

THROUGH

THE

MAZE

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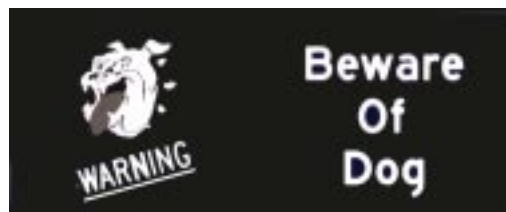
10-99

The Summer Mission Trip:

2,000 came, hundreds were touched, more than twenty-five found Christ

Ed Decker, the founder of *Saints Alive!* and author of *The God Makers*, and I kicked off our summer missions tour with a meeting in Boise on Sunday, July 18th. People who attended that meeting, at Living Faith Church, were greeted by a man handing out a flyer saying Ed and I were bad guys, bad sports, and “in it for the money.” Nevertheless, Pastors Dan and Phyliss Ferguson conducted a rousing worship service that set the tone for the rest of the week.

In the opening meeting, Ed launched a direct and frontal assault on the doctrines of Mormonism by saying, “Let’s start at the beginning of Mormonism—day one at Palmyra, New York.” Ed contended that Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, either saw God in the Palmyra grove (as Smith claimed) or he saw “an angel of light”—a demon. Throughout the week Ed and I pounded away on the proposition that Mormonism was founded in the occult and continues to this day in occult practices, particularly in the Mormon temple ceremony. Ed quoted Jesus from Matthew 5: 34-37 (the warning against swearing blood oaths) “Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.” Although Mormon blood oaths were dropped from the temple cer-



An Area in Conflict

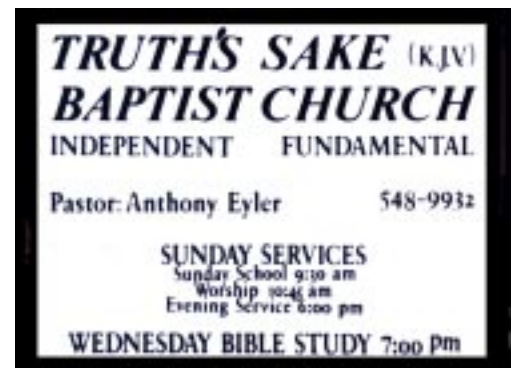
These two signs (one a welcome sign on behalf of Lovell High School) face each other across a road on the edge of Lovell, Wyoming, a town that was ripped apart ten years ago when an Evangelical Christian MD was accused of sexually molesting a dozen Mormon women during examinations. The charges came to light years after the alleged molestations occurred. Lovell, an extremely Mormon town was torn apart as the trial (conducted in my home town, Basin) set Mormons against Christians. The physician has been in prison for nearly a decade and faces at least that much more time.

The juxtaposition of the two signs spoke to me of the division which cuts through scores of small communities in Mormon America. In parts of Mormondom, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints not only rules the religious atmosphere, but often the political, educational, judicial, and economic realms as well.

These communities are in as much need of evangelization as they were 100 years ago. People outside the area have a difficult time imagining what it is like to live in the State of Deseret, a great egg-shaped area which occupies Utah and much of Idaho as well as large parts of Wyoming, Nevada, Arizona, Washington, Oregon, and California.

emony in 1990, the secret handshakes and their cloak of secrecy are still employed.

During the Boise meeting, I spoke about the Blood of Jesus and referenced several of the old Hymns such as “Power in the Blood” and “There is a Fountain Filled with Blood.” I noticed that a young man on the front row became quite agitated during this part of my presentation. After the meeting he was the center of a fairly heated discussion with a few of the people who attended the meeting. He said he was a Catholic, but



he was very critical of my message. Subsequently, he revealed that he actually was a Latter-day Saint.

One of my friends, Glenn Miles, who is active in the ministry to Mormons, reminded me that he has seen a number of Mormons come to my meetings and misrepresent themselves as Christians. Glenn pointed out that this deceptiveness is part of a pattern when Mormons encounter Christians. Mormon missionaries, for example, employ various deceptions during the presentation of the

Summer Tour. . .

Church's six missionary lessons. One example is their failure to mention that Mormonism teaches that men may become gods, one of their cardinal teachings.

Pocatello

Monday night we filled Goranson Hall at Idaho State University. It was an emotion charged evening with half a dozen Mormon missionaries present. At the end of the meeting, while I was praying for those making first time commitments to Christ, one of the missionaries came to the front of the meeting and began to harass Ed Decker. The missionary wanted the microphone to refute our "lies." Ed asked him to wait until I was done praying so he could talk to him, but the missionary continued to grow more agitated and more disruptive. Finally, Ed stood up and asked some of the men in the audience to restrain the young man. I have written a letter to the Pocatello Mission President about the matter.

Several people made commitments to Christ in the meeting. One particularly interesting story concerns a young man who had been emailing me for some time about his wife. The man said he was Eastern Orthodox and his wife was a Mormon. He told me he and she had been arguing religion for months and that their relationship was deteriorating. I counseled him to take it slow and to exercise patience.

He told me he was going to bring her to the meeting—and he did so. She didn't respond to the message, but a week or so later the young man called me to tell me that *he* had gotten saved in the meeting! He said he had been religious, but he now had a personal relationship with Christ. Wow. I never cease to be amazed.

Tuesday morning, Pastor Mike Stamper, who had arranged the Pocatello meeting, set us up to tape a television show to air on public access TV in Pocatello. Ed and I returned to our subjects from the night before. That tape should be available from our ministries in the near future. Special thanks to

Kings Way Book Store and its owner, Bruce Webb, for helping publicize the Pocatello meeting.

Idaho Falls

Another great meeting at New Life Assembly of God, which is pastored by Mike Stearns. The meeting was conducted by my friend David Grasso of Living Faith Christian Center. Two significant commitments to Christ occurred—a young woman and an older man. The man told me he had been going to church with one of his grown children. "Tonight," he said, "all my questions were answered!"

I saw lots of old friends. (I pastored in Idaho Falls from 1980 through 1989). After the meeting Ed and I drove four

**He brought his Mormon wife to the meeting. . .
. . .but *he* got saved!**

hours to Bozeman, Montana. We got there about 2:00 AM.

Perhaps I was already getting a little groggy because the next morning when Ed and I went to breakfast, the hostess asked us for a name so she could seat us when there was a table. I thought she asked how many were in our party so I said "two." She said, "Two?" And I replied, "Yes, two."

She then asked me for my first name. By this time I figured out what was going on, but since I was so far down the road I told her my first name was "Juan." She really looked perplexed, but later came to seat the "Juan Two" party.

Billings

We spoke, Wednesday night, at Faith Chapel, the Foursquare Church in Billings, Montana. Pastor Stan Simmons hosted a packed house (I would guess at least 500 people). Ed and I shared the microphone in that meeting, the first time we have done anything like that. It went very well.

Cody

Pastor Kenny Lee hosted our Cody, Wyoming meeting at the Holiday Inn. As we were checking in, the desk clerk asked us if one of us was the notorious Ed Decker. When Ed identified himself, another clerk said, "Well, I'm LDS." We invited him to the meeting.

That evening the meeting was small, but included lots of teenagers. During Ed's part of the seminar, the LDS desk clerk came in, tapped me on the shoulder, and asked if he could be put on our mailing list. He had been listening off and on at the door.

A couple of weeks after the meeting, Pastor Lee emailed me to say that one of the Mormon girls who came to the meeting had subsequently made a commitment to Christ.

In spite of its size, the Cody meeting was a key one. I felt we made a spiritual breakthrough in that very Mormon town.

Worland

Worland, Wyoming Assembly of God, pastored by Joe Sanchez was a personal oasis for me. The worship service was so refreshing that I gave up fifteen minutes of my speaking

time and asked them to continue praising God.

This presentation sticks out in my mind because I had the impression that a Latter-day Saint in the meeting was at a crucial crossroads. I slowed down and focused on the occult roots of Mormonism until I was sure no one could leave the meeting without understanding that the things Ed and I were saying were extremely important. I remember saying, "Don't you dare sit there and tell yourself I am lying about these things! Check it out for yourself!"

In attendance at our meeting was Judge Gary Hartman, the presiding judge in the famous "Doc" trial in Lovell, Wyoming. That trial, if you are not aware of it, was the prosecution of a Christian medical doctor who was accused, by numerous Mormon women of sexually molesting them during examinations. The doctor was convicted and is serving a long sentence in the Wyoming penitentiary.

Greybull

Again, another small, but important meeting. I saw many of my old friends there. (I was born and raised only eight miles away in Basin, Wyoming.) The host, CMA pastor John Henderson, has had me in his church on two

Utah wakes up to (but doesn't *own* up to) the shame of polygamy"

More than 100 years ago the Mormon Church received a very convenient revelation to suspend polygamy so that Utah could become a state. This summer the issue of polygamy topped the list of headline making stories in Utah.

Why has this subject arisen again? Several reasons. First, sexual immorality is so rampant in this country that polygamy has been allowed to blossom throughout the United States, but particularly in the West and most particularly, of course, in Utah. I have visited polygamous communities with populations of several hundred in Utah, Arizona, and Montana. If we are going to disregard the attack on the family in the form of rampant adultery and fornication, it should not be amazing that we disregard polygamy. If cohabitation is none of the state's business, then how can polygamy be? It is ludicrous to punish polygamy, in which a man makes some formal commitment to his plural sexual partners, if we are not going to punish rampant sexual promiscuity.

We don't seem to understand any more that sexual immorality undermines the entire fabric of society. It creates latch-key kids and welfare moms. When the state doesn't take an interest in helping women protect themselves from philandering males, society plummets into the gutter. I could write pages on this subject. Suffice it to say that since we have sunk to new moral lows, since our com-



Carmen Thompson: polygamist wife turned comedienne, turned activist.

Polygamy is alive in Mormondom

•Utah State Rep. proposed, and the Utah House initially passed, a proposal to study of "what actions would need to be taken to eliminate the legal prohibitions regarding the practice of polygamy."

Believe it or Not!

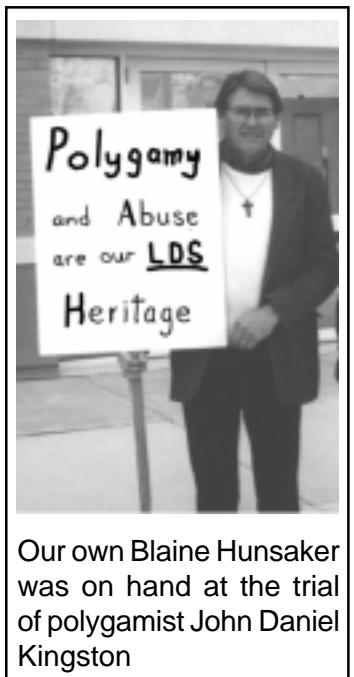
•In 1982 an anti-polygamy law provision within the Idaho State Constitution was finally removed. The law had barred from voting, serving on juries, and holding public office those who "advocate celestial or patriarchal marriage." And the measure only passed by a 65% to 35% margin.

munity conscience is so seared, polygamists seize the opportunity to practice their sick craft.

What finally happened to get the government's attention? Guess what, the ruined lives left in the wake of polygamy fell upon the state welfare roles and Utah nodded awake. Who is going to support the offspring of men who sprinkle chil-

dren like seed, live off the sweat of their wives work and then trade in the aging for the nubile? Turns out the state is!

So now, Utah's Attorney General has come up with a plan to rescue the abandoned children. A year ago Attorney General Graham "Five Point Plan to Reach Crime Victims in Polygamist communities." She said the



Our own Blaine Hunsaker was on hand at the trial of polygamist John Daniel Kingston

state would target statutory rape, incest, and unlawful cohabitation (with an underage child). She is also interested in "cohabitant abuse"

(wife abuse).

Of course, the Mormon Church continues to understand the horror of this ungodly institution. When Larry King asked the Mormon Church President about the polygamy flap in Utah, he said only, "We have distanced ourselves from it."

A Unique Perspective

A little over a year ago a new social

Summer Tour. . .

or three occasions. My “second father,” Stan Johnson, was in the meeting. Wes Clare, an Episcopal Priest who attended the meeting shared with me that the Episcopal Church is undergoing an Evangelical revival in Wyoming. He was very excited about it.

Sheridan

Sheridan was the icing on the cake of a very successful week of meetings. Sheridan had been tacked on at the end of our tour sort of as an afterthought. We had not planned on going there, but we were invited by Deb and Wilbur Holz. Wilbur is associate pastor at a Lutheran Church. The meeting was held at First Baptist Church. The Holz’ had done the legwork to turn out a crowd which jammed the church to overflowing. I estimate there were 300-400 people present.

I felt my part of the presentation was the best I had done in the series. I was not my normal Pentecostal self in the meeting. I slowed way, way down and very seriously dealt with the occult roots of Mormonism. I don’t know if I have ever preached in that style before. Certainly not for the entire 45 minutes. Again, I felt as though I were speaking to some people who were at critical junctures in their spiritual quest.

After I got home, one man—a self-described agnostic—has now entered into a friendly email dialogue with me.

I cannot overemphasize the value of this ministry tour. The hands-on contact with prime candidates for conversion breathed life into me and will affect my ministry for months. As a result, I am committing myself to spend more time on the road in an attempt to influence as many people as I possibly can.



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(My sincere thanks to Don Meyers who used to have a license plate “yrulds” on his car in Utah. And to Craig Verdi who has encouraged me with this idea)

Polygamy. . .

organization was formed in Salt Lake City. Tapestry of Polygamy (1268 West 500 North, 84116—also see polygamy.org) is headed up by Vicky Prunty and Carmen Thompson, both former polygamous wives. This organization has been extremely effective in educating the public about the abuses of modern polygamy in the West.

In June I interviewed Carmen Thomson at the organizations offices. I first became aware of Carmen listening to her late night BBC radio interview. I was especially interested that her ticket out of an abusive polygamous relationship was comedy! She began a career as a stand-up comedienne, doing night clubs throughout the West. She said, “I did jokes about polygamy. The audience didn’t always know I wasn’t making the stuff up.”

Carmen was raised in a Mormon home. As a young girl, all she wanted to do was to be married in the LDS Temple. Her Primary told her she needed to be married in the Temple because “there would be more women than men in heaven.” She also learned about polygamy at that time.

When she became a teenager and began studying the history of Mormonism she came to the same conclusion a lot of honest Mormons do: If polygamy was given by God as “the new and everlasting commandment” it should still be in effect.

Carmen was ripe for a sharp polygamist to convert her. That happened. She was married at age 20 in a Fundamentalist Mormon sect while going to Salt Lake Business College. She believed God was leading her into the patriarchal system. Carmen was the sixth of what would eventually be eight wives of a plural marriage. Carmen had four children in that marriage.

As time went on her husband (who “worked six months during their thirteen years of marriage”) became more and more abusive. He made the women work and said that state aid was “prepayment” from a corrupt government. Carmen

learned to glean food from dumpsters.

Her break came when she answered an ad to learn how to do stand-up comedy. Her husband thought it was a good idea because he believed she could earn a lot of money. What happened, however, was that she began to see that there was another world outside of her tightly controlled community. She began to make plans to break—not with polygamy—but with her husband. She escaped late at night with her children. She spent several years in semi-hiding and in great fear. Eventually she won legal custody of her children.

However. . .

Carmen still believed in the theology of polygamy. But she knew that the system she had experienced was very abusive. In that condition, she began to correspond with an “Evangelical” Christian Polygamist through the Internet. He eventually moved to Utah and Carmen married him! It didn’t take long to figure out that his system was as perverted as her former husband’s. By now she was beginning to rethink the whole philosophy of polygamy. She left that marriage after a couple of years.

During the ensuing years Carmen continued to educate herself and support her children. Finally she came to the realization that polygamy was *not* a gift from God at all.

Today Carmen works full-time with Tapestry. She is still working through her years of abuse. Where is she spiritually? She was frank with me on that. She is very skeptical of organized religion. She believes Jesus Christ loves her and she has committed her life to Him. But her theology, as one might expect, is still being formulated. I think she is going to do just fine.

Thank God for people like Carmen and Vicky Prunty, women who have gone through the fire and come out alive. Now they are spending their lives trying to help their sisters.

A New website from Through the Maze

This site will target active Latter-day Saints. We hope to run ads throughout the country simply saying “yrulds.com” We hope to challenge Mormons to think critically about their faith. We won’t pull any punches and we may even offend some, but I believe we will win many. We expect to be up and running by the first of November. mazeministry.com will still be our main ministry website.