



Ramah's Voice

An Electronic Lifeline: Ministering on the Internet

By Sydna A. Massé

"Judy" (not her real name) sits alone in her apartment contemplating a life and death decision. She feels isolated, afraid of judgment and rejection from those who may discover her crisis pregnancy. Despair has settled upon her soul and she hears Satan in her head relaying that abortion is her only "unselfish" option. Yet there is another voice calling her to search for answers. The word "search" reminds her of the Internet. She runs to her computer and logs onto the World Wide Web.

Using a search-engine "Judy" types in the word "abortion" and a plethora of websites appear. The first is the Planned Parenthood page but she already knows that they are available should she decide to abort. What she needs is to speak to someone personally about abortion. As she scrolls down the screen she finds a website that seems friendly so she positions her cursor and double-clicks on the icon. The site features the faces of women and lists their testimonies.

One face appeals to her. As she reads the woman's testimony she discovers this person has had an abortion and wants to help those who are considering this choice. She clicks on the face and an e-mail box pops open. "Judy's" brief message to the woman outlines her crisis and pleads for more information. She hits the "send" button and feels a small amount of relief. For the rest of the evening she awaits a response.

The woman doesn't disappoint her and responds quickly. "Judy" whispers a silent prayer thanking God for this lifeline. The words of her return message fill "Judy" with love and the story the woman relays portrays a horrifying personal perspective on abortion.

The new friend shares about the work of pregnancy care centers and offers to help her find a confidential center in her area that can support her. After securing "Judy's" city and state, the woman even gives her an e-mail address for someone from her local center. For the first time in several weeks, "Judy" no longer feels alone and writes to the local person. The connection is made and "Judy" eventually visits the center. While she may never meet this stranger, God has used this woman to touch her when no one else could. When her baby is born, the e-mail advocate will receive an incredible message and baby picture from "Judy" thanking her for being there in her time of need.

The question you must consider is will "Judy" be able to find you? This story is played out countless times each day throughout the world. The purpose of this article is to strongly encourage your center to establish a website and an e-mail ministry of your own. Each time I receive messages like "Judy's" I search the various directories for a center with e-mail/website information. Through these searches I have discovered that we are insignificantly represented in this valuable medium. "Judy" may never visit or call your center but that doesn't mean she doesn't need your help desperately.

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Satellite Offices

For better or for worse, today's youth spends most of their time on the Internet using instant messaging systems that allow them to converse with many people at once. They write things that they would never dare to say out loud. The perceived confidentiality of this medium can make individuals bolder and more open in sharing about their fears, hopes and dreams. The Internet is their "Yellow Pages" directory for any and all information. If you are not listed in their information bank, they won't know you as a valuable resource. By featuring your site during public presentations with youth you communicate that you are "hip" and available to teens in their own "community." If you are not in their "directory," they won't know to turn to you for help. Instead they will find the Planned Parenthood site and their message that sex is great and abortion is their best option.

When considering a website imagine it as a satellite office for your center. Be wary of the local teen or volunteer who wants to develop your site for free. Would you let a novice engineer build your center's building structure? A website is just like a center only it exists in a different "space." The professional appearance and information available on your site will dictate a respect level in the visitor. Every website "office" requires a firm foundation with a programmer who understands search engine technology and graphic design to ensure that you reach hearts in the best manner possible. It doesn't have to be expensive or time-consuming. Ramah provides low-cost website design services that can have your site up and running in less than a few days with great information. To see our sample sites, visit our website at: www.ramahinternational.org.

Another consideration is that a website will allow people who don't need your physical support to understand the option of abortion at a greater level. Educated women are often too embarrassed to visit a center but will search a site to determine more information on abortion. They may not need your physical services but the electronic lifeline can give them sufficient information to make a life decision for their child. You may never know until you get to heaven how many lives your site has touched and impacted on a positive level.

Staffing the Satellite Site

An e-mail ministry is easy to begin. Most volunteers have home computers and enjoy this medium because they can do it in their home at their own pace. Some may not be able to physically volunteer at your center so the Internet provides them another way to serve. Their appearance doesn't matter because they are never seen! They can find their own time during the day to respond.

Centers also have greater control over the information being relayed through the volunteers in e-mail ministries. Return messages don't need to be unique because standard messages can be personalized with a few sentences to address various situations. For example, I have a general abortion-minded message and a post-abortion reply prepared. By cutting and

pasting this basic message, I know that my response is complete. I address the writer's concerns in the opening and closing paragraphs. Should the person write again, I keep my response personal with the ultimate goal of transitioning them into a pregnancy care center. Some may never be able to face their fears and walk into your center. These e-mail messages may become their only lifeline to support. Volunteers are blessed with flexibility and new clients are impacted that may never have found you through normal channels.

Liability Issues

While many voice concerns about liability issues surrounding Internet ministry, legal guidelines have yet to be significantly established for this medium. It's possible that you may never know to whom you are speaking to or be able to completely protect confidentiality. You can address these concerns by saying, "Your letter will be kept confidential once it reaches my computer," or "I'm not a medical doctor or a counselor – just a woman who wants to help people." Most of your normal procedures can be followed on this medium.

The anonymous element of the Internet clearly makes some uneasy but it shouldn't mean that we turn away out of fear. Tom Glessner from NIFLA has prepared a "Legal Tips" sheet entitled, "Website and the Law" (Vol. 1X, No. 11, Nov. 2002). This is available to NIFLA members and will provide your board of directors with an understanding of how to address any legal concerns related to website development (www.nifla.org).

E-Mail Ministry

While you may not be able to introduce a website right away many of your volunteers have e-mail addresses. In all your communications provide an e-mail address to those who may only reach out to you in this manner. Some are afraid to speak to you directly but will write. For this reason, e-mail addresses are particularly important in church and abstinence presentations. Include a spot on intake forms for clients to list e-mail addresses. Individuals can be more willing to share this information than their telephone numbers. They can also be more honest and open in this contact. While they may only visit your center once, you can keep in touch through this lifeline and God can use you to impact their lives through future cyberspace visits.

Whatever way the Lord leads you, don't neglect the Internet ministry tool. Matthew 24:14 relays, "*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*" The World Wide Web is the first medium in history to reach the entire world. It's obvious that God is using the Internet to bring people to His wonderful saving grace.

CHAT LINGO AND MEANING

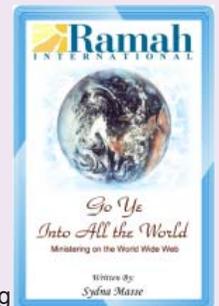
Here is a peek at the interesting new language developed for Internet users. This list was developed by Carla Simmert of SafeHaven ministries.

Lingo	What It Means
:) or :-)	Smiling or Happy
:(or :-(Sad
:D or :-D	Laughing
:-p	Stick your tongue out
:-()	Talking too much
;-)	Winking
2	To/too
4	For
AB	Abortion
Ack!	Disgusted
AKA	Also Known As
AFK	Away from keyboard
B4	Before
BAK	Back at keyboard
BF/GF	Boyfriend/Girlfriend
BRB	Be right back
BTW	By the way
CU	See you
G2G	I've got to go
IC	I see
IM	Instant Message
IMO	In my opinion
J/K	Just Kidding
K	Okay
LOL	Laughing out loud
OIC	Oh I see
PM	Private Message
RU	Are you
ROTFL	Rolling on the floor laughing
TTYL	Talk to you later
WB	Welcome back
WTG	Way to go
Y	Why?

Go Ye Into All the World

This booklet will help you chart a course through a new ministry arena where God can use you to reach those who need your services desperately.

Available at:
www.ramahinternational.org



Ministering to Future Generations

“For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.” Psalms 100:5



Helen came to visit us shortly after we moved to Florida. She was clearly hungry and in need of help. Her leg was crippled and each step was a struggle. One day she brought along a friend — Hank. We assumed they were a couple but we weren't able to gather many details about their relationship. Sometimes they would come together but most times separately. Earlier this year Hank brought along a youngster. As was our custom, we provided meals whenever any of the family members appeared. We nicknamed the youngster “Baby” and felt blessed that his parent's trusted us enough to allow us to care for their offspring.

Do you realize that our movement is now serving the second and third generations of former clients? Someone recently relayed that they had two new volunteers who were both former crisis pregnancy babies that God saved through their center. It was wonderful to receive these women into their ministry. Their simple presence was proof that God had used them incredibly over the years.

Sometimes God gives us a glimpse into how He's using us and other times He keeps us in the dark. God knows my pride can only handle a limited number of “great revelations” (2 Cor. 12:7) at the power that He has flowing through me. This is why we seldom know the future choices of our clients. When I'm particularly discouraged, God sends a past client with great news and a picture or two of a newborn. Because of one child's birth, future generations of this family is secured. One life touches so many others.

By the way, did I mention that Hank, Helen and Baby are great blue herons? The beauty of these birds reminds us that God is indeed an incredible creator!

Sydna A. Massé

Ramah's Resource Corner:

“Go Ye Into All the World: Ministering on the Internet”

In this booklet you will learn the practical application of ministry on this new medium and how the Lord can use you to save many lives from abortion through e-mail contact. Everything from sample letters to design elements are included in this easy-to-read booklet. Sydna Massé and Carla Simmert of SafeHaven ministries team up to write this publication that can enable your center to reach out into many new hearts in your community and around the world.

To order use enclosed card, visit our website at: www.ramahinternational.org (\$5 Suggested donation.)

From the Word of God:

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV)

