

May 1st, 2005

H.I.S. Ministries May Newsletter, covering April 2005

Happy Spring Day - or May-Day as celebrated all around Europe with parades and flowers. We celebrate this season with renewed faith and joy because He is God of life and salvation.

Spring does seem to give people new hope and joy. There is new life all around. We have two birdhouses on the East wall of our house. They are already occupied with busy birds.

We can learn so much from them - they do not worry where they are going to find food to feed their babies, they just trust the Creator, and go about their lives full of happy songs. They have seen God's provision through the harsh winter. The past is their assurance of the future. God's provision in our past likewise should be our assurance of the future. God has blessed us in the past, He will do it in the future. Hard times are when God tests our faith.

I was reading again how God brought Israel out of Egypt, parting the Red Sea and destroying the mighty Egyptian army before their eyes, but only three days later they were already murmuring, complaining and questioning God's ability to provide water and food for them. They got water, they got manna, they got quail till they could not eat any more, and yet at every turn, they again and again questioned God. On ten occasions the Lord brought Israel to the place of testing, and on all ten occasions He delivered them miraculously - yet every time Israel failed in their faith in God. God's patience was about to run out. They had one more opportunity, the final test. They arrived to the edge of the Jordan River, where they could see the Promised Land. God had told them that **they must go and possess the land**. Instead of going in and trusting God, they sent twelve spies to check it out beforehand. Ten of them returned with a discouraging message, saying that yes, Canaan was everything that God had said it would be, BUT it was filled with giants who could crush them all. They also said that the cities were impenetrable fortresses, "walls reaching up to heaven" and that they are not strong enough to face that kind of enemy. "*We simply cannot go in*", they said. (See Numbers 13.) Keep in mind that **God had already given them a command to go in and possess the land. They should have known from that that it was possible to do**. But because they listened to these evil reports, they lost their faith in God and cried all night, murmuring against Moses and Aaron and said unto them, "*would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would God that we had died in this wilderness! ...wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return to Egypt?*" They did not stop their murmuring even after Joshua and Caleb, two spies who gave a good report (Numbers 14:7-9), said, "*The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then He will bring us unto this land, and give it to us, the land that floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land...their defense is departed from them and the LORD is with us: fear them not.*" Instead of listening, the whole congregation wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb, along with Moses and Aaron. God's patience run out. God was ready to destroy them for their lack of faith and trust,

but Moses pleaded with the Lord for His forgiveness and mercy. **The Lord forgave them**, but the consequence of their unbelief was that none of the adults who had experienced all the miracles of God were going to be allowed to possess the Promised Land, but that they would die in the wilderness, as they had wished, but their "*little ones*", who they had said *would be a prey*, they will enter the land that their parents had rejected in unbelief. (See also Hebr. 3:16-19.) Of that generation, only Joshua and Caleb would live to see that land, and the children of these faithless parents would see God's miracles if they trusted the Lord and walked in obedience to Him. When the priests, carrying the Ark of the Covenant, which represented God's presence with them, stepped into the River Jordan, it parted, and they walked into the Promised Land on dry ground to possess it as God had promised to their parents, who were not able to enter because of their unbelief. (Read this exciting story, Joshua Chapters 3 and 4.) They were told to take 12 stones from the middle of the River Jordan, and make a memorial marker to tell the story to their children and children's children what God has done for them, from Egypt onward, so that they, and all the world through them, will know that they serve God who is mighty and faithful to His promises.

Why am I writing about this now? It is because we need to trust in the Lord and do as He directs, **even when it seems impossible**. We are no different than the children of Israel. How many of us have experienced God's deliverance and His great salvation, but after a severe testing came, we were filled with fear and were ready turn back to "our Egypt"? **True faith is birthed in affliction and testing**. That is the only way our faith can be proven true. When we are in the midst of a trial and we turn to God's Word, choosing to live or die by His promises, we come through with tested and strong faith. That is the only way that our faith grows - from test to test, until we can say from our whole heart that our God is faithful God. If we loose faith in testing, we let go of the very purpose why God has called us, chosen us and changed us. We, like Israel, tend to turn to our own "wisdom", and seek to deliver ourselves from the crisis **God had planned for us only to strengthen our faith and our trust in Him**. It was Israel's unbelief that aborted God's purpose for their future. God had to tell that generation that they were useless to Him. God had tested them and they had proven to be faithless complainers, each time. **God forgave them, but He could not use them as a testimony to other nations**. They simply just wasted away all their remaining years. *Without faith it is impossible to please God*. What happened to Israel then can happen to us in our day. *God is the same, yesterday, today and forever. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."* (Hebr. 3:12, 18-19.) We too cannot enter into God's rest, or fulfill His purposes and be a testimony to others, if we do not grow in faith through our testing. Our lives too can be turned into a long wilderness experience. Israel became totally consumed by their own personal welfare, focusing in their problems **instead of God's plans and promises**. **That is what can happen to us if we end up being consumed with our own welfare, without a sense of God's presence and purposes in our trials**. If we focus on our problems instead of God's plan through them, our days can become filled with confusion, strife and even envy. **Good and prosperous times do not develop our character. Trials are God's way of strengthening us**. When we become strong in the Lord, then and only then we can help others. *"If it has not happened to you, it cannot happen through you."* In other words, after we have experienced severe trials and seen God's victory, God can use us to strengthen those who are now going through them. Instead of trusting God, in the midst of our trials, we often become fearful and want to give up. We think that God has not answered our prayers. We all are guilty at times of such an unbelief when we face struggles and allow the enemy to discourage us. We become

convinced that the Lord does not hear us. We ask, “*Lord, where are you? I pray, I fast and I study Your Word. Why don’t you answer me, why don’t you help me?*” When we face this kind of thinking, we must discipline ourselves and recall all that the Lord has brought us through in the past. When these huge issues are facing us, we must cast ourselves totally on God’s promises and believe that **God is bigger than any of our problems**. Our God is looking for faith that deals with problems by putting our trust in Him, no matter what our situation is. Testing brings us out of unbelief **if** we but endure and do not panic as Israel did before the giants they thought were too much for God to take care of.

God cannot do anything through us until our faith in His provision is tested. We see this in how God tested the new generation of Israel after Moses’ death. They had to face the same testing of faith their fathers had failed when they stood before the River Jordan. They had to decide to trust in God. They believed and the river opened and they walked on dry ground to the other side. After that they had to face the thick walls of Jericho and a powerful enemy inside, but through faith and obedience to God they saw the walls come tumbling down. **Our faith is a commitment to believe and obey God**. Israel’s testing and trials did not end on crossing the River Jordan. It must have seemed totally impossible what God asked them to do to win this battle of Jericho. God had told them “*Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee.*” (Joshua 1:9.) They did not understand how this battle can be won by marching around the walls, but they decided to obey God, regardless. They were told not to say a word, but march around the walls in a certain order, and blow their instruments a certain number of times. Think about this. It required total commitment to God, to trust and obey and not question anything at all. They did not ask, “*how could this happen?*” “*how are we able to do it?*” **They determined in their hearts to obey and because of their faith, trust and obedience to God, the walls of Jericho came down and they received what God had promised. Israel did not win because they were able. They won because God is able.** “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.*” (Eph. 6:10) Let’s make up our minds not to question the Lord every time we face seemingly impossible struggles, but to remember that He has promised to fight our battles.

“*Be not afraid or dismayed...for the battle is not yours, but God’s.*” (2 Chron.20:15.)

Dennis and I can testify that because we obeyed the Lord and in faith stepped out into this battlefield, the Lord has been with us, and He has fought our battles. Still, it has not been an easy road, but we know through our past experiences that if we do what He has called us to do, regardless of opposition and even threats, we know that He will be with us to the end. It has been rather lonely at times, and we had to remind ourselves with the words of a song, “*If none goes with us, we still will follow.*” “Our battlefield” has been, and is, stepping out to expose false teachings and false prophets that lead people to eternal destruction. This day and age **talking about God’s absolute truth**, when ecumenical thinking and “tolerance” is fast spreading, **is not “in”**. We are accused of intolerance, and often told not to be so concerned about doctrine, but make friends and live “peacefully” among those who have put their faith in false prophets and churches, “after all they are such nice people”. If this life was all there was going to be, then it would be OK to be silent. **But God’s command is that we, who have been warned, warn others.** (Ezekiel 33:7-9.) **We must warn what the consequences of following false prophets and false teachers are. We must counsel them to test by the Word of God, the Bible, all that is taught about God, Jesus and salvation.** All cults, false prophets and false teachers mix truth and error. They do that with a purpose in mind. That is what makes them more dangerous than if

they were always 100% in error. *"Evil is it's worst when it poses as good and justifies itself with lies."* Of course we are to be friendly and kind to all, but God's counsel is **not to make friends** with those who do not teach the truth about Him and His salvation in Jesus! "...*know ye not that the friendship with the world is enmity with God?*" (James 4:4) Also, *"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."* (2 John 10-11.) *"Have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."* (Eph. 5:11.) (See also Romans 16:17; Titus 1:13; 3:10; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; 2 Cor. 6:17.)

The command of God is **to study His Word** (2 Tim. 2:15) so that we will not be deceived, and then help those out who have fallen prey to false teachings. *Test all things*, and reject what is not true, is God's instruction. We must **test and reject spirits** that give "*testimonies*" of something that is not according to His Word. (1 Thess. 5:21; 1 John 4:1; 1 Tim. 4:1; Acts 17:11.)

"I'm a still an active LDS, and probably will stay active member. I am a former High Councilor, Bishop, Bishop's Counselor and a Seminary Teacher, who has spent the last nearly 20 years or so since I was released as a Bishop studying Mormon history and problems. I counted myself as a skeptic during my many years of teaching Gospel Doctrine and more recently the High Priest-group. I saw a reference to your story on the former Mormon site and thought I would get an official copy. I have read it and found nothing new in what you wrote, nothing that I did not already know, but I find people's personal reactions to their crumbling faith in Mormonism interesting. I carved out a niche for myself within the church and my skepticism is largely tolerated and, in many cases, even celebrated--even by my long time friends, the current Bishop and High Priest group leader. Thanks."

Response:

Thank you for your letter. Very interesting that you are still active in the Mormon church. To me finding the truth about Mormonism was a "black and white" issue. By that I mean that if the "First Vision", the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham etc. are just made-up creations (=lies) of Joseph Smith, then there is no point in belonging to the LDS Church no matter how good of a social club it has developed into, no matter how good their programs now are - **a lie is still a lie!** I would not want to have anything to do with it! I am thinking from a convert's point of view, as I was. It was REQUIRED that I believe all of the above before I was baptized, and now that I know that they are not true - I wanted my baptism, membership, temple ordinances etc. all null and void! I knew there could be a life after Mormonism - since there was a life for me before it! For Dennis it was more difficult since Mormonism was all he had ever known. I believe that had we not had a strong desire to know God and what He was all about, and about life after death, we perhaps would have had a harder time personally to find our place in life after Mormonism. Since the Bible and its correctness is questioned in the Mormon Church, we decided to take up a Bible study - I mean a REAL STUDY. We bought dictionaries (to verify the correctness of the translation that is brought into question by the LDS church - "*as far as translated correctly*" - after all translation had been my job with the LDS Church for over 14 years, so it did not seem like something impossible to verify), we also bought commentaries by the best Bible scholars, who were not promoting any denomination. We bought secular histories from the Biblical era, maps, archeological information - you name it, we went after it. It became

a fun and rewarding discovery for us. We studied about 1.5 - 2 years intensively before we ventured out to see if there were any churches around that taught correctly from the Bible. We have continued in our daily studies now for 23 years - and that has been the best times in our lives! We found out that God is not anything Joseph Smith said He was. God is not a former mortal man. Jesus is God and not our spirit-brother. Salvation has nothing to do with any organized religion or our own works, etc. etc. We truly have a tremendous freedom and joy in our lives after Mormonism. If you are interested in talking more, we are available. If you live around Salt Lake City or anywhere in Utah, perhaps we can meet some day.

Rauni Higley

He responded:

"...I have spent a good part of my life finding my own values, convictions, and practices. From a very early age I had been skeptical about the church and decided (even before I knew I had decided) that I would not go on a mission--though all my friends dutifully went. I remained active in the church while growing increasingly independent of its dogma and strident leadership including while I was a bishop who was known for being a bit "off"... In consequence, when I really delved into the history and problems of the church what I found was not especially surprising and, in fact, more or less confirmed what I had come to believe intuitively. I suspect that I was further influenced by the things I heard from my mother when I was young. She is a great grandchild of _____(one of the early leaders of the LDS church) and was raised (from the time she was an infant) by her great-aunt, (daughter of this leader) who was an intelligent woman who hated the polygamous marriage she was in (she left her husband to live a life of poverty rather than stay in polygamy) and had been raised associating with the elite circles of Mormonism. She told my mother of her disillusionment and some of the more troubling stories of Mormon history. Just listening to mother talk to her siblings while I was growing up I had picked up a pretty accurate picture of Mormon issues. So why do I stay? I'm also a bit of a American history buff. I have found that much of the traditional record of American history is a bunch Euro-centric distortions of reality emerging as justifications of Calvinist excesses under the guise of divine destiny. I think our previous president (Bill Clinton), who I voted for is (as is Orrin Hatch), very likely a criminal, who has no concept of the distinction between telling the truth and lying--so long as he is promoting his own anointing as a grand dragon of the universe. I also think he is a sexual predator who will risk anything for sexual gratification. The fact that the history of America is largely a bunch of justifications of exploitation by European elitists and that our past president is likely a criminal and pathological liar, is not going to cause me to renounce my citizenship any more than our current president's policies I do not agree with...At the end of the day I think there is more good about America (and even about Bill Clinton and alike as a bright and driven leaders) than there is garbage in the remnant of their mistakes. At the end of the day I hope I am more that a spectre of my past and present mistakes. I have chosen to not kill myself over my past mistakes and I will continue to try and make America a more beautiful and prosperous place to live--its sorted history and present leadership notwithstanding. For similar reasons I have chosen to remain attached to my Mormon heritage--though with no illusions about it's divine commission. On those rare occasions when I teach or speak, I will invariably get quite a few comments from people thanking me for challenging them to think and reason. These comments mean more to me than accolades or recognition from people whose values and beliefs mirror my own. If all I wanted was to hear from people who already agreed with me, I could simplify my life by going to a canyon and

listening to my echo. - Finally, because I respect other's beliefs (even the most strident Mormons), people are largely unthreatened by my perspectives._____”

My response:

Thank you. You made me curious. Being a Mormon should be a religious choice, indicating what one believes to be true. It is in a sense your I.D. May I ask you: If you had not been born into Mormonism, would you have chosen it via missionary-efforts and teachings as I did? If you had chosen it, like I had, based on limited and deceitful information given by "innocent" missionaries, and you'd later find out that you indeed have been deceived, would you just stay anyway? Or is it any different that you were born a Mormon? Don't we all personally still have to find out what the truth is?

Do you believe there is a personal God, and if there is a God, what do you think He expect of us? Would He expect us to seek Him as Jeremiah 29:19 says; not a religion, but Him personally? Have you sought to find out, even if only out of curiosity, if the Bible truly is what it claims to be, the Word of God, the Book about Him? If it is true then the only sensible thing is to trust what it says about God, Jesus and salvation.

Do you believe that people will live after this life is over? If so, then where? Would it be worth it for you to know? **Would you want to know?** Does knowing the Truth matter? Jesus said (John 17:3) that it is equal to eternal life to KNOW Him; not just "about Him", as a person from history, but **Him, personally!** Again, I ask: Do you believe that there is a life everlasting - a life after we die physically? If so, where do you think you are going to spend that **life that will never end?** *Jesus said that He alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life* (John 14:6). Would it be worth your time to find out **if He is the Truth, and if He is the only Way, as He said?** Or are your ideas about Jesus still based on teachings of Joseph Smith, and those who came after him? If Joseph Smith and those after him were liars, as you already seem to know they were/are, wouldn't you, in that case, through their teaching about Him, end up **not** knowing the true Jesus Christ at all, but had instead believed in "*another Jesus*" and "*another gospel*", spoken of in 2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15; Gal. 1:6-9, and elsewhere? Or do you care? We might not have many choices when we elect a president and/or other political leaders, and that is only for a short period of time. In a matter of faith and **eternal destiny** we can choose between the true God or a false god or gods without having to give up our earthly citizenship - at least in this country this freedom is still offered. If we live eternally anyway somewhere, would it matter where? Can a false gods save or promise anything worthwhile? They can promise, but they cannot deliver! Our life in mortality is relatively short, even if we live to be over hundred years old. Eternity is never-ending existence. I believe that most people make more plans for their short vacations, and where they are going stay while on vacation, than they do for eternity! Perhaps your peers and Mormons you talk with do not see you as a threat to them, **because you are not challenging them to look elsewhere for truth?** Just thinking - and wondering...and praying for you. - Rauni

Ever since the publication of Dan Brown's **fictional novel**, *Da Vinci Code* (2003) (and other subsequent TV interviews and programs along that line), a lot of theories have been created on Mary Magdalene's and Jesus' relationship. Of course the Mormon church has a long history of fictional stories, similar to this one, and this book has fueled their fire some more. What we must keep in mind is that this book, *Da Vinci Code*, declares right on the cover that **it is a novel**, meaning it is not a true story. Yet multitudes have taken it as if it was true. We have received numerous letters and calls asking what we think of this. Just that: **It is not a true story, but a**

novel. If you read it, do not take it seriously.

I'll quote from one of such letters:

"...I have a friend who is slowly coming around to orthodoxy, however she retains some peculiar LDS ideas... [and even some new ones because of this Dan Brown's book, Da Vinci Code] . My arguments have failed to make a dint, so I thought I'd put the question out - two or more brains is better than one! My friend contends that because Our Lord was referred to as "Rabbi" by his apostles, He must have been a married man, because Rabbis' were always married...[Mormon leaders have taught that Mary Magdalene and Martha and others were His wives and that it was His wedding in Cana of Galilee, spoken of in John 2 ...]... How can I answer her claims?M_____"

Response:

"Rabbi" simply means a teacher in both Aramaic and in Hebrew. Teachers did not have to be married, even though he could have been. Lets be reasonable. IF Jesus was married, surely it would have been reported in at least one of the gospels and other New Testament writings! **The Bible teaches that He is God who came to save sinners. Period!** The Bible records about Jesus' family life as having, besides a mother (Mary), also sisters and brothers (Mark 6:3) and of course, a stepfather, Joseph. IF He had had a wife (wives, according to Mormonism) and children, surely they too would have been mentioned. He gave to John, His beloved apostle, the care of His mother after His crucifixion, perhaps because His own brothers were not believers in Him then. That is it in a nutshell what is mentioned about his immediate family. Mormons are fabricating this story, as so many other stories. We are His body, His church (Col. 1:18, 24). The church is His Bride when He comes to receive us to Himself. Mormons are beyond being ridiculous in this, as in many other issues! They are pre-occupied with sex and future sexual relations - as was their idolized prophet, Joseph Smith. - May God bless you as you help them to understand. - Rauni

Mother's Day is coming, so enjoy this little story: *"A four years old and a six-year old presented their mother with a house plant. They had used their own money and she was thrilled. The older of them said with a sad face, 'There was a bouquet that we wanted to give to you at the flower shop. It was real pretty, but it was too expensive. It has a ribbon on it that said, 'Rest in Peace', and we thought that it would be just perfect since you are always asking for a little peace so that you can rest'."* ☺

Happy Mother's Day to all.

We have had an unusual amount of letters from Mormons who have held, or are still holding, important leadership positions in the LDS church. We hear of hardships and sorrows that come to these families when one of them discovers the truth and others in do not want to even consider changes of this magnitude in their lives. Please pray with us for all of them, and that we have strength and compassion to deal with all of them.

What is going on continually around here demonstrates the deep need for those God has called to minister in this missionfield. Even more workers are needed. This work involves teaching how Mormonism differs from biblical Christianity and making Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Savior known to all of them. When they finally understand who He is and receive Him, we must

continue to disciple them, teaching the Word God to them. **Faith in Jesus as the only way** is under attack as never before - and through His prophetic Word we see that this assault will only intensify. We ask you to stand with us in this. As partners we have the opportunity to accomplish the work of our Lord in the hearts and minds of men and women for His glory and honor. Your prayers and your support will continue to encourage us. We look forward to hearing from you. May God bless you as you study His Word and wait on Him. Let's be determined to keep the SON in our eyes, all the time.

Because of Him, and in His service,

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