they would get it over with quickly. Each time, the Lord rescued me and my heart was moved by a sense of God's mercy and protection.

By the time I was 29, I was sick of the drugs, alcohol and prostitution. I attempted to find meaning by following Guru Maharaj Ji, the self-proclaimed "perfect master of the universe." On one occasion, I actually attained nirvana or god-consciousness, feeling "one" with God and the universe. On other occasions, I saw the guru perform supernatural miracles, and I naively assumed that only God could do that.

In the meantime, my mother and father had become true Christians and had all their friends praying for me. Then, as I began to have doubts about my guru god, I began praying to the God who created the universe—who had a Son named Jesus.

"Please keep me from being deceived if I am following a false prophet," I prayed. Suddenly I felt an incredibly powerful river of "living water" (John 4:14) surge into my being. It felt like a raging waterfall of liquid love, and it seemed like I would die from its intensity. When I cried, "Stop!" it ceased and I fell down weeping on the floor. *God exists,* I thought, *and He loves me!*

"With childlike faith, I believed — and God began living His righteousness through me. Since that day, He has kept me from falling back into sexual immorality."

Soon afterward, I felt compelled to visit the land of Israel, seeking the truth about Jesus Christ. Inside a church next to the Garden of Gethsemane, I prayed for an answer to my burning question: "If both God and Satan can do miracles, how am I supposed to know who is really from God?"

I felt God speak directly into my hungry, searching heart: "Who proved His love for You?" Scenes from the scourging and crucifixion of Jesus started flashing through my mind and I realized the truth: God loved *me* so much that He had sent His Son to die on a cross for me.

God began a series of miracles in my life. Within six weeks, I was attending Trinity Evangelical Divinity School near Chicago, my tuition fully paid by a Christian businessman. I graduated with a Master of Divinity degree in 1983. During the next decade, I worked for several major Christian ministries before God called me into full-time work as director of Mastering Life Ministries, which equips the body of Christ to minister to sexually-broken people.

God has worked faithfully over the years to bring healing from my past sexual addiction. Immediately after my salvation, I went to a pastor and said, "I've been sleeping with two or three people every night for almost ten years. I know you're going to ask me to stop, but I can't."

"I'm not going to ask you to stop," he replied, and I recall thinking, *What's the matter with you? You're a preacher. You're supposed to tell me to stop!* But he was trying to help me understand a profound truth: God was going to do it *for* me. He was going to live His righteousness *through* me. All I had to do was pursue an intimate relationship with Him and allow Him to take complete control of my life.

With childlike faith, I believed, and God indeed began living His righteousness through me. Since that day, He has kept me from falling back into sexual immorality.

Of course, I still have to deal with sexual temptations that arise. I remember being in Orlando one time to record our "Sexual Healing Video Course." The church put me up in a hotel located right in the middle of strip clubs and porn stores.

When I entered my hotel room, there were two hardcore porn magazines lying next to my bed. As I began to look at one, the Holy Spirit said to me, "Satan is trying to take you out!"

"Thank you, God," I breathed. A sudden delight overtook me as I threw the magazines into the trash can and smashed them to the bottom with my foot. As I stepped on them, the Holy Spirit proclaimed as clear as a bell in my heart, "I will crush him under My feet!" (see Romans 16:20).

During the past 20 years of healing, God has transformed my heart of rebellion into one of love and grace. And He has healed those areas of sin and weakness that led me into bondage in the first place.

God has taken away the deep hatred that I had for my father. One day He asked me to forgive my dad. *I can't,* I thought. *The hurts run too deep.* Then I added, *But if You will enable me, I will.*

Then the Lord said to me, "Take the forgiveness from Me and give it to your father." In the Spirit, I reached up, took forgiveness from Jesus' hand and turned to my father, saying, "Dad, with the ability that Jesus has to forgive you, I forgive you." Instantly I felt a release from the hatred and bitterness. It has never returned.

God desires to make trophies of His love and grace from those He rescues. In a way that confounds the world, He places some of us into ministry in the exact same area where we have fallen the lowest. By replacing our greatest weakness with His strength, He silences the mouth of those who do not acknowledge Him. ◆

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▶▶ CONTROVERSY

National "Gay Youth" Booklet Condemns Exodus

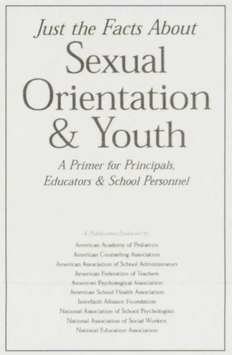
NEW YORK CITY—A 12-page "fact sheet" distributed last month to all 14,700 school districts in the United States says that homosexuality is healthy, does not need to be "cured," and gay students should be protected from groups like Exodus which give assistance to those who want to rid themselves of unwanted same-sex attractions.

The booklet also warns that any attempts to change sexual orientation "may cause harm to young people." The authors quote a statement by the American Psychiatric Association: "The potential risks of 'reparative therapy' are great, including depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior, since therapist alignment with societal prejudices against homosexuality may reinforce self-hatred already experienced by the patient."

The booklet concludes: "School officials should be deeply concerned about the validity and bias of materials or presentations that promote a change to a person's sexual orientation as a 'cure' or suggest that being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is unhealthy."

The booklet attracted national media attention, including articles by *The New York Times* and Associated Press. Its publication was sparked after staff from the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) attended a November 1998 "Love Won Out" conference sponsored by Focus on the Family, an event which featured numerous Exodus speakers.

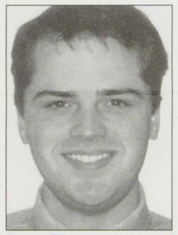
The GLSEN leaders were "disturbed at what they heard" and called a meeting of representatives from a number of national education, health and mental health organizations. These leaders said that ex-gay ministries represented a "potential threat ...to the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students" and they began planning the booklet as a way to counteract the Exodus message.



"The publication of this booklet is just another indication of the new national profile that Exodus has reached," said Exodus director Bob Davies. "The pro-gay organizations realize that our message is reaching millions, and they are doing everything they can to prevent us from reaching gay students with the option of change."

The booklet is endorsed by ten major groups, including the American Counseling Association, American Federation of Teachers, American Psychological Association, National Association of Social Workers, and the National Education Association.

Tom Cole: harassed as a gay youth


Jason Thompson: youth report is "very biased."

Exodus chairman John Paulk said the booklet is "a clear sign that organizations purporting to represent children have lost all objectivity and common sense in handling kids struggling with their sexuality." John also said the booklet belittles Christian parents who believe that homosexual behavior is morally wrong.

Jason Thompson, who ministers to youth through *The Portland Fellowship* in Portland, OR, noted that the booklet uses "legal scare tactics" by saying that schools may be risking legal action if they inform students about ex-gay ministries because such organization are religious-based. "When I was growing up," Jason said, "being encouraged to be gay left me empty and suicidal. What I desperately needed, as a youth, was to know my options."

Jason said the booklet is "very biased in many ways. It fails to address the thousands of men and women who have successfully overcome homosexuality, whose lives have been dramatically changed for the better."

The booklet urges schools to be "safe and supportive" for all students, and Jason agrees. "We [also] have this concern, but not wrapped in the manipulation and deception that reparative therapy is harmful."

Tom Cole, director of *Reconciliation*/Detroit, agrees that gay youth must be protected from harassment. As a gay youth, Tom said he was ridiculed daily at school by other students.

"The conservative Christian Church which is strident in its condemnation of homosexual behavior seems to be in denial about targeted attacks on gay and lesbian youth," Tom said. "We must reach out with a clarion call. We must stand up and voice our opposition to violence and hateful words." •

▶▶ CALENDAR

- **Feb. 26/Tampa.** "Love Won Out" conference on youth and homosexuality, featuring Joe Dallas, John Paulk, Jane Boyer, Joe Nicolosi, Mike Haley, and others. Sponsored by Focus on the Family. Info: 1-800-A-FAMILY or 719/531-3400.
- **Mar. 3-5/Bradenton, FL.** Exodus Southeast Regional Conference. Info: 407/629-5770.
- **Mar. 18/Toronto, Canada.** Fundraising event for the International Exodus office, featuring Exodus chairman John Paulk. Info: 905/686-7363.
- **Mar. 18/Baltimore.** "Healing Homosexuality," a seminar for overcomers, featuring Richard Cohen. Info: 301/805-6111.
- **March 30-April 2/Quito, Ecuador.** Exodus Latin America Conference. All classes in Spanish. Info: (e-mail) eslyc@attglobal.net.
- **May 5-6/San Diego.** Annual Trauma & Sexuality Conference. Info: 760/789-4700.
- **May 6/Dallas.** "Love Won Out" conference (see Feb. 26 listing above for details).
- **May 27/Baltimore.** "Healing Homosexuality" seminar for parents, family members and friends, featuring Richard Cohen. Info: 301/805-6111.
- **July 24-28/San Diego.** 25th annual North American Exodus conference, featuring Steve Arterburn, Andy Comiskey, Kathy Koch, Frank Worthen, & over 80 workshops. A brochure with full details will be mailed to everyone on this mailing list in early February 2000.
- **Aug. 28-Sept. 1/London, England.** Triennial International Exodus conference (held every 3 years). Info: 905/686-7363.

To obtain a copy of the "Sexual Orientation & Youth" report, go online to http://www.glsen.org