I started going to church and eventually, even my former lover gave his heart to the Lord. But our church had some deep problems. It was very legalistic, and steeped with secret homosexual activity. Then in 1986, I visited Covenant Church of Pittsburgh and sensed God's voice: "This is the church where I will deliver you from homosexuality."

A few months later, my attention was drawn to a really attractive woman who was there for every service. I heard God again: "That woman is going to be your wife."

Yeah, right! I thought. But we became friends, and she won my heart. Nine months later, we were married. Soon our first daughter was born and I should have been excited and fulfilled. Instead, my unresolved inner conflicts erupted. I was plagued with gay thoughts, fell into pornography, and even got together one time with my former gay lover.

Then the Lord challenged me, "The only way you're going to become free of homosexuality is to confess it to your wife."

"Lord, I'm not going there," I protested.

A month later, the Lord challenged me again, but I refused. Finally, I sensed His ultimatum: "You are either going to tell your wife of your homosexual sin, or I'm going to start taking away those things that you love the most."

I had a trucking business that was making a tidy profit. Our trucks cost $100,000 each—and I had ten of them. Suddenly, clutches and transmissions and other problems began erupting in my vehicles. Within a few months, I was staring at possible bankruptcy.

My whole world continued to crumble. I went for a blood test prior to obtaining a life insurance policy and my doctor broke the news: "Michael, you tested positive for AIDS."

I started shaking and couldn't say a word. I went out to my car and cried hysterically for two hours. I thought of crashing my car on the way home, so I could die and no one would know. Then I heard God again: "If you confess to your wife, I'll set you free."

I went home, but couldn't give a plain confession. "Honey," I began, "I want to tell you some of the things I practiced before you and I were married." I mentioned homosexuality in a long list of other things and she said, "Don't worry about it. We all have skeletons in our closet." She didn't seem upset at all.

But the next day, it hit her: *My husband was involved in homosexuality!* She went right to our pastor. He sent her home with one piece of advice: "Ask Michael to tell you the whole story."

I told her a little bit more, and finally the pastor asked to see both of us. He wanted a full confession, and I knew that I had to come clean with the truth.

I'll never forget that night. As I spilled my whole past, I saw an anger rising in my wife that I'd never seen in anyone before. But she humbled herself and forgave me. It wasn't easy for either of us. I felt totally emasculated. I couldn't even face going to men's meetings at church, because I didn't feel like a real man. I was plagued with gay memories. It seemed like all the demons of hell had been unleashed against me.

Then I started attending a support group for ex-gays right in my own church. At first, I hated it. One of the male leaders was effeminate, and it was so distracting.

But one night the teaching really got through to me. The group was discussing masturbation, a bondage in my life for many years. Afterward, I broke down and cried. For the first time, somebody had spoken into a deep place in my life. I understood the underlying reasons for my addiction, and I knew there was hope. Over the next year, I kept attending the group and my life improved greatly.

Then I visited a former lover who was dying of AIDS in the hospital. We began talking, and our conversation went deep. "Where did it all go wrong?" I asked him.

"It went wrong when I didn't accept Jesus." He had never mentioned Jesus in all the years I'd known him.

"If you had it all to do over again, what would you do differently?"

He looked at me sadly and said, "I would not be a homosexual. This has been a painful life for me." I held his pitiful body in my arms and tears slid down my face as I asked him to forgive me for all the unholy things we had done together. As we talked, he fell silent and limp. I realized that he had died right in my arms.

Later as I stumbled out to my car, I wondered, "God, why did You do that to me?" When I started my car engine, the radio came on and I heard a well-known Bible teacher say, "You were chosen for such a time as this. And you will lead many to redemption."

Several weeks later, my pastor asked me to begin leading the support group when the previous leader resigned. When I prayed about the decision, God said to me, "This is the thing that I have been preparing you for."

In the years since then, about 500-600 men and women have gone through the group. Some of them have gone back into gay life, but a great majority of them are church leaders today. Some are married with families. And it has all happened because I said "yes" to what God called me to do.

I have remained under the pastoral leadership of Bishop Joseph Garlington, who is the Senior Pastor of Covenant Church of Pittsburgh, a cross-cultural inner-city church of approximately two thousand members.

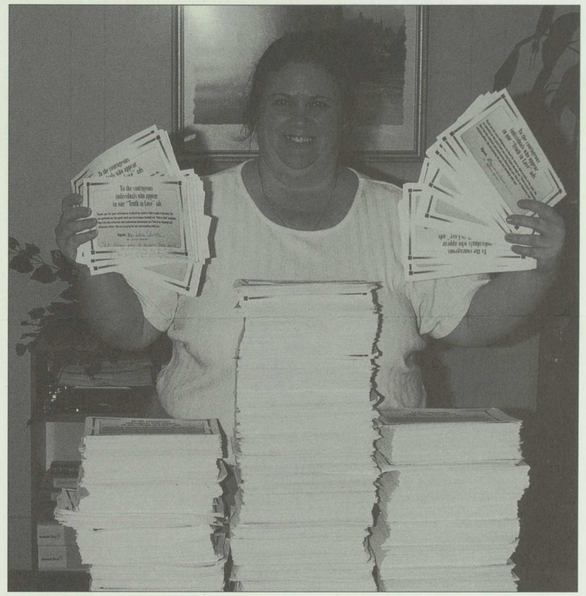
Today, with God's abundant grace, and His miraculous power to heal, I walk totallly free from the AIDS virus. My wife and I celebrate 12 years of marriage this year.

With God's help, my life has dramatically changed. I give all the glory to Him. ◆

Finally the Lord confronted me: "You are either going to tell your wife of your homosexual sin, or I'm going to start taking away those things that you love the most."

OFFICE NEWS

13,000 People Say "Thanks, Exodus!"



Staff member Cheryl Wallace shows off the 13,000 cards that Exodus received from people around the world who sent their thanks for our 1998 ad campaign.

SEATTLE—In early December, the Exodus staff received two ordinary boxes filled with an extraordinary blessing. Coral Ridge Ministries in Fort Lauderdale had issued a mailing about the "ex-gay" ad campaign during July and August 1998 to their constituents. People were invited to sign and mail back a card which was addressed to "the courageous individuals who appear in our 'Truth in Love' ads" (Coral Ridge is the parent ministry to the Center for Reclaiming America, who put the ads together). The cards—over 13,000 of them—arrived at the Exodus office on December 4.

Exodus staff member Cheryl Wallace said she was deeply moved by this outpouring of support, especially when she began reading the notes scribbled in the margins and on the backs of some cards.

"Thank you for standing up for what God's Word says," wrote one woman. "I lost a dear [gay] friend to AIDS."

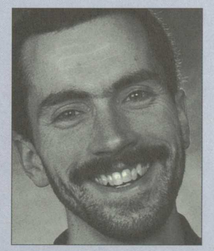
Some of the cards included words of testimony, like this one: "I am a former lesbian. I am married now, with two children 9 years old and 5 years old."

Many other cards had messages like, "We will be praying for you" and "God bless you!"

Exodus director Bob Davies echoed Cheryl's gratefulness: "There is no doubt that the battle over homosexuality is getting more intense in our society. We want to thank every person who took the time to participate in this wonderful gesture of support." •

New Web Site Gives Help to Struggling Youth

TORONTO—*New Direction for Life Ministries,* an Exodus member agency in Toronto, has launched a new web site for youth dealing with homosexual issues (http://www.freetobeme.com).



Rob Goetze designed the new web site for teens.

New Direction's director, Rob Goetze, developed the site after a parent asked him what materials for teens were available. Rob found almost none online. So, with this woman's encouragement and editing assistance, Rob worked for eight months to create material for the site.

"We developed it specifically to offer youth a more complete and hopeful perspective than they are usually given about sexual orientation," Rob said. "With new information and more ways of understanding same-gender attraction, teens will now have a greater range of choice open to them as they consider the direction they want their lives to take."

The three main sections cover the subjects, "I think I'm gay" (for males), "I think I'm lesbian," and "Common questions about homosexuality." Resources are also listed for those who work with youth. While consistent with biblical Christianity, the material is written in a "faith-neutral" way so it can be used by public school boards.

Rob said many people question their sexual orientation during youth. "This vital resource offers young people a different set of answers and help in understanding their feelings." •

CALENDAR

- ***Feb. 19-21/Wichita.*** "Discovering the Heart of God," a men's winter conference featuring David Smithers. Sponsored by Freedom At Last. Info: 316/945-7050.
- ***Feb. 27/Willoughby, OH.*** Fourth annual ministry presentation by In His Image. Info: 440/953-1536 or 440/954-9536.
- ***Mar. 4-6/Destin, FL.*** "Pursuing Relational Wholeness" conference, sponsored by Desert Stream. Info: 850/837-6324.
- ***Mar. 23/Denver.*** Spring banquet for Where Grace Abounds. Info: 303/863-7757.
- ***Mar. 27/Memphis*** "Youth & Homosexuality" seminar, sponsored by Focus on the Family. Info: 1-800-A-FAMILY or 719/531-3400.
- ***Mar. 26-29/Washington DC.*** Third annual P-FOX Conference (Parents & Friends of Ex-gays). Info: 202/371-0800.
- ***Mar. 26-27/Columbia, SC.*** "Family & Friends" conference, featuring Frank & Anita Worthen. Info: 803/787-9617 or 803/776-3428.
- ***July 26-31/Wheaton, IL.*** Annual Exodus North American conference. Special speakers: Rev. Joseph Garlington, Leanne Payne; plus over 60 workshops. Call the Exodus office for a brochure.