program when I was living the way I had for so long? A short time later I learned that Love In Action had accepted my application.

I arrived at Love In Action on March 23, 2008. I was a shell of a person, completely numb. I really don't think I had even truly woken up after my suicide attempt. I was completely drained of emotion or awareness of my state of being and I still wished I wasn't alive. But for some reason, being there gave a little bit of hope. I planned on resisting the religious aspect of the program, expecting to be strong-armed into becoming a Christian man

(continued on reverse)

Becoming a Man of God *(continued from front)*

that I didn't believe I could ever be. I thought I was beyond God's acceptance. What I wanted was to learn how to not be gay and get a few months of sobriety under my belt so I could be free from addiction and live a "normal" heterosexual life.

What I found at Love In Action was far from the religious condemnation I expected. I was accepted, perhaps for the first time in my life, where I was and how I was. No one was feeding me a conditional love based on what I did. I didn't know how to react. (In some ways I still don't.) But over the next six months I was shown how to find God through their love. I was surrounded by others who shared in my struggle. I learned that nothing is impossible for God and that all my life's events could be used as a foundation to build inspiration and create hope for others who have been through the same things. My life story has been a tragic one but I now know that it doesn't have to end the way it began. I can love again. I can be loved. I don't have to fear the rejection, separation, and condemnation of others. Because if God is for me, who can be against me? The ministry equipped me to find God in my life and learn that I am able to have healthy relationships with others. They taught me that there are Christians who have the ability to see me through God's eyes and love me even when they know where I've been, and what I've done.

The love of God continues daily to teach me the limits of my understanding. My existence is no longer dictated by what has happened to me, what I've done, and what others think about me. My identity is now realized through the eyes of God. I still struggle with self-hatred, pride, and self-destructive inclinations, but these struggles now lead me into the arms of God's love instead of the grip of hopelessness and despair. It's not about being "straight" or sober or any other form of performance perfection. My freedom is found in finding sexual purity and sobriety in realizing God's love for me. Feeling Him in my life every day motivates me to change the way I think about myself and that transforms my behavior. I gave myself to bondage, believing that I deserved the suffering because of who Satan had me convinced I was. Through the ministry of Love In Action God has showed me that I am not a "fag." I am not a hopeless drunk or a tragic drug addict. I am not trapped in androgynous confusion because of scarred masculine identity any more. I am and can be a man. I am a man of God, a son of God.

I sit here today at my computer writing this a changed man. I am not without struggle, but I am also not without hope. Though my struggle continues, I am now aware of a choice I lived so long not knowing I had. I don't have to be a slave to my sinful desires. And if I fall I don't have to give up and give in. I can fight. My freedom is a process that continues and I hope for the opportunity to show someone how their freedom can begin. Because God is not the author of condemnation as the world would have homosexuals and drug addicts believe. He doesn't expect us to achieve some level of unattainable perfection to become a Christian. God sent Jesus to die for us so that we could come to him as we are right now; broken, scarred, used, and in complete bondage. Why? Because God is love.



A Word From Tommy

I am moved by Jason's story any by countless others like it. Like many of our clients, Jason had had some positive church involvement, but found the need to come away for a while into a structured, intensive environment. This was necessary to break some of the unhealthy patterns in his life, reestablish order, and posture himself to hear God's voice again. LIA was the safe place that Jason needed in order to begin experiencing God's healing. In a recent lecture, Christian counselor Janelle Hallman stated that due to the breakdown of stable family structure, our society is poised to see the emergence of generations who present an unprecedented level of personal dysfunction, an onslaught of emotional and psychological problems for which we might not even have names or categories yet. How will the church respond to these hurting generations? How is the church responding today to those whose woundedness runs deeper than average? Will these hurting young people approach the church for help? Clearly what is needed is more safe havens where broken people can rest, learn to experience Christian community, and receive targeted help for their life-dominating sin patterns. When you give to Love In Action, you are making it possible for someone to experience such a safe haven. You are joining with us in God's work to "heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds." (Psalm 147:3 NIV) To donate to Love In Action, please contact us at 901-751-2468, toll-free at 800-201-4129, or give online at www.loveinaction.org.

In His Service,

Acting Director

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	Apr. 21-24, June 9-12	1:00 pm
Within Reach Support Group	LIA Campus	Tuesdays, call to enroll	7:00 pm
Family & Friends Support Group	LIA Campus	Tuesdays	7:00 pm
Open Meeting	LIA Campus	Fridays	7:00 pm
Love Won Out Conferences	Westover Hills AOG, San Antonio, TX	April 18, 2009	8:00 am

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