

LOVE IN ACTION

finding freedom in Jesus Christ from sexual and relational sin



Sitting Beside Pain

by **David Jones**, LIA Counselor



Several years ago while visiting another church, I was perusing the bulletin before the service and the sermon title caught my eye: “I Sit Beside Pain.” I actually could not wait to hear what the pastor would say about such a topic. One of the things he said during this sermon was, “There are people who come to my office with a tremendous burden of pain. There is nothing I can say to take away their pain, there is no scripture verse that will remove their pain, and there is no quick fix to their pain. I can, however, sit beside their pain.”

My first thought was, “This guy is going to get run out of his church because he is being way too honest.” I was impressed by this pastor’s humility. So here I am many years later realizing that what the pastor spoke of many years ago is what we do here at Love

In Action every day. We sit beside pain. It could happen in one of our groups where someone shares the years of shame associated with their secret life of sin. It may be the pain of abandonment that a wife experiences when her husband of many years chooses to pursue his own selfish desires. Whatever the circumstances or situation, we sit beside the pain of others every day.

Now, this would sound like a very depressing job if we stopped here. But as Paul Harvey would say, “And now, for the rest of the story.” I consistently tell people that I have the best job in the world because I get to go to church every day. I get to go to “real” church. “Real” church is a place where people can feel safe enough to be completely honest about their pain without fear that they will be shamed, talked at, preached at or minimized. The “real” church of Love In Action does not just sit beside pain. We also provide a system by which hurting men and women can deal with their pain. This is a system of restoration and healing that is based upon God’s grace, mercy and forgiveness. In order to access this system, we first have to get real and honest about our pain. Sometimes that pain is self-inflicted and a product of our pursuit of sinful desires. At other times it comes from the wounds inflicted by others. In either case, Jesus bore our specific pain on the cross. Jesus said that when we are yoked to Him, our burden is easy and light. We are not designed to carry the burdens of our past pains and when we try, we often seek worldly and sinful ways to reduce that pain.

The church has often been accused of “shooting their wounded.” It would appear that we are exceptionally good shots regarding those among us who are wounded in their sexual sin. I wonder what would happen if every church became a “real” church. The Church of Laodicea was being warned by Jesus to get “real” and lose their “got it all together” image. Maybe that is the type of revival that our country needs today. There is an old phrase that says “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Today’s challenge is this: is our church and are we as individuals ready and willing to “sit beside the pain” of others? If we are not willing, the world is more than willing and ready to offer a counterfeit balm for the pain.

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