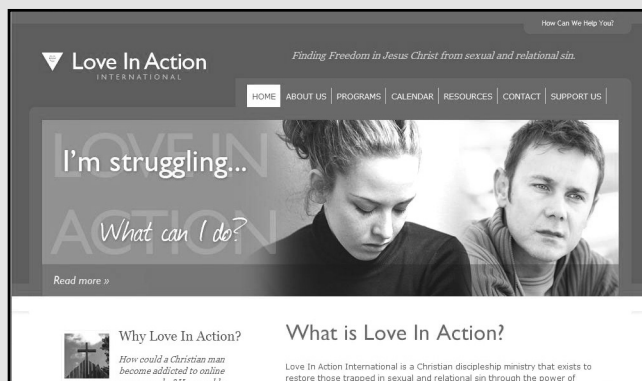


LIA Launches New Website!

We can't think of a better way to celebrate the new life of springtime—a symbol of God's renewal of our hearts—than by unveiling the new www.loveinaction.org! Our new webpage features user-friendly navigation, updated staff photos and biographies, new articles, an extensive list of recommended reading, a ministry calendar, a helpful "Answers to Common Questions" section, and tips for strugglers and their family members and friends. Please join us in praying that God will use the new site to help and encourage everyone who visits it!



Part 2 of 2:

4 Practical—Not Easy—Tips for Reaching Out

LIA Admissions Coordinator **Joshua Tyra** concludes his recent remarks to a church youth group.



After defining six components of homosexuality, I suggested the following pointers to help my young listeners respond to their struggling friends:

1. **Be a safe person.** If someone tells you they are "gay" or experiencing same-sex attraction (hereafter SSA), it means they trust you. It also means that God is giving you an opportunity to be used redemptively in their life. Let them know you are there to listen if they need to talk, and make it clear you are the kind of person who treats everyone else with kindness and respect.

Part of being a safe person means avoiding "gay" jokes. You never know who is listening to you! Maybe a guy on your basketball team is struggling with SSA; what he wants more than anything is to have some real friends, to feel accepted as "one of the guys," and he is really confused and conflicted over his feelings. He hears you or someone else crack a gay joke (or even say something like "that's so gay") and he may think: "You know, they're right. That's what I am, and that's all I'll ever be. Why even bother to hope for anything else?" Even if someone doesn't view their core identity as homosexual or embrace a gay-affirming mindset, gay humor can still be incredibly discouraging and hurtful.

2. **Find out more.** Are you having trouble relating to your gay-identified friend? If so, when you have an appropriate opportunity, ask them a few questions. What does your friend mean when she says "I'm gay?" Does she mean she is simply experiencing SSA? Does she see her attractions as the core of her identity? What does she think these attractions mean in her life? When did she first notice them? Does she think they have just always existed in her, or does she think they came from a specific source? Does she think same-sex sexual and romantic relationships are right? Why, or why not? Try to understand where your friend is coming from. The better you understand her, the better equipped you will be to show her Christ's love. And the more you learn, the more you will find that you and your friend have more in common than you thought. Of course, you will not be able to have a discussion like this until a certain degree of trust and intimacy have been built. But when you do discuss these things, that trust and intimacy will give you the right to share—calmly, reasonably—your views on homosexuality. In the name of mutual understanding and friendship, you will be able to present the truth in a way that your friend is much more likely to hear, since she will have already seen that you are not there to judge her, but to listen and share. This exchange will also force you into a very helpful exercise: that of thinking critically about your own beliefs. It is very hard to defend your Christian beliefs and ethics to others until you have carefully thought through why you yourself hold them. Doing that is a lifelong process for every Christian as we learn more about God and his word, and dare to ask the honest, tough questions that He ultimately uses to deepen our faith.

3. **Share what God is doing in your life. Be real!** Look for opportunities to share your own story, and pray that God will give you the right words at the right time. This concept turns the traditional idea of "witnessing" on its ear. In our culture, I believe people are so relationally starving that the Gospel almost always has to be shared in the context of developing authentic friendships. Until people's basic need for friendship and real intimacy has been met, they are not going to be open to presentations of the Gospel, especially not cut-and-dried ones like the "Romans Road" or the "Four Spiritual Laws." Too often Christian young people are just as relationally starving, just as in need of authentic connections as their unsaved friends, so I encourage them just to be real and focus on being a good friend. There is perhaps no school of the virtues of Christ as intense as that of showing real love to someone totally unlike ourselves.

(continued on reverse)

4 Practical—Not Easy—Tips for Reaching Out (cont. from front)

Now, being a good witness does not mean you have to be perfect, and being a good friend even less so. Real friendship is blocked by “image management.” Do you have an area of your life where you struggle, and where God is dealing with you and challenging you? Share it, when appropriate. I believe Christians do more to hinder the advancement of God’s kingdom by concealing their sin struggles than by sharing them openly. Sharing our life struggles honestly with others helps everyone feel less alone, since it highlights the common struggle that all people have with sin. If there is an area of sin in your life that you know you need to surrender to God, then pray for the courage to push through that. Find someone you trust to confess it to, and who can support you as you move forward. You can’t give away what you haven’t received, so if anything is coming between you and God, ask him to forgive and heal you, and ask him to use you to touch others who are struggling in similar ways.

4. **Relax! God is in control!** It is his job to change people’s hearts and behavior, not ours. In that knowledge, you can just focus on being a good friend and showing the love of Christ. People struggling with SSA are usually well aware of the church’s position on homosexuality—many of them are already believers in Christ!—and so it is not productive to keep reminding them or to quote the well-known “hammer passages” from Leviticus and Romans. They may even be carrying wounds that were inflicted by someone representing the Christian church, so that makes it doubly important to show them a loving response. You do not have to accept homosexual behavior as moral to show someone the love of Christ. Jesus hung out with lots of people whose behavior and worldview must have made him uncomfortable on some level. But he was with these people so much so that he was himself labeled a drunk, a glutton, a libertine! He didn’t seem to worry that his associating with tax collectors and prostitutes would “send the wrong message” to them, or “reinforce their lifestyle.” He apparently worried still less about the labels applied to Him by the Pharisees and other religious hypocrites. If you live out an authentic faith, you are going to make some religious people mad, and you are probably going to be accused of being too permissive. If not, then you’re probably not doing it right. Christ’s reactions to different sins are often the reverse of what we expect from the false hierarchies of sin that we have created. To those trapped in sexual sin, his response was unflinchingly measured, calm, and loving. I believe this is because he knew how much their hearts were hurting and would be further wounded by an aggressive approach. He saved his displays of righteous anger for the Pharisees, whose legalism was preventing hurting people from finding God’s love. What people need more than anything is to get a taste for God’s love and start to want more of it; as they draw closer to Him, he will show them areas of their life that need to change.

Since God is in control, we can give up the expectations of any specific outcome in another person’s life. We can trust him to bring fruit from any seeds he allows us to plant, acknowledging we may not ever see that fruit. In the five years during which I was involved in homosexual behavior, God constantly sent believers my way who treated me with kindness and respect even though they knew there were issues in my life. I especially remember Justin, who faithfully invited me to InterVarsity Christian Fellowship every single week, even though he knew I would turn him down; and I think of my dorm parents, evangelical Christians who quietly but visibly lived out their faith and extended me their friendship. None of these people ever “preached” at me, but God used their calm and loving witness to remind me of his presence and draw me to himself. *Any questions?*

If you are interested in having Josh Tyra share his story with your youth group and equip them to reach out to their struggling friends, please e-mail info@loveinaction.org or call 901-751-2468 (toll-free at 1-800-201-4129).



A Word From Tommy: Thanks, Josh, for offering us some hope in this refreshing and informative article. My hope and prayer is that anyone who reads this will take an opportunity to really listen to others rather than just waiting for their chance to speak. We need to allow those who are hurting to ask questions even when it doesn’t make much sense. We are asked to give of ourselves without receiving anything in return. I encourage you to give yourself in this way, allowing the Spirit to move through your sphere of influence to those who need it the most, those who often get ignored and marginalized. As you do this please remember Love In Action in your prayers and consider us as you budget your 2009 giving. We are fighting this battle together and we need your support. For more information, please call us at 901-751-2468 or e-mail us at info@loveinaction.org. To donate online, please visit www.loveinaction.org.

In His Service,

Tommy Corman, 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 | June 9-12 | 1:00 pm |
| Within Reach Support Group | LIA Campus | Tuesdays, call to enroll | 7:00 pm |
| Love Won Out Conferences | Sunshine Comm. Ch., Grand Rapids, MI | June 13, 2009 | 8:00 am |

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