



# Desert Hope Ministries

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September, 2005

**Desert Hope's purpose** is to extend God's love, truth and healing to people struggling with relational, sexual and identity issues. Our **goal** is to bring a fresh and relevant message of hope and renewal to the church through conferences, speaking engagements, writing and counseling.

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## Exodus International

The Exodus conference was held in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains near Asheville, North Carolina. I was thrilled, as usual, to speak for such an open and receptive audience as Exodus. I believe God showed up in marvelous ways. I saw many old friends and was also blessed to minister to one who was able to see Jesus in a new light. Through prayer, she realized that Jesus would sit with her, hold her, play with her, or listen to her as long as she wanted or needed. He would never wear out, be distracted, or bored in her presence. What a deep healing God did!

## Good News!

I also experienced a divine appointment at the Exodus Conference. On my last afternoon at the conference, I had several conversations with friends about my book project and my need for an editor/writer who could commit to editing, rewriting, and guiding me on the completion of my manuscript. As I left these conversations, I was feeling hopeless about ever finding that special person who could both be kindred in my heart for women struggling with same-sex attraction, yet technically skilled in writing and editing. While I was walking down the sidewalk headed for a lunch date, I saw a woman I had met at the November NARTH conference. She had attended all of my workshops and I remember the beam on her face as she offered me confirmations and affirmations of my lecture material through her nods and smiles. After attending NARTH I had reviewed a recent issue of Christianity Today and discovered an article on coming out of female homosexuality. I thought I recognized the woman in the picture. Yes, it was the gal I had met at NARTH.

When I saw her on the sidewalk at Exodus, I wanted to give her a big hug and mention that I had read her article. I then sheepishly asked her,

"Are you a writer?"

She answered with a drawn out, "Yeah," which ended with the unspoken question, "Why do you ask?"

But I was not convinced, so I asked again, "Are you a REAL writer?"

And she said, "Well, I have a Master's Degree in Writing and Research and I've worked for the Washington Post for 20 years – does that count?"

At this point, I was so excited I could barely speak. But speak I did, probing her, "Are you like swamped with all of your ministry and professional work right now?" This has been a problem as I've contacted professional writers in the past. Many are so busy they can't consider working on yet another project.

She answered, "No, I'm really not, in fact I've been praying that God would begin to use my talents for His Kingdom."

Now my heart was racing. I could barely believe my ears, and only seconds into our conversation I declared, "And I am praying that God would send me a professional writer who would want to use their gifting to help me out with my book project."

We stared at each other for a moment, and almost both simultaneously gasped, "Could it be that God wants us to work together?!"

As soon as I returned to Denver, I emailed her, asking her to review some of my completed chapters to determine if she is interested and if it felt like a good fit. A week or so later she responded with a big YES. She, Diane Mattingly, and I are now well entrenched in the editing and rewriting process. I know her help and support will save me hours and hours of editing and rewriting time that I have had to spend because of my lack of professional assistance. I am still in shock. She not only understands the issue of female homosexuality, but also supports my thesis and purpose statement for the book, AND is an excellent editor. I am humbled for God's provision through her.

## More Good News!

I am further humbled by the fact that another incredible woman, Ellen Haroutunian, also a professional therapist and former research nurse, has agreed to work for Desert Hope Ministries two days a week for a salary that is well below her actual worth. Ellen is an expert on gender studies and Biblical material related to the true masculine and feminine. She, together with her husband, Rev. Aram Haroutunian, who has also been on the Desert Hope Conference team since the beginning, is also working on a book manuscript addressing how we as Christians can maintain our Christian identity within a pluralistic world and effectively engage our post-modern culture. She will be helping me with all of the administrative responsibilities involved with my counseling practice, writing project, and Desert Hope matters. God has truly poured out His blessing and favor over Desert Hope!

## Restoring the Glory Conference

Mark your calendars! We are in full swing in preparing for our annual conference in Denver, Colorado on **April 27-29, 2006**, at Church in the City. Church in the City has a heart for healing and cross-cultural ministry and has previously hosted Andy Comiskey and Living Waters programs. We feel honored to be invited to present our conference in this church.

## Testimonies:

I found these words from a woman for whom I prayed at a recent women's retreat so encouraging:

*"I just wanted to say thanks again for praying for me. I already knew in my spirit that the Lord was going to do something deep. I came with expectation and the Lord touched me in a miraculous way. I shall never be the same. Thank you for once again touching my life Janelle. You are one of God's generals and you are raising up a mighty army that's going to destroy the works of the enemy. There may be times that you feel battle weary, but never give up the good fight of faith, mighty woman of God. I pray that the Lord would open doors for you that no man can shut, and that He shuts those He wants closed that no man can open. Keep speaking words of life to the hopeless. You are walking in your calling because there is a mighty anointing up you. To God be the Glory! Amen!"*

## From Janelle's Desk,

Following is a synopsis of the teaching I shared at the annual Exodus International conference in July:

God has a pattern of using average, run-of-the-mill people to accomplish His plans and purposes. For example, the Children of Israel were a small and, from the world's perspective, somewhat insignificant group of nomadic men and women. Israel was actually one big family made up of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, or great-great-great grandchildren of a patriarch named Abraham. Abraham, formerly named Abram, indeed had many descendents, yet when he walked the earth, he was just a regular sort of guy who came from a regular sort of family. There was nothing inherently unique about Abraham, except that he boldly trusted in God's goodness!

But because of **God's** choosing, promise, and faithfulness, Abraham became the Father of many, regardless of what he was able to bring to the table. I do not believe, however, that when God made this promise to Abraham, He was only concerned about guaranteeing Abraham a long lineage of offspring. God had a greater burden and purpose to fulfill. Ultimately, God was concerned for all of the surrounding people groups who were lost and separated from His heart of love and affection. God had a plan, and this plan depended on His small ordinary group of chosen people.

First, God told His people that they needed to:

**“Love the Lord their God, to walk in his ways** (*His path, design, and order for life, beauty, and glory*),  
**and to keep his commands, decrees and laws** (*these are merely the guideposts to keep them walking “in Him” or on His paths*);  
**then they would live and increase**, (*of course they would, they would literally be living and walking in God or in abundance, blessing, and life*)  
**and the Lord your God would bless them in the land they were entering to possess.”**  
Deut. 30:16

Actually, God gave them a choice. He never forces His people, that's why He gave us free will. They could choose:

1. Him as their God and Father, which of course was the same as choosing life (“*For the Lord was their life.*” Deut. 30:20)

**God = Life**

**or**

2. Another god, which of course was not God since there is only one True God, which would be the same as choosing a non god or non-life or death.

**non-god = non-Life = Death**

Seemed simple enough. God said: “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life.”

Most of Israel's neighbors only knew about non-gods or false gods; gods of their own making and own imagination. They were helplessly lost and in bondage to emptiness, darkness, and decay – and they may have not even known why. They were being destroyed and this moved the very heart of God who didn't *just* care for Israel; He cared for every nation, every tribe, and every tongue. He wanted all peoples to LIVE and know His great love.

So God hoped, and purposed, that as His people chose and loved Him and walked in His ways, they would experience such abundance and blessing that they would attract the attention and curiosity of all the nations and tribes living in the surrounding areas. God wanted His people to shine as a bright light for others to see; a light that would show them the way to True Life, abundant blessing, real Joy, Peace, Love and happiness. He then hoped that those trapped in darkness and confusion would eventually learn about the God that Israel was serving and following and make a choice to also follow Him. God wanted to draw all men and women to Himself and He wanted to love and pour out His blessings upon each one of them.

Since this plan was so dependent upon Israel, like a good Father, God gave them a final warning. If they decided to choose other gods instead of Him, or look to **anyone** or **anything** apart from Him, the one True God, for life, a sense of safety, love, peace, provision, security, protection,

meaning or purpose – they would be sorely disappointed. **No life** would be found there. This was not a promise of punishment for their poor choice, but a statement of reality. Life was *only* found in Him. It simply could not be found in following after non-gods. Instead, of life, blessing and abundance, they would be met with emptiness, darkness, despair, decay, and destruction.

But there was still another rub. If Israel chose other gods, they would essentially become just like all the other peoples. They would not stand out as different or as a bright light, but be darkened like everyone else who was following after emptiness and death. The surrounding people would then not be given an opportunity to know about the great love of Yahweh. They would simply continue in their paths of corruption and decay and God's heart would be broken, not just for Israel but for all the surrounding people. He would weep.

It is important for us to remember that in our contemporary era of history, **we** are now God's chosen and special people and **we** have been given a similar choice and call on our lives. Indeed, we live in a world that is trapped in confusion, deceit, and darkness, dying for lack of knowledge about His love and mercy. God is calling each one of us, just like the Children of Israel, to love Him and walk in His ways. But He does not merely want us to keep His commands and decrees for the mere sake of obedience OR for our sole blessing. Bottom line, He wants us to be *with* Him as He walks and moves. He wants us to fellowship with Him – to find our truest love and identity in Him. He does not expect us to be perfect, but to return to His paths when we stray.

He never stopped loving and wooing the Children of Israel – even when they blatantly ignored Him. He will never stop loving us either. But ultimately, He still wants the men and women who have been sorely disappointed by the false loves and deceitful promises of illicit sexuality, relational brokenness, and identity crises to know and experience a Love that will endure, that is Real, solid, constant, and rooted in sacrifice. So he hopes that instead of ignoring Him we will continue to turn and return to His ways. It is through **our** ongoing journey of struggle and suffering as God's beloved children that our darkened world may begin to see a picture of a good and faithful God who remains patient and persevering with His children. We can also shine like a bright light for all to see, similar to how a healthy young child shines forth the care and affection bestowed on them by a good mom and dad.

Will you choose Life this day? Every moment of every day we have a choice. And our choices matter deeply. They will either usher in a ray of light and life *or* will add to the surrounding darkness. It is as we choose True Life over our immediate gratification, self-protection, or relief, a piece of darkness will be conquered. We will make a difference in the Kingdom of God. We matter!

## Please Pray:

Pray for Diane Mattingly as she continues to immerse herself in the book manuscript.

Pray for Ellen Haroutunian as she is being trained in a multitude of tasks and is learning to don several "hats" at one time.

Pray for Jill Harris, a member of Church in the City who will be serving as our Conference Director for the April conference.

Pray for ongoing inspiration and speed as I research and write.

Pray for my trip and presentation at the annual NARTH (National Association of Research and Treatment of Homosexuality) conference in Los Angeles, California on November 10-13, 2005.

Pray for a constant base of funding for Ellen's salary, general overhead, and writing expenses.

and

PRAISE God for His faithfulness!

You may send donations to:

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### Desert Hope Ministries

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