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Twenty-Eight Years of Healing, Equipping, and Proclaiming.

For the Good of All

By Andrew Comiskey

The main resistance I hear from Christians friends when I implore them to fight gay marriage is: “Christians should stay out of politics,” or “We should not legislate morality.”



Andrew Comiskey

Now admittedly, if one views the world around him or her as a necessary evil to be tolerated at a distance with those in his or her community of faith, then the conversation ends. But if one takes seriously the public good as an aspect of faith, then we can talk.

As members of a democracy, each of us can have a say in what that public good can be, and how we can influence that good. Yet we do so with care. In a pluralistic culture that values a variety of religious beliefs, we cannot insist that all can or should share our particular faith. Faith informs what we assume the public good to be. Yet we must make our case for the public good using language and reasoning that can be understood by all, not just the faithful.

For me, the public good of marriage is at stake. California’s Supreme Court ruling in May mandated ‘gay marriage’ and in so doing interjected evil into the most important institution of civilized society. In resisting the Court, I am not asserting anything radically evangelistic upon the masses. Informed by ‘the great cloud of witnesses’ that surrounds the Judeo-Christian tradition of marriage, I am simply seeking to protect the true and historic definition of marriage. For the good of all.

It is naïve and short-sighted for any Christian to stand idly by while gay activists change the DNA of marriage. It justifies an apt criticism of American faith which Pope Benedict XVI made during his recent trip to the USA. He noted the coexistence of strong faith and an equally strong secular society; he observed how that divide resulted in Americans not living out the beliefs they espoused. “Thus, there is a growing separation of faith from life... We need to reassess the values underpinning society, so that a sound moral foundation can be offered to young people and adults alike.”

Let’s seek to consider how we might live out a commitment to the values that underlie marriage. Then we can (and I think should) ask how we might influence others to resist gay marriage. For the good of all. **DSM**

Inside . . .

- For the Good of All1
- Overcoming Brokenness through the Beauty of God’s Image2-3
- Eight Reasons to Resist Gay Marriage5
- Springing the Trap6
- Destroying the Dividing Wall of Hostility7
- Corporate Corner8

Overcoming Brokenness *through the*

Annette and I had a great honeymoon. 27 years ago, almost to this day, we spent one glorious night at the Beverly Hills Hotel, right in the center of Los Angeles. Besides the splendid things one does on a honeymoon, we had time to reflect upon how meaningful our wedding ceremony had been.

Desert Stream was just a year old, and many of the friends who attended the wedding were the first round of men and women to gather with us weekly in West Hollywood for healing and community; they were seeking by God's grace to leave the gay identity and lifestyle behind.

Our new marriage had prophetic power to urge all onward to the best God had for them. Though broken, many were coming to reckon with the truth that through God's mercy, they too were heirs to what it meant to bear God's image.

Unbeknownst to us, Annette and I together conveyed that hope. Not only does Jesus save us from our sins, He also saves us for becoming a gift to the opposite gender.

Our wedding celebrated the mercy that makes all things new. Our honeymoon punctuated that truth. But a strange thing happened as we sought to leave Beverly Hills. We could not get out! It seems we were married on the weekend of the gay parade. (We have since discovered that June is National Gay Pride Month, and in LA at least that weekend is its epicenter.) Due to roads being closed for the parade, we were hemmed in on all sides by men and women celebrating another kind of liberty.

A little bit of heaven in the hotel, a little bit of hell outside of the hotel. We finally did get out of town (for the rest of our honeymoon). And our marriage not only endured; it flourished! Yet today in 2008 the frenzied energy of that gay parade has taken a strange and disturbing twist. Last May (2008), the California Supreme Court ruled in favor of several gay couples demanding marital rights and overturned

a voter-based initiative that 8 years earlier declared that marriage would be defined as solely heterosexual in California.

The implications are huge. That means any gay couple can go to California, get legally married, then seek to overturn in their state any laws that define marriage as heterosexual. How? Through the courts. It happened in California; it can happen anywhere in the USA.

But do you know what the California courts really did? They took God's image in their own hands and said: 'Let's reconfigure it. Let's make ourselves an image that seems right to us.' The creature has asserted its independence from the Creator in the most brazen way possible.

"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil..." (Is. 5:20)

"For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry." (1Sam. 23:16)

My prayer in these days? "Lord, have mercy. In Your wrath, which is wholly justified, remember mercy." (Hab. 3:2)

Besides prayer, how do we respond? How do we make it through the entanglements that Annette and I experienced symbolically many years ago, and that we all must face legally and morally today?

We must commit ourselves afresh to God's image in humanity, who man will be for woman, and who woman will be for man. God chose to manifest Himself on the earth as male and female. And He ordained marriage as the commitment we make with our bodies to join with this other for life.



Beauty of God's Image

By Andrew Comiskey

Genesis 1: 26, 27 is the thesis for God's image in humanity, and Genesis 2: 18-25 spells out the specifics of the unique expression of God's image known as marriage. The New Testament reinforces this mandate in many places but most succinctly in Hebrews 13: 4 which declares: 'Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure...'

Image-bearing involves complementarity: realizing that all of life is a duality between the masculine and feminine. That means honoring and dignifying that duality in our most basic relationships. It applies to marriage but goes beyond it; God calls us to take every opportunity to honor the other's difference, whether at work, church, or in opposite sex friendship.

Image-bearing also involves the capacity to form meaningful emotional commitments with the opposite gender and to reserve sexual unions for the one we marry. That means respecting and upholding the boundaries of those to whom we are not married.

The goal of image-bearing is to manifest the Creator of that image in how we love the opposite gender: we seek to confirm the goodness of the other through our love, not to provoke confusion, fear, or lust in the other.

I came upon a 17th century painting by Rembrandt last month; entitled 'The Jewish Bride', it conveys tenderly the power of man for woman and woman for man.

Rembrandt painted a beautiful picture. But many of us aren't free to see its beauty. We view the image through a broken lens. The brokenness in our own lives may make it difficult to believe that we are a part of God's image-bearing creation, or that we even desire to be a part of it.

Our starting point may be abuse, same-sex attraction, or addictive lust. It may be divorce. Or maybe a frustrating, prolonged season of singleness. It may be fear of the other, the tendency to control the other, or the temptation to disregard the other altogether.

Recognizing the breadth of our brokenness helps us. In the light of the gay marriage crisis, it frees us to discover a vital truth: homosexuality is but one of the fallen facets of God's image in humanity. As we discover ourselves along the continuum of the broken image, it frees us to lay down our arms toward what confuses and even disgusts us about homosexuality.

Most importantly, it frees us to discover God's mercy where we need it most. And to give it away, particularly toward those dealing with homosexuality. If God has not acted disgustedly toward us in our particular brokenness, how can we continue to rage against homosexuals, however militant they may seem?

God is faithful. Regardless of our starting points, His mercy and His intention for humanity prevails. He calls us to make peace with the beautiful truth of man for woman and woman for man. That is His call for every human being. Why? Because every human being bears His image; His image is what most defines our humanity. What God calls us to be, He enables us to realize.

Whether we marry or not is not the issue. It is simply a matter of agreeing with God: 'You have made me to realize my humanity in honorable relations with the opposite gender. And You have ordained marriage as one man for one woman, committed to permanence and fidelity, who in turn commit themselves to the new life which results from that union.'

Any other configuration desecrates God's image; gay marriage leaches the light of one man for one woman, and weakens the capacity of kids to realize that commitment themselves.

Maybe real life conveys it better than a picture. While boarding a plane the other day, I observed a pregnant woman in some distress. She and her husband barely made the flight; the husband then had to make a significant effort to find room for their bags on board.

She quietly began to weep; when the husband returned, he tenderly gathered her up in his arms. As his presence strengthened and consoled her, she rested. The baby within her rested. That is the beauty of God's image in humanity.

Next to me on the plane sat a man who was a homosexual. He was kind and funny yet insistent: he wanted me to know that his long-term partnership was normal and should be blessed by the culture. But as he spoke of their distinct and childless lives, and how they exercise the freedom to release one another to temporary lovers, I thought: "That is not a marriage. You are describing a room mate with whom you occasionally share a bed, but you are not describing a marriage."

Marriage belongs to one woman and one man, pledged to permanence and fidelity, for the sake of all, especially for the kids they create. It existed long before the nations codified it. It existed long before California had the nerve to reconfigure it.

Marriage is pre-political. As the main expression of God's image in humanity, marriage is rooted in the heart of our Creator. We honor God by honoring marriage. We do so by declaring all other definitions null and void.

A good friend of mine, Steve, is a pastor in the northwest. He loves people well, including his family, who for the most part do not share his faith. Included there is a gay brother who recently moved to Europe 'to marry' his boyfriend. His brother invited Steve to his 'wedding'. Steve refused simply based on the fact that in spite of his brother's best intentions, gay marriage does not exist in God's reality. Choosing a higher allegiance, Steve could not attend what is in essence a non-reality.

His brother was deeply offended. He could not imagine how a Christian could not bless his special day. Actually, Steve loved his brother well. He chose to please God rather than man. In so doing, Steve

Continued on Page 4

Overcoming Brokenness...

Continued from Page 3

made the truth blessedly, painfully, clear to his brother.

Severe mercy is harder to extend than the sentimental love we often dole out, deceiving ourselves into believing that we are being 'loving.' Sentiment detached from truth is not love at all. It is self-protection. We are merely defending ourselves from the inevitable conflict between truth and well-intentioned delusion.

We love people and honor marriage by defining it as God does. In that way, we cannot grant gay loved ones and their sympathizers what they want. We cannot concede marriage to them. But we can give them what they need: the true image of God manifested in whole heterosexual unions.

I recently met a Latin man who asserted his homosexuality brazenly to me. That invited (provoked) me to assert who I was: I shared my testimony that centered around my journey out of homosexuality and into marriage. He flippantly responded that he had relationships with many married men.

I then made clear to him the truth of my faithfulness to Annette and the truth of God's will for marriage: one man, one woman, committed to permanence and fidelity. In spite of many temptations to the contrary I made known to him the power of Christ and His community to keep a weak man like me sure in his commitment to the one I love most.

I also told him that any sexual action outside of marriage damages God's best for humanity. Unintentionally, his addictions had visited spiritual violence upon a host of faceless ones—wives, sons and daughters.

He was honestly shocked. In his culture, married men routinely have affairs; he had not considered the greater impact of his actions. He needed a higher vision of what God's best for humanity. He needed to know the beauty of God's image. And he needed to know that his choices had con-

sequences. Most importantly, he needed mercy. Our long conversation broke ground for all of the above.

Those under the power of the broken image need the true image of God in humanity. We manifest that image by loving them well. I want to make that truth known in my sphere of influence. Yet I want more than a 'canned testimony'; I want to live the truth that I proclaim. That means growing in our freedom to dignify and honor the opposite sex.

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In the last year, God has been convicting me of some of the ways that I do not love Annette well. And at the same time, He has been opening my eyes to new dimensions of her beauty and value.

Perhaps the two go together: God's grace to renew our vision of love for the other, and in that mirror, to view uneasily the haggard ways we fail to love. Then, forgiven and enlivened to love better, we can determine to cherish that one more authentically.

God delights in renewing our commitment to His image. I am grateful for the renewal I have been experiencing of late. I feel more

sober in my commitment to love Annette and yet also more joy and gratitude as to this one God has given me to love!

I am more aware than ever that my freedom depends upon giving freely to her. Our wholeness depends upon how I value her difference from me, and how I steward the boundaries that keep our emotional and physical offerings to one another exclusive and rich.

I love God's image in humanity! In love, I can engage assertively with hellish opposition to that image. I can war against gay marriage out of something far more powerful and creative. That requires an allegiance to the truth of God's will. More than that, it involves a commitment to living out that truth by honoring God's image in humanity. That is a choice I make daily, beginning with how I treat my wife.

For our 27th anniversary, Annette and I shall return to California. We arrive on the day that clerks throughout the state begin to issue gay marriage licenses. The thought chills me and provokes me to prayerful activism. Pray for the citizens of California to go to the polls in Nov. and overturn the Supreme Court's gay marriage decision!

My hope extends deeper than the political process and its uncertainties. On two things I stand: Jesus lives, and He lives in my marriage—He manifests His very image through it! Annette and I began our marriage trying to break out of a gay parade. We reenter California 27 years later as thousands from around the USA converge in order to desecrate that image through gay marriage.

Where sin abounds, grace will abound all the more, and manifest His truth. Annette and I, along with thousands of others, will continue to flourish as His image-bearers. We manifest that image for all who have eyes to see, and ears to hear. The beauty of God's image has power to overcome its brokenness. **DSM**

Eight Reasons *to Resist Gay Marriage*

1 'Gay marriage' radically redefines the meaning of marriage.

Marriage is the most basic and arguably the most important building block of civilized society. For thousands of years, society has made marriage the one context in which sexual attraction between a man and woman matures into an enduring, exclusive unit that creates and protects children.

Marriage has always been defined by gender complementarity, or gender unity within difference, and by commitment, a pledge of permanence and fidelity. 'Gay marriage' radically alters that definition, and the values that underlie it. To say that the definition of an apple must include the attributes of an orange changes the meaning of an apple. It ceases to be what it was. Similarly, 'gay marriage' changes the meaning of marriage as it has always been understood by civilized society.

A wise man said that 'the corruption of society begins by a failure to call things by their proper names.' I refuse to ascribe marriage to homosexual unions based on the original and true meaning of marriage. That is why I use quotes to reference the misnomer of 'gay marriage.' I urge you to do the same.

2 'Gay Marriage' devalues gender differences in human relating.

'Gay marriage' is founded on the premise that gender should no longer matter in sexual relationships. For example, California marriage licenses have replaced the language of 'Bride and Groom' with 'Partner 1 and Partner 2'.

'Gay marriage' removes the centerpiece of marriage: how one gender provokes and balances the opposite gender, creating (besides children) an emotional, spiritual, and sexual whole. Instead, 'gay marriage' redefines sexual wholeness as the freedom to desire and wed whomever one wants, regardless of gender. That undermines the inner logic of man for woman, and woman for man, and makes freedom from that logic optional for all.

3 'Gay Marriage' devalues monogamy.

'Gay marriage' tweaks the meaning of fidelity. Gay men in particular tend toward tolerating multiple sexual partnerships in the context of a commitment to one partner. A marriage license will not change that tendency.

J. Michael Bailey, Chair of Psychology at Northwestern University and one of the foremost researchers in homosexuality, contends that "regardless of marital laws and policies, gay men will always have more sexual partners than straight people do. Those who are attached will be less monogamous."

4 'Gay Marriage' is founded on a false understanding of homosexuality.

California's gay marriage decision is founded on a 1948 Court decision (*Perez v. Sharp*) to strike down a state ban on interracial marriages. That means today's Court equates ethnicity with homosexuality. Bad reasoning. Unlike ethnicity, homosexuality is neither genetically-based nor immutable.

Same-sex attraction is a three-fold cord of nature, nurture, and culture, all bound together by one's moral decisions. The fact is: many choose to change their homosexuality, and find peace and purpose in heterosexual relationships. 'Gay marriage' advocates refuse that truth and insist that homosexuality is destiny, which is a false understanding.

5 'Gay Marriage' makes its opponents racists.

Based on #4, those who oppose gay marriage will be seen as bigots. 'Gay marriage' validates as normal and good the problematic, complex condition of same-sex attraction; all who choose to view that attraction as a problem not a birthright will inevitably be accorded the same social shame and even legal consequences that racists incur.

6 'Gay Marriage' encourages and increases homosexual behavior.

Over the last 50 years, homosexual behavior has increased due to media advocacy, our culture of divorce, porn, and promiscuity, and the greater economic and emotional independence of women from men. Validating 'gay marriage' will further encourage men and women to explore homosexual unions.

Social shame used to inhibit homosexual experimentation; 'gay marriage' casts off the last restraint, and increases homosexual behavior in our society. Between 1995 and 2005, lesbian unions in the USA increased 7 times, while male unions doubled.

7 'Gay Marriage' opens the door to other types of 'marriage.'

In changing the meaning of marriage to include infidelity and gender sameness, 'gay marriage' sets a precedent for other types of units, like incest and polygamy. Legal cases involving polygamy now invoke the same legal precedents of gay rights advocates. What seemed unthinkable 10 years ago is now 'gay marriage' law. We flinch until we become sensitized, then we flinch no more.

8 'Gay Marriage' unleashes a global legal nightmare.

'Gay marriage' will clog the courts with myriad issues. Already, married gay couples are demanding marriage rights wherever they settle, regardless of the current laws of that state or nation. Not to mention the hundreds of cases in the USA alone concerning a host of bewildering issues, like gay divorce and custody of artificially inseminated offspring.

The profound needs and fragility of soul at the core of same-sex unions will make for messy and consuming court battles—all within an already beleaguered system that has no precedents for the legal Medusa that 'gay marriage' has created. **DSM**

Springing *the Trap*

By Christie May Jessee

I feel compelled to add my voice to the ongoing discussion regarding the legalizing of same sex marriage in California. I am distressed that the people of California are allowing the homosexual political agenda to progress so far and cause so much damage to our society in general and same sex strugglers in particular.



Christie May Jessee I feel compelled to add my voice to the ongoing discussion regarding the legalizing of same sex marriage in California. I am distressed that the people of California are allowing the homosexual political agenda to progress so far and cause so much damage to our society in general and same sex strugglers in particular.

A few loud, wealthy and determined individuals who have banded together to form a political block are now manipulating the government in a way that will strip hope from those who desperately need it.

My heart breaks for those who are trying to understand why they are attracted to someone of the same gender and what they are going to do about it. The cry for legalizing same sex marriage is the cry of the un-affirmed for affirmation. Those deeply enmeshed in the homo-

“...the homosexual agenda seeks to tip those on the fence into the mud pit of sin — seeking to add to their numbers and further legitimize their brokenness.”

sexual lifestyle are desperate for society to legitimize their unions.

But this would be the cruelest thing for Christians to do. Just as a loving Christian would never take an alcoholic into a bar and give him free drinks 24/7, a truly loving Christian cannot legitimize homosexual behavior. To do so would be to hand the struggler over to Satan with no possible way out. Christians have the responsibility to fight for lost souls at the polls as well as in their personal lives.

In my walk out of lesbianism, and in ministering to fellow strugglers, I have encountered many people trying to make sense of their struggle and asking “Is this just the way I am? Is this what I am going to live with?” Often these people are young men and women who don’t yet know who they are or what they’re about. They are looking for truth, they are wondering where God is in their struggle, and they are afraid that there is no hope for change. The church is the only hope for change for these people.

And as they seek, there is a very strong, evil movement afoot to recruit them to embrace their brokenness, dive into sin and darkness and reject the notion of healing. I have personally experienced these recruiters and they are a strong and convincing force indeed. Much like cult leaders, promising fulfillment and meaning, the homosexual agenda seeks to tip those on the fence into the mud pit of sin – seeking to add to their numbers and further legitimize their brokenness.

Legalization of same sex marriage would be a mighty weapon in their favor, essentially ‘normalizing’ that which can never bring life. I would think parents in particular, Christian or otherwise, would be well



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By those who chose to be my
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advised not to put such a weapon in their hands, lest their easily confused children be drawn into the trap of being blessed in their sexual brokenness.

How is the trap sprung? By those who chose to be my friends, accepting me in my struggle, but offering me hope to change. Uncompromising Christians who were able to minister both love and truth in a way I could not refuse. Now is the time for Christians in California to stand up and administer this profound blessing: prayerfully, politically and personally.

Christie lives with her husband Erick, and their daughter Joanna, in Kansas City. They both serve as lay leaders in Living Waters. DSM

Destroying *the Dividing Wall of Hostility*

“For He Himself is our peace who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,” Ephesians 2:14



By Ann Armstrong

Last month the Lord fulfilled this verse in a beautiful and profound way. It was the Tuesday afternoon at the Living Waters training in Argentina. The leadership team gathered to share and pray for the evening session.

After we debriefed about our small groups, Andy took a poll of the leaders. He asked how many were aware of infidelity in their parents' or grandparents' marriages. Of the Latin team members, about 20 men and women, all but 2 raised their hand.

From what I understand these men and women and their family members offer an accurate picture of the moral climate in their different Latin American nations. Mauricio Montion, the Coordinator of Aguas Vivas in Argentina, recounted how marital infidelity has been the norm in his country for many decades.

The weightiness of this reality gave a fresh urgency to our prayers for the evening session. The immediacy of our need for God's mercy and power was so evident. We cried out for God to come with clarity and truth, to give the participants fresh grace to see, name and renounce their sin and idolatry. We asked to dismantle the strongholds keeping many captive, the beliefs and practices that had set themselves up against the knowledge of God (1 Cor 10:15).

That night Andy spoke of God's intent for us as men and women—the power of the 'imago dei', and God's desire for us to bless and honor the good in each other. At core that involved the plan He began in Genesis with Adam and Eve, for us to be agents of His love and truth for each other as marrieds and singles.

He shared the results of his informal poll, and how he believed the high rate of marital infidelity allowed sin and idolatry to take hold in the nations represented. Like the people of Israel, he made it clear we get to choose who we will serve, to whom and what we give our affections and allegiance.

The prophet Elijah challenged his countrymen, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If Yahweh is God, follow him, but if Baal is God, follow him.” (1 Ki 17:21).

Andy asked us to consider our idolatry, the ways in which we had wavered. He challenged us to acknowledge our complicity to the other gods we or our family members had worshipped.

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All but a few of the participants came forward for the prayers of renunciation. The prayer ministry time was extensive, marked by sobriety among all those present.

Raul Morales, a leader living and ministering with his wife and family in Mexico, shares how the evening impacted him:

“Hearing Andy speak about the power of idolatry was significant for me. Things became clearer, and I realized that idolatry (regardless of what I call it or how it manifests) was getting in the way of my relationship with God. It was hard to accept that

my rebellion was against God's will, and my own self-image. I felt there was no longer any place to hide my idols. I was encouraged to identify and renounce them, and to stand firm in my decision to follow God, regardless of how it feels or what needs to be done.”

Like Raul, many others choose to stand and reaffirm their allegiance to God that night. It came at a cost. As the men and women present made this decision in prayer, the heaviness in the room began to be replaced by peace and expectancy.

When we began to worship and celebrate what God had done, spontaneous dancing slowly broke out. A couple from Bolivia began to lead out in dance while circling the room. Each time they circled more and more people joined in. Men and women joined hands, coming together to celebrate the freedom and joy they felt. Those dancing continually grabbed the hands of those they passed and made a place for all who wanted to join the circle. The dance gave us a fun and wonderful opportunity to embrace the unity God established through our prayers.

I have been at this teaching more times than I can remember and have never seen or experienced such a beautiful example of the joyful unity God intends for us to have as his sons and daughters. I witnessed joy and delight in the good of the other, and a willingness to stand together, no matter what. As we embrace these qualities, I believe God will continue to give us the grace we need to join Him in the battle.

Ann lives in Kansas City and is the Intercession Coordinator for Desert Stream. DSM

Corporate Corner



By Annette Comiskey

“Summertime and the livin’ is easy” has often described the pace of office life for Desert Stream. But not this summer! Even though our staff is leaner than usual (5 staff, one intern, one ‘summer temp’ and a faithful volunteer) we are busier than I can remember.

Andy and team went to Chicago for a conference at the Evanston Vineyard – it was time of sowing generously into deep soil. The Evanston Vineyard is an amazing church. Its sponsorship combined with the equally amazing job that Amy Donaldson does in building up the upper Midwest region created a solid offering that benefited all.

Right after Andy’s return, he and I went to California – me on vacation, Andy meeting with many supporters, pastors and Desert Stream leaders. On the forefront of Andy’s mind and all the California newspapers was the states initiation of gay marriage. Your

response to our appeal for prayer and support has been heartening. We feel greatly encouraged. We are focused in our efforts to fortify the Californians who are committed to overturning the gay marriage mandate in November.

Andy joined with Portland (OR) leaders for a citywide conference in early July. Back at the office we continued to prepare for Egress. Egress is our first young adult conference aimed particularly at college aged students seeking keys to whole relationships.

In August I begin tackling the long awaited revision of SOULutions. We will also finish the production on new appendixes for the Living Waters manual.

Andy will be preaching in churches around Kansas City where we continue to build local groups in welcoming churches.

Finally, we continue to rely on your prayers. They are needed in this focused time of battle. Andy will writing a 40 day devotional leading up to the election. Stay tuned for more details! **DSM**



Mid-Year 2008

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DESERT STREAM MINISTRIES
PUBLISHES THE FOLLOWING:

Newsletter (Spring and Fall)
Mid-Year Report (Summer)
Year-End Report (Winter)

Mission Statement

Based on the biblical foundations of compassion, integrity, and dependence on God, Desert Stream Ministries proclaims to the world the transforming power of Jesus Christ. We equip the body of Christ to minister healing to the sexually and relationally broken, through healing groups and leadership training for the local church.

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L E A D E R S H I P



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