



## God Will Open Doors

A conversation with Michelle Bralts, former *Source* client and new Admissions Staff member



**LIA:** Michelle, tell us how you first came to Love In Action.

**Michelle:** Well, I went to an Exodus conference in 2007 looking for a ministry to help me with the issue of same-sex attraction. No one in my church or the women's drug and alcohol recovery program where I was living really knew how to minister to me or push me forward. At the conference I met and talked with two Love In Action staff members. They answered my questions about *The Source* program, but I thought I wasn't at all what they were looking for in a client: I had tattoos and short hair, I was in board shorts and flip flops, and I never thought I would be accepted at LIA. But I still made it a goal to get there, and I started trying to raise the needed program fees through my church. But the money just didn't seem to be coming in, and I got really discouraged, and even stopped trying to get help for about a year. But I finally reached out again, and at another Exodus conference in 2008, I met [*LIA board member*] Diana Hoaglan and [*Women's Program Coordinator*] Carolyn Rose. I originally walked into that meeting to kind of "stir the pot." I wanted to talk with some Exodus board members about some things that I felt should and shouldn't be on their website... I really went in there to start trouble! But that's where I met Carolyn and Diana, and they asked me how they could help me. One month later, I was at Love in Action! It was thanks to the LIA scholarship fund that I was able to come to *The Source* residential program at all. I am so grateful to the individual donors whose sacrificial giving made my program a reality. Because of their gifts, my life will never be the same.

**LIA:** How would you sum up your experience in *The Source* residential program? What was it like for you?

**Michelle:** It was a very interesting time of my life. I had pushed the program away for so long, and when I got here I was still pushing it away. I knew there would be emotional pain involved in the healing process, I knew I would have to look at myself under a magnifying glass, and I was avoiding that, big-time. My experience at Love In Action was very intense, it was extremely painful, but I was at peace the entire time, and I knew that I was right where God wanted me to be. And that's a really cool feeling! It was the best thing that ever could have happened to me. The issues that were dealt with at LIA had hindered growth in my life and had needed to be dealt with for a very, very long time.

**LIA:** What are the top two or three things that you gained from the experience?

**Michelle:** Number one was forgiveness. I needed to forgive my dad for a lot of things which had also hindered a lot of growth in my life. I hadn't understood that forgiveness is a gift that you give to yourself, that forgiveness is a process. Understanding my relationships with my mom and dad was a major thing I gained. Also, learning how God views women was really eye-opening to me. I went on a journey through the Bible and searched out all the women of the Bible, trying to find out who God says women are. I learned a lot about what it means for me to be a godly woman. I learned that God sees equality between men and women, that women are very precious to him, that he has created strong women, and that he does not view them as weak. This was a huge paradigm shift for me.

**LIA:** You've just joined the Admissions Staff here at Love In Action. What do you feel that God has called you to do personally, and how do you see your personal ministry being channeled through your new role at LIA?

**Michelle:** It is clear as day to me that God has called me to Memphis. I can see God using me here, using my testimony. As a woman he uses me in ministering to the young women who are calling in for help. Even with only a few days officially on the job, I have already had several significant conversations with young women.

*(continued on reverse)*

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## God Will Open Doors (continued from front)

**LIA:** Who are some of the most important people that God has brought alongside you in this process?

**Michelle:** Ms. Sharon Stone introduced me to the ministry of Exodus in a jail cell. She was a therapist at the prison, and she kind of mothered me. She treated me like I was her daughter. Charlotte Osborne was my program director at the women's shelter after I got out of jail. She embraced me and has a passion for helping women who struggle with same-sex attraction. She and Rebecca Randall, the assistant program director, both poured their lives into me and my struggle, even when they didn't know exactly how to help.

**LIA:** What has been the most important concept or tool for you on your journey of healing?

**Michelle:** I would say it is the concept that the opposite of homosexuality is not heterosexuality, but holiness. That gives me hope through my struggle, even knowing that there is no "zap cure" involved. That knowledge allows me to press on, and not be my own personal Pharisee. It helps me not be so performance-based with God, and to know that he loves me unconditionally.

**LIA:** Has your view of God changed through this process?

**Michelle:** Yes. I no longer perceive him as a disciplinarian, or such an authoritative tyrant of a God. He is a patient, gracious, merciful, and unconditionally loving God. His love for me is not based on my performance, and he is using me and my life. He has chosen me, and that feels good to know that I am chosen by God.

**LIA:** Humanly speaking, do you have any heroes?

**Michelle:** One of my heroes would be my mother. My mom is one of the strongest, godliest women I know. She realized a long time ago that I don't belong to her, I belong to God. She has been behind me and walked alongside me through everything, even when I thought I was born this way. She was there even when all of this started and I was having doubts and I wasn't doing so well, when I was wanting to go back. She was there through all of it, just being my mom.

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

**Michelle:** I want people to know the truth about Love In Action, that this is not a place where condemnation happens, this is a place where you can *be* and not *do*; that this is a place of unconditional love, where everyone is willing to support you no matter what you're dealing with. Wherever you are in your process, they meet you there and just love you.

**LIA:** As a new member of the Admissions Staff, if there are any women reading this who are considering applying to the program, do you have anything to tell them?

**Michelle:** Well, I want them to know that all it takes is a willing heart. I want them to know that healing is a process, but God makes the impossible possible. There are loving people out there who God will use to support you, and *The Source* program staff are those kind of people. I want them to know that God will open doors.



*A Word From Tommy* : This past month a delegation from LIA had the opportunity to attend a highly successful event, the Memphis Urban Youth Initiative headed up by Executive Director Cheryl Beard. We spoke to local youth workers about ministering to homosexual strugglers from a Christian perspective. In my remarks I focused on transparency, vulnerability and authenticity as the counselor's most effective tools in ministering to the sexually broken, while Chad and Michelle, our new Admissions Staff members, shared from their personal testimonies and helped with answering questions. This and other local outreach events are made possible by our generous donors.

July and August have proven very challenging for Love In Action. Though we are doing our best to steward what God has given us by cutting expenses, we are currently operating under significant fiscal difficulties. We would appreciate your prayerful consideration of a special gift as we recover financially from a lean summer donation season. Will you pray about partnering with us through your monthly giving? Your donation directly supports the radically life-changing experiences of our clients, just like Michelle featured in this month's newsletter. If you can't afford a one-time or monthly gift, please support LIA by praying for us, and by telling people about the redemptive work that God is doing through our programs and outreach.

*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	Flexible dates, call for details	
Within Reach Support Group	LIA Campus	Tuesdays, call to enroll	7:00 pm
Love Won Out Conferences	Metropol. Ch. of God, Birmingham, AL	November 7, 2009	8:00 am

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