

ranged to fly Tony to another brother's home in central Oregon. The next day when Tony arrived home from school, we loaded all his things into a car and drove him to the airport. Before Tony knew what hit him, he was on his way north. I thought the whole problem was solved. Tony was now 1,100 miles away from his gay friends in California—perfect! My brother promised to look after Tony until I could join them.

I was immensely relieved, especially after my brother's phone call the next day. "Tony has gone to a church," he reported. "Praise God, everything is going to be OK." The day after, he called again. "Anita, I've got bad news. You know that church Tony is attending? Well, it's a homosexual church." I felt sick. The problem was much deeper than outward circumstances. This situation was going to be more difficult to "fix" than I thought.

Immediately I gave my notice at work. I think they were relieved when I finally left two weeks later; I cried continually and walked around in a fog the whole time. Unfortunately, there was no one to encourage me, and I was overwhelmed with guilt. *This might never have happened if you'd gotten married*, I lectured myself.

My handsome son had always been the pride of my life; now I was so ashamed of him. I was certain no other Christian mother had ever found herself in my situation.

Once back in Oregon, I joined my old church. I went for counseling, but all the counselor could do was read the Scriptures on homosexuality. He meant well, but hearing about men lusting after one another was not what I needed. Inside, I felt like I was dying. I even had a hard time going to church. Sitting in the service, I'd see the "normal" young men in front of me, and I'd burst into tears and have to leave. My son was abnormal—and nobody could tell me things would ever change.

After six months of turmoil, I heard about Love In Action, a ministry in California to people coming out of homosexuality. Something heavy lifted off my shoulders as I read testimonies of men and women who had been set free. Finally I had hope—both for me *and* my son.

Life returned to my weary spirit. Now I wanted to help everybody. I especially wanted to reach out to other mothers in the same situation as I was in. The Lord led me to a Christian counselor in Eugene who agreed to be my spiritual covering in ministry. Soon, we launched a parents' support group. Then, after a year of preparation, we brought some Love In Action staff to our city for a church seminar. It was an exciting time. Things were much improved for me. I could honestly say, "Because of what happened to my son, I am a better person." My walk with the Lord was so much stronger. "Wishy-washy" wouldn't do anymore; I had to cling to Him.

About this time, I faced some difficult questions: *If Tony is still gay 10 years from now, where will I be? Am I going to base my whole life on waiting for the day he turns around?* I knew my answer. No, I had to go on. I had a life outside of Tony; my life was centered in Christ.

To free myself for daytime ministry, I took a night

job in a little restaurant. When I applied, the boss asked, "Do you know this is a homosexual hangout at night?"

I went, "Acchh!" Then came the thought, *I must be able to handle it for God to put me here.*

One night a group of gay men came in, and I was on the other side of the restaurant. One of them said in a loud voice, "Which one is Tony's mom?" I turned about three shades of red. After that, I didn't have to worry about my co-workers finding out about Tony. The news spread through the restaurant like a prairie grass fire.

Meanwhile, Tony and I were re-establishing our life together. I had a growing realization: *Tony is a person, not just a homosexual.* At the restaurant, I grew to love the gay kids. I'd hug them, bring them home, and feed them. They knew I was a Christian; some would introduce me to their mothers and I would minister to them.

In 1983, I moved down to southern California to help my mom adjust to retirement. Inside, I felt a real emptiness from missing those homosexual kids. Then I got to know Frank Worthen, the founder of Love In Action. I was helping Barbara Johnson, who had a ministry to parents, and she played matchmaker by sending Frank and me to Disneyland for a day. My relationship with Frank quickly deepened, and before long, marriage was in the air.

When I went up to San Rafael to visit, I saw how God had been preparing me. The guys in the Love In Action program filled the empty place in my heart left by "my kids" back in Oregon. The Lord had prepared me for Frank, giving me such a love for him and the whole Love In Action ministry. It was a wonderful "package deal."

Since marrying Frank on November 24, 1984, God has continued to unfold exciting things in my life. After I worked in the LIA office for six years, God directed Frank and me to move to Manila. In January 1991, we launched Bagong Pag-asa, a ministry of "New Hope" to homosexuals in the Philippines who desire freedom.

"What has happened to Tony?" many parents ask me. My son is still in a homosexual lifestyle. However, we have a good relationship and I believe that one day, Tony will see the emptiness of his lifestyle and turn to God. I also know I can't make that happen, so I leave him in the care of One who loves him even more than I do.

Of course, my son and Frank understand each other very well. (Frank lived an exclusively homosexual life for over 20 years before exiting that in his early forties.) And Tony teases me: "Mom, if it hadn't been for me, you wouldn't be married!"

The experiences of my life have sometimes been very painful, but they have caused me to grow, and have given me a special sensitivity to others who are hurting. Only the Lord could take such deep trials and turn them into blessings. I thank Him every day for what He has done.

The Worthens returned to California in 1994; Filipinos now lead Bagong Pag-asa. Anita volunteers regularly at the Exodus office. © 1991 by Bob Davies.