

Full Time Mission Message #14

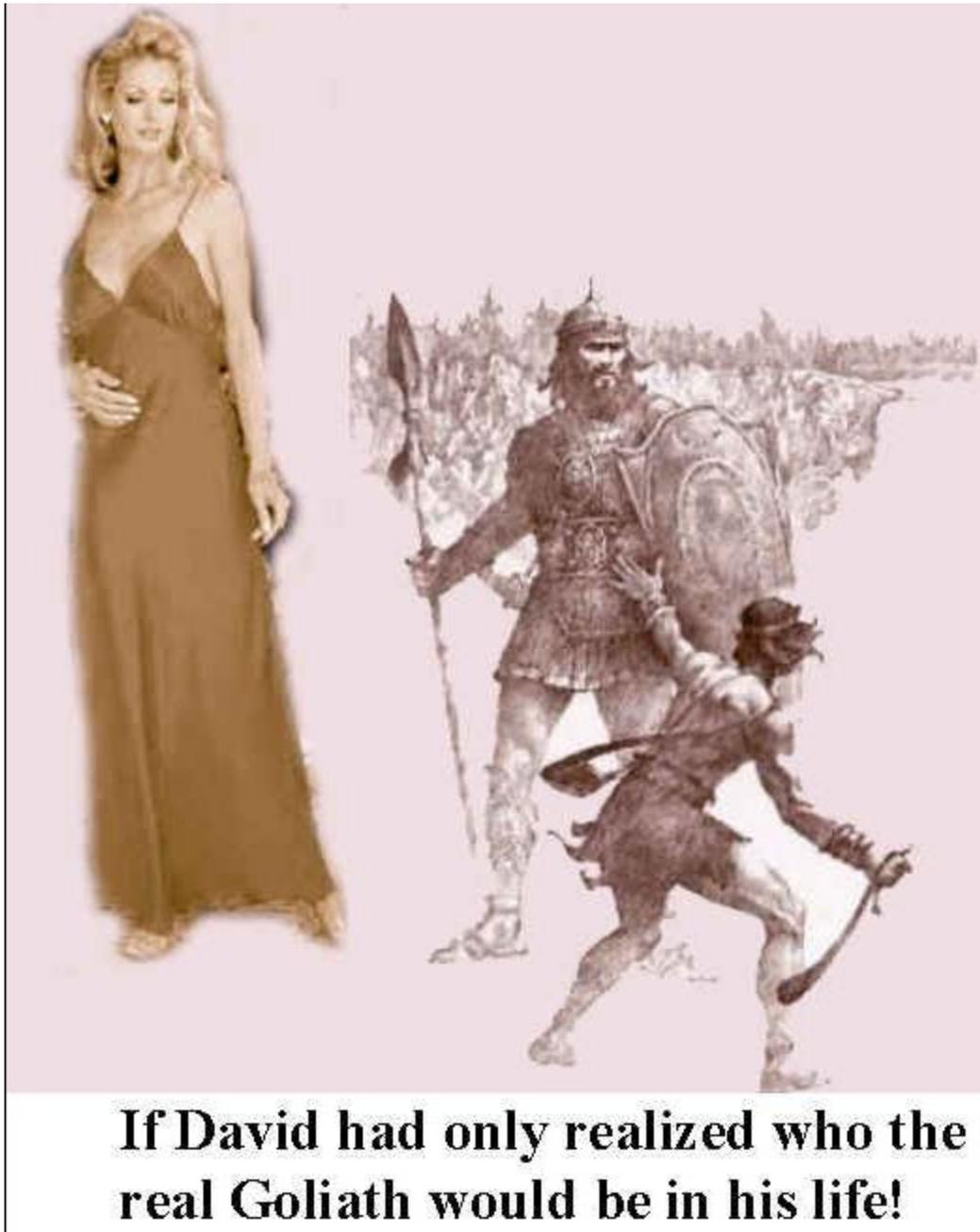
Elder / Sister xxxxx,

MORAL CONVERSION

Most people in the world live in a very different moral culture than we do as members of the church. Therefore in this day and age one of the biggest challenges to new members of the church is being converted culturally as well as spiritually. But in this day and age they also have to be converted MORALLY. It has been our experience over the years that when new converts fall away, in most instances it is a social or cultural difference that causes the beginnings of their leaving not spiritual. They do not stop believing Joseph Smith was a prophet. Rather they often don't feel accepted socially, or even such a simple thing as they do not wear the right clothes to church and feel out of place. Then they fall back in with their old friends, old habits creep back in and then follows the loss of the spirit in their lives. And if immorality is a part of their old habits they will not survive spiritually very long.

We see from sad experience that not just new converts but many long time members of the church are having a hard time separating themselves from the morals of the world. That is partly due to the exposure to immorality on TV, in movies and in magazines, even in advertising. We normally do not fall away as a spiritual blow out but rather as a series of slow leaks in our moral or spiritual life. When people start to break the commandments, many times they decide to change their cultural beliefs to match their conduct rather than change their conduct to match the moral codes of the church. I would assume as a missionary that you have found that teaching morality to the converts is a very high priority.

Years ago our son Nathan drew a picture for me that we have cherished. It is a picture of David and Goliath. It is very similar to the picture the church publishes of David and Goliath but I ask him to add one other thing into the picture. We ask him to add the REAL GOLIATH in David's life. Here is the picture he created for us.



Teaching morality to our contacts is going to be a huge cultural change for them. In this day and age morality is a whole different thing that it was even just a few years ago. If converts cannot make that change and become pure in heart and mind, they will not stay in the church very long. Their old habits will come back to calm them and before long they will be gone. That is why President Hinckley so emphasized retention. It is just as important to retain the people you convert as it is to convert them in the first place. We can promise you that converting them to spiritual purity in mind and deed will be one of the key elements to retention of converts on your mission. We had a friend once who was having fidelity problems. When we talked to her about it she said something that was simply profound. She

said, "It felt so good it made it seem right". It was obvious she was listening to the wrong voices in her mind. She was letting her feelings over power her reasoning. She was not seeing the end from the beginning. Often one of Satan's best tools is to cover up the consequences of our actions by the feelings of the moment.

Time is going by so fast. You will be home before we know it and then for the rest of your life you will talk about "WHEN I WAS ON MY MISSION"... But then you can only remember the things you did. Right now you have the opportunity to create memories worth remembering. And those memories are very closely related to hard work. I know you and trust that you will be a sprinter and work hard every day of your mission right up to the very last day.

We send our prayers and blessing to you.

Brother and Sister Vail

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