

Living Church News

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Faith for Healing

Dear Brethren and Friends,

Greetings from Charlotte! A “wave” of enthusiasm hit my wife and me as we helped conduct the Feast of Tabernacles in Branson, Missouri and in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina! This year’s Feast—according to many accounts—was the best and most inspiring of *any* we have had in our almost 15 years of the Global/Living Church of God. Several “old timers” told me sincerely it was their “best Feast ever”—going clear back to the 1960s and 1970s in the Worldwide Church of God.

We had excellent attendances of more than 1,260 people in Myrtle Beach, and more than 520 each in Branson and in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin. It appears that we had a few more in attendance than we did last year. From *every* area on earth that has reported, we have heard reports of a truly *outstanding* Feast, and excellent comments about the sermons, the activities and especially the warmth, love and joy among the brethren. So it truly appears, brethren, that increasing thousands of God’s people are beginning to realize that they really *are* at the “end of an age,” that those of us remaining have been “tried and tested”—and we are grateful to see the end of this confused society finally coming into sight. Yet we all do realize that it must become “darkest just before the dawn.” We have many trials and tests before our final reward is sure.

Another encouraging point to note is that *several* unusual and very documentable *supernatural healings* were reported in the weeks just before this year’s Feast of Tabernacles! We have already reported to you on some of these in the *World Ahead Weekly Update* which is read at Sabbath services. As many of you know, we have had *two* dramatic healings in the Kansas City area, one in California involving Dr. Jeffrey Fall’s daughter-in-law, and one in Canada.

Above and beyond those, I was delighted at the Feast in Branson to hear from one of our members in the Joplin area, who told me that I had participated in a wonderful recent healing! She thanked me, and I asked her to write briefly the details of this healing so we could all rejoice together. She stated in her handwritten note, “We would like to thank everyone for all the prayers and wonderful cards for Jim. Jim was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. The doctors gave Jim two to three months to live. Jim was anointed by the local ministers and Mr. Meredith. Jim’s cancer is gone into remission! He was diagnosed last Feast. Thanks, Jim & Marla Tallman & Family.”

Thank God that He is beginning to intervene more frequently and more powerfully as we approach the end of the age. Perhaps as the prophetic

events now under way *drive us to our knees*—as we humble ourselves and cry out to Him—more and more of these healings will begin to occur. Let us all remember that, as Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong said repeatedly, “The Church of God moves forward *on its knees!*”

Always remember, brethren, that the very “work of the Gospel” *continually involved* divine healing! As Jesus began His ministry, what did He do? We read: “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan” (Matthew 4:23–25).

Later, Jesus sent out the Twelve with these specific instructions: “And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.... ‘And as you go, preach, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:1, 7–8).

As you know, Jesus later sent out a group of “seventy others”—not apostles, but simply young men acting as servants of Christ. He told these still-unconverted disciples as they went out, “Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. And heal the sick there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’” (Luke 10:8–9). Did they also “cast out demons?” *Indeed, they did!* For Matthew also reports, “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name’” (v. 17).

We constantly *need to remind ourselves* that the practice of “divine healing” is not some “odd” or seldom-talked-about feature of the first-century Church. Rather, it was an *intrinsic part* of preaching the Gospel in that day. As I have explained, in *our day*—because of the great “apostasy” that came over the Church through the rebellion of the recent leaders of the Worldwide Church of God—thousands of people had their *faith* and genuine trust in God for healing all but stamped out! Even for many who finally left that apostate outfit, its attitude of faithlessness affected *their* willingness to trust in God for healing.

So it is *absolutely imperative* that we all begin to *study*, meditate and *pray more fervently* about this matter, and ask God to “restore our faith!” As we do this, we will undoubtedly see far *more*—and far *greater*—healings in the future. As the prophesied *disease epidemics* begin to come upon our nations, we—of all people—need to have the *living faith* to put our full *trust* in God to deliver us! Although it is certainly good, in most cases, to find out the nature of any sickness or disease—and often to get appropriate physical help—during the coming disease epidemics it will become *imperative* that we put our *full faith* in God! For the hospitals and doctors will be overwhelmed,

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Do You Have Enthusiasm and Zeal?

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

Enthusiasm and zeal are characteristics of nearly every great servant of God in the Bible. Yet, in our modern age, the attitude of being “cool” seems to prevail. People seem to be suspicious of anyone getting “too excited” about Christianity.

Why is this?

Part of the answer is that we have become such a secularized society. Religion is nowhere near the “big issue” in modern life that it was a few generations ago. Another reason is that some people feel they have been “burned” by religion, and are therefore afraid to wholeheartedly commit themselves to *any* religion—even the *true* religion of their Creator.

But this attitude can only be self-defeating, for again and again God makes it clear that—in every age—He wants His servants to go “all out” to seek Him and to serve Him. After describing how His people would be taken into slavery in the “latter days,” God said: “When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed. And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and

you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. And there you will serve gods, the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with *all your heart* and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice” (Deuteronomy 4:25–30).

In the book of Ecclesiastes, God tells us, “Whatever your hand finds to do, *do it with your might*; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going” (Ecclesiastes 9:10). We are also commanded, “And whatever you do, *do it heartily*, as to the Lord and not to men” (Colossians 3:23).

Indeed, the *entire Bible* is filled with instructions and examples showing our need for *enthusiasm* and *zeal* in serving the living God. Our father Jacob, after all of the machinations and trickery in which he had been involved, finally turned wholeheartedly to God in his later years. At the time of a sort of “conversion” in his life, Jacob cried out to God, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you’: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and

now I have become two companies. *Deliver me*, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children” (Genesis 32:9–11).

We read that later that same night, Jacob “wrestled all night” with that great Being who later gave His life for us. It was obviously a “test” to reveal *how much* Jacob wanted God’s promise. After he had zealously wrestled *all night long*, Jacob told God’s Messenger, “I will *not* let you go unless you bless me” (v. 26). Then, the One who became Christ answered, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed” (v. 28).

Commenting on this scriptural passage, the *Critical and Experimental Commentary* (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown) states:

It is evident that Jacob was aware of the character of Him with whom he wrestled; believing that His power, though by far superior to human, was yet limited by His promise to do him good, he determined not to lose the golden opportunity of securing a blessing. And nothing gives God greater pleasure than to see the hearts of His people firmly adhering to Him. But as Jacob continued wrestling all night, and was not blessed till “the breaking of the day,” so God frequently does not answer the prayers of His people till the last moment,—till, by the very

delay—strengthening of the spirit of prayer, and by the continued exercise of it—their hearts are brought into such a state of submission and of faith, that they become fit recipients of the blessing (p. 215).

Because he went “all out,” Jacob [“Usurper”] had his name changed to “Israel”—which means “prevailer with God” or “prince of God.” As you read this account carefully, you get the feeling that just as Jesus sweat blood during His super-intense prayer to God before His crucifixion, so Jacob must have virtually “sweat blood” in his total effort to prevail with God during his special time of trial.

Have you ever cried out so earnestly that you burst a blood vessel? How *much* does eternal life in the very Family of God *really* mean to you?

Put it another way: How *easily* can you become discouraged or bitter—or just drift away from God and His true Church?

The very attribute that separates the Philadelphians from the Laodiceans at the end of this age is their *zeal* for the Word of God and for the Work of God. Remember that Jesus Christ, the “Faithful and True Witness,” clearly sets forth His judgment of the Laodiceans: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are *lukewarm*, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (Revelation 3:15–16). A weak, insipid, lukewarm approach to God—of *not* being able to get totally excited by the Word of God, and totally involved in the Work of God—is one of the most disgusting attitudes imaginable to the living Christ. Of it, He says, “I will *spew* you out of My mouth!”

Please think deeply about that, brethren!

For this present society will soon come to an end. Those of you who make even a “lesser god” out of your job or business, your home or family, your professional or society friends, your money, your prestige—or whatever—will *lose out*, unless you genuinely *repent*.

As a servant of Christ, I cannot help you by putting it in a “nicer” or “softer” way! You *all* know what to do. You have heard this many times. You must diligently and regularly *study* the Bible and “feed on Christ” (John 6:57). You must *cry out* to God in your prayers on a *daily* basis. Remember Jesus Christ’s example: “Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with *vehement cries* and *tears* to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Hebrews 5:7–9).

We all need to learn to *use* the spiritual “tool” of *fasting—regularly*. Remember Jesus’ instruction: “Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and *then they will fast*’” (Matthew 9:14–15). And again, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and *fasting*” (Mark 9:29).

David, whom God called “a man after His own heart,” was a marvelous example of *passion* and *zeal* for God. David cried out: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My

soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, ‘Where is your God?’” (Psalm 42:1–3).

It is hard to read the accounts of Paul in the book of Acts, or to study his letters, without feeling the *enthusiasm* and *zeal* of this apostle who “labored more abundantly than they all” (1 Corinthians 15:10). Throughout his letters, Paul displays a remarkable degree of zeal and total commitment.

Even while in chains as a prisoner in Rome, the Apostle Paul was glad that the Gospel was being preached. He wrote, “For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:19–21).

Do you and I have the total commitment, no matter what, that *Christ* may be “magnified” in our bodies—even if that means *death*?

Is it “immature” to become excited and very enthusiastic about the Work of God, and about our daily preparation for the soon-coming Kingdom of God? *Paul certainly did not think so*, for he was inspired to write: “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I *press* toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in

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What Are the Works of Faith?

Are you developing these Christian qualities that will keep you from falling?

By Dibar K. Apartian

In the spring of 2005, when Mr. John Ogwyn learned he had MRSA, he pressed on with his service, giving of himself to help others for as long as he could. Many of us remember him continuing to smile, even through the terrible swelling on his face, as the infection spread. He remained full of smiles, full of encouragement, and full of hope. He remained focused on others, not on his own suffering.

Here was a man who had faith to be healed, but he died. Sometimes it seems that those with apparently much less faith are healed, while others who are pillars of faith—like Mr. Ogwyn, and Mr. Carl McNair, and other dedicated ministers and brethren in God’s Church—nevertheless die. Over the last 6,000 years of human history, it is obvious that God has not allowed every one of His people to live to age 70—or 80, or 90. We are not given immortality in this physical life. Yet we understand that if healing does not take place in this life, it will nevertheless occur at the resurrection. That is greatly encouraging. Though we may not understand God’s reasons for doing certain things—or merely allowing them—we know that He is in charge (Romans 11:33).

When we call for the elders of God’s Church to pray for us and to anoint us, we should *expect* to be healed (James 5:14–15). Yet some must wait until the resurrection of the dead to be totally healed.

The Apostle James devoted practically his whole epistle to the subject of faith—living faith, faith that always produces fruit. But he also revealed a much neglected truth that holds the key to healing. He wrote, “Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2:17).

Certainly Mr. McNair, Mr. Ogwyn and others like them can be counted among the many faithful Christians who up to the moment of their death exhibited both faith *and* works! They did the best they could to lead a Christian life. They were excellent examples for us all. Their lives were a continual example of living the works of faith.

James’ epistle deals primarily with faith. Peter’s two epistles put the accent on hope. The Apostle John, in his three letters, expounded on what love is.

These three virtues combined—faith, hope and love—reveal to us the works of faith. Can we see those works in our own lives?

Interestingly enough, the Apostle Peter groups these works in three simple verses, as he writes: “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to

godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love” (2 Peter 1:5–7).

Do you understand the full meaning of these words? Peter mentions seven supplements—seven important works—that are to be added to faith. These seven works make our faith a living faith, not a dead one.

In any language, words are used to express ideas, but they often have different connotations in people’s minds. God expresses His ideas through the Bible. We must therefore grasp the spiritual intent of His words to fully understand the Bible’s meaning.

Virtue

Peter wrote, under God’s inspiration, that the first supplement to faith—the first of the required works—is *virtue*.

In the original Greek, this word appears four times in the New Testament, but it is not always translated “virtue” in the various English versions. Some translate it as “excellence” “strength”, “right conduct” or even “wonderful deeds.”

In essence, you must conduct yourself according to God’s way in order to have living faith. You must show courage and strength, and you must excel in your task.

Peter also wrote, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Here the same Greek word that is elsewhere translated as “virtue” is rendered as “praises.”

Interesting, yes? The word “praises” is used as the equivalent of the Greek word elsewhere translated “virtue.”

Therefore, to have living faith (remember, “Faith without works is dead”—James 2:26), you must produce “wonderful deeds” or have “praiseworthy conduct” in God’s sight. That is what God wants you to do (Isaiah 66:2).

Knowledge

Let us examine the second work that must be added to your faith to make it live. Peter states, “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge” (2 Peter 1:5).

Why should knowledge come right after virtue? The answer is obvious: to enable us to rightly determine just

what are good and praiseworthy deeds. That knowledge only comes from God.

Consequently, you need to study the Bible and learn what God wants you to do. Your deeds must be evaluated by His standards and not your human standards. Without divine revelation, you cannot have this essential knowledge.

Today, humanity as a whole has much knowledge of material things, but is lamentably ignorant of spiritual truths. Men can send highly sophisticated machines into space and take remarkable pictures of the planets. Astronauts can set foot on the moon and return to the earth safely.

Nevertheless, that kind of knowledge, however awe-inspiring, does not produce living faith. It cannot save a person. Your faith must be supplemented with the knowledge of God's will and His ways.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," says your Creator. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children" (Hosea 4:6).

The prophet Micah clearly shows what is the true knowledge that needs to be added to your faith: "He [God] has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8).

Simple and beautiful words, provided you grasp their spiritual intent. To do justly is to live by every word that proceeds out of God's mouth; to love mercy is to be good to your neighbor—to love him as you love yourself; to walk humbly with God is to do His will, and to have no other gods before Him.

Regrettably, ever since the beginning, the world has rejected this knowledge.

Self-Control

After supplementing your faith with virtue and knowledge, you must exercise temperance—self-control. "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add... to knowledge self-control" (2 Peter 1:5–6).

Of what value can knowledge be if you fail to put it to use—or if you lack self-control? More often than not, people know what they are supposed to do, but they lack the character to do it.

Misuse of anything leads to sin. For instance, there is nothing wrong with eating and drinking. But too much eating and drinking can lead to sin. Do you see why God wants you to add to your faith—as a working part of it—self control?

You must learn to resist temptation, to stop before you come anywhere near breaking God's law.

The best and surest way to resist temptation is to get closer to God, but you can only grow closer to Him by doing His will. That is having self-control or temperance.

God's Spirit in you will give you all the help you need, because "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22–23).

Patience

To virtue, which is good conduct or praiseworthy deeds, we must add godly knowledge; to knowledge, self-control or temperance in order to resist evil; and to self-control, steadfastness or patience (2 Peter 1:6).

Patience is one of the most important—and one of the hardest—virtues to practice. Without it, we cannot grow in grace and knowledge or exercise self-control.

That is why the Apostle James wrote: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2–4).

To one degree or another we all lack patience. We often become upset and irritated when others do not do what they are supposed to do, but we are very tolerant with ourselves.

How grateful we should all be to God that He does not lose patience as we do!

To have patience is to set your ideas, your goals, your mind on positive things—with faith—all the time.

Patience never gives up, no matter what. It enables you to remember that God loves us and that He always knows what is best for us.

Throughout history, all the people of God and every disciple of Christ had to learn to be patient. Today, in this era of corruption, as we eagerly wait for God's Kingdom to come, some of us have not patience enough to wait. Some of God's people quit! They must have forgotten that God's timing is always best, and that our faith is strengthened when we patiently wait on Him.

Godliness

Just what is godliness (2 Peter 1:6)? How does the Bible define it?

To be godly is to have a godlike attitude. You must gradually learn to think like God and behave like Him. God commands you to "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (1 Timothy 2:2).

Indeed, you have to endeavor to be godly and respectful in every way—to think and act as God does—to be patient and kind as He is. Regrettably, the much misunderstood words *pious* or *piousness* have been substituted

for godliness in some English versions of the Bible, and people are confused.

Godliness is synonymous with true Christianity or true religion. In fact, in the *Revised Standard Version*, this is how the same Greek word has been translated in 1 Timothy 2:10: “but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.”

As you can see, to practice godliness is to have godlike religion—the true religion. Faith without godliness is dead.

Kindness

So far, we have briefly examined five of the seven supplements or works Peter tells us to add to our faith. The last two concern love toward neighbor: first, love or “brotherly kindness” (2 Peter 1:7) toward God’s people; second love toward all mankind.

The “brotherly kindness” mentioned in this verse is translated from the Greek word *philadelphia*, which literally means “brotherly love.” This love is one of the works of your living faith.

God’s Church has members all over the world. Some are poor—much poorer than you; some are sick and very old; many are of a different race than you. Nevertheless, they all are your brethren. You must have brotherly love for every one of them.

How often do you pray for God’s people around the world? Do you love them as you do your closest friends in your local congregation? Are you concerned about their particular problems, their difficulties and hardships? You lack living faith if you are not!

God commands you to have brotherly love—*philadelphia*—for all members of His Church. Whatever their age, their education, their nationality and their race, they are your brethren—members of God’s spiritual family—who share with you God’s most precious gift: His Holy Spirit.

This is the type of concern you should have for all of your brethren in Christ. You must pray for them, suffer when they suffer, rejoice when they rejoice. That, indeed, is brotherly love—a dynamic supplement to your faith.

Mr. McNair, Mr. Ogwyn and others like them certainly had brotherly love. They truly expressed it. When people saw them suffering from their illnesses, it was they who encouraged others. People who visited them became fortified rather than depressed, because they saw God’s Spirit working in and through these faithful servants of God. They studied and taught, right up to their deaths, in a beautiful attitude. And they will be resurrected—totally healed—to live forever expressing brotherly love. Can they have desired anything more rewarding? We miss them, but we know they have overcome, and endured to the end. We should treasure—and follow—their example of living the works of faith.

Mr. Meredith often asks us to pray for him, as well as for all the ministry and the Church as a whole. Do we do it? Or is this vital work absent from our faith?

Love

The final supplement—the seventh work—to living faith that Peter lists is love for all human beings (2 Peter 1:7). Brotherly love—*philadelphia*—alone is not sufficient; you must love (*agape*) all human beings regardless of their character.

Do you really love everyone, including your enemies? Do you sometimes criticize others, see the evil in them, overlook their good deeds? Do you judge them instead of being a light to them?

Without question, there is much wrong in the world, and you, as a Christian, should not be a part of it. The whole world today desperately needs God’s Kingdom to come. Christ did not only die for His true followers. He died for every human being.

In fact, when a man came to ask Christ what were the two great commandments, Christ answered: “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37–39).


Christ is not only talking here about brotherly love, but of the love (*agape*) for all of humanity, which is the highest form of love. He expressed *agape* for every single human being when He died for our sins.

Consequently you, too, through His Spirit, must have *agape* for everyone—including those who hate you and persecute you.

Examine your heart. Is your faith truly supplemented with the seven works the Apostle Peter mentions in this section of his second epistle? Mr. Ogwyn and Mr. McNair, even when debilitated by serious illness that led to their deaths, did not let up in doing those seven works. If they could do so, even when facing such severe trials, how much more should each of us be able to practice those works amidst our far lesser trials!

In concluding this section, Peter wrote, “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble” (2 Peter 1:10).

What a tremendous promise! If you have living faith—faith supplemented with these seven works—you will never, never fall. You will never give up, and “an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (v. 11).

That is your precious, ultimate reward. Let your faith truly be supplemented with the works of the Holy Spirit! 

Seize the Day!

By Scott Winnail

“**C**arpe diem” is a Latin phrase made popular by a 1989 American film titled *The Dead Poets Society*. In the film, Robin Williams portrayed a teacher who tried to inspire his students to make the most of the people and opportunities around them. The phrase, taken from a poem the Roman author Horace wrote more than 2,000 years ago, translates into English as “seize the day.” But what might that phrase have to do with us as Christians? Does it have any bearing on Christ’s command that we “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33)?

When I was in college, I was impatient to complete my education and finally “get on with life.” After all, I was obtaining my education so I could move into a career and a life that I would love. Then, in the final nine months of my college experience, God allowed me to observe some sobering events in the lives of several people I knew:

- A recent college graduate in our Church area found an excellent job, became engaged to be married, then died suddenly in a car crash.
- A husband and father in our congregation, in his forties, died in another car crash.
- A 20-year-old colleague of mine, recently engaged to be married, was diagnosed with testicular cancer and died six months later.

- The woman who later became my wife lost a very close friend in a car crash.

This string of events taught me a profound lesson; I *was* getting on with life, and I needed to make the most of every day—because there was no guarantee of a tomorrow. This realization did not scare me, but rather helped me think more clearly about my current life and the future for which I hoped.

Several years later, the wife of a family friend died of breast cancer at age 34, leaving behind her husband and three small children. This again served as a strong reminder: “Seize the day!”

Redeem the Time

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:15–17). The word translated as “redeem” can also mean “to rescue from loss, to improve one’s opportunity” (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*); the dictionary defines “redeem” as “to win back or change for the better” (*Webster’s Ninth Collegiate Dictionary*). These definitions show us how Paul’s admonition to “redeem the time” focused on reclaiming time that was or could be lost or taken away. The *New International Version* translates

Ephesians 5:15–16 as: “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity...” The Apostle Paul is reminding us to take full advantage of each moment we have been given, because once it is gone we will never get it back.

The question for each true Christian is: “Do I spiritually take advantage of the time that God has given me, or do I waste or squander it?”

Why should we maximize our time—or seize the day, spiritually speaking? Because there are profound consequences for failing to do so!

In Matthew 25, in His parable of the wise and foolish virgins, Jesus Christ used ten virgins to symbolize the Church. Five of the virgins were foolish, and five were wise. All had oil lamps, but only the wise had the foresight to fill their lamps with oil. This symbolized their stirring up the gift of God’s Holy Spirit by taking the time to pray, study, meditate and fast (2 Timothy 1:6). The foolish virgins neglected to stir up God’s gift, so their lamps were empty—their lives empty of God’s Holy Spirit and devoid of a close relationship with God.

The parable shows that while the bridegroom (symbolizing Christ) delayed, *all* the virgins slept, just as many in the body of Christ have slumbered in the past and were nearly deceived when apostate leaders tried to take the Church off course. Only

as the bridegroom was returning (v. 6) did all the virgins wake up and trim their lamps. Though they had been sleeping, they tried mightily to rekindle the flame of the Holy Spirit and draw close to God once again. The wise virgins succeeded, but the foolish virgins could not—so, in desperation, they asked the wise virgins for help. The wise virgins understood that they could not work out someone else's salvation, so they advised the foolish virgins to try to re-fill their own lamps—in effect, to hurry up and build a relationship with God.

However, by the time the foolish virgins had “bought their oil,” the

up for years of spiritual neglect in a very short time.

Even a Vapor...

Indeed, not one of us knows when *our* “last minute” will be. James wrote: “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that’... Therefore, to

Any one of us can easily fall prey to Satan's deception that time will go on for a long while, and that we have plenty of life yet to live. But Scripture tells us otherwise! The recent, sudden deaths of beloved saints in God's Church should teach us the vital lesson that *we are not guaranteed a tomorrow!*

God may choose to let us depart from this life whenever He decides it is time. But even if our physical life continues for many years, Scripture warns that many will fail to watch world events and will be unable to recognize the signs at hand, having become distracted by the cares of

Whether young or old, we cannot afford to become side-tracked by cares of the world. We must not let relationships and other seemingly important issues distract us from growing spiritually and staying close to God.

bridegroom had welcomed the wise virgins to the wedding. Though the foolish virgins begged to enter, the bridegroom refused them, saying, “I do not know you” (v. 12).

Christ ended the parable by admonishing us, “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming” (v. 13). The foolish virgins—who did not maintain a close relationship with God through regular Bible study, prayer, meditation and fasting—were caught completely off guard and were spiritually unprepared when the bridegroom returned.

Whether young or old, we cannot afford to become side-tracked by cares of the world. We must not let relationships and other seemingly important issues distract us from growing spiritually and staying close to God. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins shows us that we cannot expect to “wait until the last minute” spiritually; we cannot make


him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:13–15, 17).

What happens if we assume, “I have many more years to live. I can live as I want to for now, and then turn around, live God's way, and focus spiritually at the end of life”? This perspective is like playing “spiritual Russian roulette.” It is putting off until tomorrow what we *should be* doing today—even though we cannot be sure that we will have a tomorrow.

God has repeatedly reminded me that I must not think this way—that I must instead “seize the day” spiritually. God admonishes us to “exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13). Taylor, in his *Living Letters* edition of the Bible, translates “while it is called ‘Today’” more pointedly, as: “while there is still time...”

this world. These distracted individuals will also neglect their spiritual responsibilities. Some will miss out on the Philadelphian reward, and will go into the Great Tribulation. Others will quench the Holy Spirit they once had, and will miss out on the first resurrection entirely!

Whether we are young or old—or somewhere in between—we cannot afford to neglect the calling God has placed before us. He has given us the opportunity to be overcomers—and to ask for, be given and then stir up the gift of His Holy Spirit. We cannot afford to “put off” receiving such a gift. We must not fail to develop our relationship with our Father—and with His Son, Jesus Christ!

So, *carpe diem!* Seize the day, while it is still called today! Do not let Satan deceive you into assuming you have plenty more time. Do not delay drawing close to God! Be sure you do not miss out on what God wants for you! 

Love in Action

By Rod Reynolds

The Bible shows us that after Jesus Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth, His law will go forth from Zion to all the nations (Isaiah 2:2–3). God’s law will become the law of every nation. But what is the foundation of that law?

Scripture describes a discussion between Jesus and some of the Jews’ religious leaders. “Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:35–40).

The very foundation of God’s law—its vital essence, the motivating principle that permeates it—is the principle of godly love. Those who will be in the first resurrection will teach all nations God’s law, founded on the principle of godly love. It is essential that we master the concept of godly love—not only that we understand it intellectually, but also that we apply it in our own lives.

As Christians, we know we must love. But what does that mean? How are we to love? The world presents us with countless distorted and perverted ideas of love. Apostates and charlatans have even used false concepts of love to deceive and subvert brethren in God’s Church who lack understanding of true godly love. In order to practice true Christianity and God’s way of life, we need to understand what true godly love is—and how to manifest it in our own lives. When Christ returns, His Kingdom will reeducate the whole world in the ways of godly love. Those whom God is calling to be the firstfruits should be learning *now* how to show godly love to others.

The Bible teaches us the definition of true Christian love in action, and provides guidance in how to love God’s way. So, how does the Bible define love?

The New Testament was written in Greek, a language that has particular precision and power to express shades of meaning. Greek has no fewer than four words to express different kinds of love: *eros*, *storge*, *philia* and *agape*. Though the word *agape* is

found only rarely in Greek writings outside the New Testament, it (along with its cognate verb *agapao*) is by far the most common word for love in the New Testament, occurring about 250 times.

Just what is *agape*, as defined by Scripture? Unlike some other varieties of what might be called “love,” *agape* is not fundamentally an emotional response. Rather, it is the product of a mind and will empowered by the Spirit of God.

Here is what *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* says in this regard: “Christian love, whether exercised toward the brethren, or toward men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all, Rom. 15:2, and works no ill to any, 13:8–10...” (p. 382). William Barclay, in his book *New Testament Words*, discusses at length the meanings and use of key Greek words from the New Testament. In discussing *agape*, Barclay writes, “*Agape* has to do with the mind: it is not simply an emotion which arises unbidden in our hearts; it is a principle by which we deliberately live. *Agape* has supremely to do with the will. It is a conquest, a victory, and achievement” (p. 21).

Godly love, *agape*, does not occur accidentally; it is something we *choose* to do. Joshua reminded his Israelite brethren, “But take **careful heed** to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, **to love the LORD your God**, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Joshua 22:5).

And again, “Therefore **take careful heed** to yourselves, **that you love the LORD your God**” (Joshua 23:11). In both of these verses, *agapao* appears in the Septuagint where “love” appears in the English translation. These verses emphasize that we must *choose* to love God, and that doing so requires deliberate effort and an exercise of our will.

Heart, Mind and Will

Jesus explained that godly love—*agape* love—requires engaging the heart, mind and will. “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your

neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:43–48). God’s love extends to all, whether they are good or evil, friend or enemy. Godly love has been described as “unconquerable benevolence, invincible good will.... A deliberate conviction of the mind issuing in a deliberate policy of this life; it is a deliberate achievement and conquest and victory of the will” (*New Testament Words*, p. 22).

At the same time, we cannot generate godly love entirely on our own. It must come from God as we submit our will to His. Scripture shows clearly that Christian love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us (Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22). We need to go to God daily and pray for His love, for ourselves and for others (Philippians 1:9–11).

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong often defined love as outgoing concern. Godly love is not inward or self-ish; it is not directed toward self. Godly love is directed first toward God Himself, and second toward other people (Matthew 22:36–40).

Most people love themselves, even if they do not like themselves very much. This is natural (Ephesians 5:28–29). But *agape* is an **outgoing** love toward God and our fellow human beings. Those who say you must first love yourself to love others have it wrong. Love God first, then love other people, and you will not need to be much concerned about loving yourself. When we learn about God’s love, we learn not only that He loves us, but also that we can become instruments of His love, extending it out to others. As we learn to love others, our own scars from past abuse or hurt will heal, as we come more and more under the influence of God’s love.

We must understand, however, that loving others means loving them responsibly, in accordance with God’s law, which defines love (Romans 13:10). Loving others does not mean giving in to manipulation, or succumbing to pressure to approve or carry out destructive or lawless conduct. It does

not mean letting ourselves be influenced to do what is unedifying or harmful to ourselves or others. Godly love, however, often does require self-sacrifice toward a goal that is truly edifying (Ephesians 5:2).

We have seen how godly love is a matter of will—of deliberate choice. It is outgoing concern. But it is also something more. Love is *how we live*. As Barclay said, love “is a principle by which we deliberately live.” As *Vine’s* says, “Love can be known only from the actions it prompts” (p. 381). Love is rooted in the mind, but it is manifested by how we act—by how we behave.

Godly love means behaving toward others in a way that demonstrates genuine concern for their well-being. God the Father showed this kind of love when He was willing to give His Son, Jesus Christ, so that sinners might be saved (John 3:16). Jesus showed this kind of love in action when He gave up His life so that we might share eternal life with Him in the resurrection (Romans 5:6–8). Even God’s chastening is given because of love (Hebrews 12:6–10). Scripture contains many other descriptions of love in action. Paul, for example, demonstrated his love through his self-sacrificing service to God and the people to whom he ministered, even when many among them were critical of him or refused to respond in a positive way to his entreaties (2 Corinthians 12:15).

A Practical Guide

How can we put love into action? God’s law is a practical guide, showing how to love. It is, essentially, an extended definition of love. Indeed, the entirety of God’s word defines and explains godly love. Our love should be first toward God. Jesus said, “And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment” (Mark 12:30). We manifest our love toward God through obedience. “...I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Exodus 20:5–6; see also Deuteronomy 7:9; 11:1).

Vine’s says, “Christian love has God for its primary object, and expresses itself first of all in implicit obedience to His commandments” (p. 382). Many statements and examples in Scripture

teach us that to love God is to obey Him. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). John wrote, “He who says, ‘I know him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). Those who teach that we need not obey God’s laws are teaching against love, and they are teaching against God’s will!

What about love toward our fellow human beings? How can we put love into action with them? God’s law, as magnified through the teachings of Jesus Christ, reveals how. Jesus said that the weightier matters of the law include justice, mercy and faith (Matthew 23:23). The law teaches us how to treat others justly, with mercy, kindness and faithfulness. For example, the commandment instructs us (no matter what our age), “Honor your father

The commandment teaches us, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). A corollary is that husbands and wives are to faithfully love and respect each other. A husband must treat his wife with devotion, kindness and tenderness (Ephesians 5:25, 28–29, 33; 1 Peter 3:7–8). A wife needs to respect her husband as head of the family. She should be faithful to him in thought, word and deed (Proverbs 31:10–12; Ephesians 5:22–24; 33; 1 Timothy 3:11; Titus 2:4; 1 Peter 3:1–6).

God’s law instructs us, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16). The principle is that we are not to deal falsely or to lie at all to one another (Leviticus 19:11; Colossians 3:9). A corollary to that is that we must speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Share the gospel through our example (Matthew 5:14–16).

It will take us a lifetime—and then some—to learn all we need to learn about godly love. But the basic principle—keeping God’s commandments, motivated by outgoing concern—is relatively simple.

and your mother” (Exodus 20:12; cf. Ephesians 6:1–3). If we honor father and mother with appropriate obedience, with acts of kindness and service, we are loving them as God would have us do.

Some of the Ten Commandments are stated as negatives (“You shall not...”). But not only do these commandments teach us what not to do; their corollaries, as revealed in Scripture, also teach us how to relate to others in positive ways, exercising justice, mercy and faith. For example, we are told, “You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15). The corollary, taught throughout the Bible, is that we should give generously to those in need (Proverbs 11:25). Paul wrote, “Let him who stole **steal no longer**, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, **that he may have something to give him who has need**” (Ephesians 4:28).

Scripture tells us, “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13). Corollary to that are God’s commands that we feed the hungry, heal the sick, and give comfort and aid within our means to those who need it. “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore, ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:19–21).

Be a light to others (1 Peter 2:9, 12). Support the formal proclaiming of the gospel through our prayers, tithes and offerings (1 Corinthians 9:13–14; Ephesians 6:18–20; Philippians 4:14–19).

The Apostle John summed it up, saying: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). Learning to love God and keep His commandments is our chief task. Nothing is more important. “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?” (Deuteronomy 10:12–13).

It will take us a lifetime—and then some—to learn all we need to learn about godly love. But the basic principle—keeping God’s commandments, motivated by outgoing concern—is relatively simple. We are to put on love (Colossians 3:12–14). We are to walk in love (Ephesians 5:1–2). *Now* is the time for us to be learning to put love into action in our lives, not only for its present benefits, but also so that when Jesus Christ returns, we can help Him teach godly love in action to all the world. LEN

Are We Seeking Wisdom?

By Don Davis

Wisdom is more precious than gold (Proverbs 16:16). Yet it seems that many more people are seeking gold than wisdom. Why is this? What exactly is wisdom, and how can we acquire it? Then, once we have found wisdom, how should we put it to use? Our answers to these questions can make the difference between life and death, health and illness, prosperity and poverty, strife and peace—for us individually and for those around us.

Seeking Knowledge

Throughout the nearly 6,000 years of recorded human history, men and women have sought understanding and truth. Yet the vast majority of people have rejected the real source of all right knowledge—God’s word. As a result, modern civilization rests on a foundation of sand.

Jesus Christ explained what will happen to those who neglect His wisdom. “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew [the trials and tests of life] and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall” (Matthew 7:26–27).

By contrast, if we start our search for truth and knowledge by looking to God’s word, our foundation will be sure. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7).

Christ explained that He is the fountainhead of truth, and is the

“Rock” upon whom we should build: “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock” (Matthew 7:24–25).

Jesus of Nazareth, in the beginning, was the Word, who was with God and was God (John 1:1). Since it was He who inspired the Old and New Testaments, the entire Bible consists of His “sayings.” During His confrontation with Satan, Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God’” (Luke 4:4). This is the essence of true wisdom!

The Apostle Paul tells us where to find that Rock upon whom we should build our spiritual house: “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:1–4).

Yet most of mankind has lost its way, having rejected the knowledge and wisdom revealed through God’s word. The prophet Jeremiah understood that without God’s word to guide us, human beings cannot find truth or lasting success in this life or in tomorrow’s world: “O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who

walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

When human beings reject God’s revelation, they fall into wickedness, influenced by Satan, the “god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4), who wants to destroy our incredible human potential by preventing us from being born, at the resurrection from the dead, as the spiritual children of God. Yet we are without excuse if we do not acknowledge God’s existence, and obey Him: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things” (Romans 1:18–23).

Science, in and of itself, is a method for acquiring knowledge. It can be used for good, or for evil. True science can help us appreciate the world God has made, and to understand it within the limits of our finite physical nature. But in recent decades, we have seen how false science has been used—just as this passage

from Romans explains—to deny God and, through the false theory of Darwinian evolution, place mankind on the same level as the “creeping things.”

What does Scripture say about those who deny God as the Creator? Are they wise? No! “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity; there is none who does good” (Psalm 53:1).

Sinful mankind reasons that if there is no God, there is no punishment for sin, and human beings can live as they wish. “Why do the wicked renounce God? He has said in his heart, ‘You will not require an account’” (Psalm 10:13). God’s people know that we will be held accountable for our choices, and He has given us the right to choose either wisdom or foolishness.

We Must Choose Wisely

God has granted each of us free moral agency. We must ultimately choose, individually, whether to obey God or to follow the ways of Satan the devil. Obedience to God leads to love, peace, generosity, service and outflowing concern for those around us. Satan’s way leads to vanity, lust, jealousy and greed—and ultimately to eternal destruction. These two ways are contrasted in the scriptural account of the two trees: “And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:9).

God explained to Adam that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was “off limits” to him, and Adam passed this knowledge on to Eve after God created her. Now God could test their obedience, so He

allowed Satan to tempt them: “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die”’” (Genesis 3:1–2).

Eve understood what Adam had told her; she told Satan of the instructions Adam had relayed to her from God. But she did not believe God’s warning. “Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (vv. 4–5). Eve was tempted by Satan’s assurance that she could become like God by disobeying Him. “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate” (v. 6). Though Adam had warned his wife of God’s prohibition, he still chose to disobey his Creator. “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings” (v. 7).

Perhaps we sometimes want to condemn our father Adam for his weakness. But have not each of us—even after learning of God’s laws—occasionally taken a “bite of the fruit” ourselves, willingly, hoping that what we do in the dark will not come into the light? “Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, and their works are in the dark; they say, ‘Who sees us?’ and, ‘Who knows us?’” (Isaiah 29:15).

Truly converted Christians understand that, once they have a calling

from God, His eye is upon them for judgment. “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:15–17).

No Sins Secret from God

After Adam and Eve sinned, they tried to hide themselves from God (Genesis 3:8). As Christians, we understand that it is not possible to hide our sins from the One who created us. When we sin, God is faithful to forgive us, if we sincerely turn from sin and ask for His mercy. “And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” (Romans 2:3–4).

We cannot hide our sins from God, but perhaps we think we can hide them from the people around us. What does God say about this? “For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops” (Luke 12:2–3). Even if we can hide our sins from others for a short while, God’s word explains that our efforts will not bring success. “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13). Our Father is always watching diligently for

opportunities to correct His children in love, and to bless us if we heed His wisdom. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

God’s wisdom is available to those whom He calls, who put forth the effort to seek it. Along with fasting, prayer and meditation, Bible study is one of the tools He has given to help us grow in wisdom. Regular Bible study is essential for a Christian who hopes to grow in

access to the wisdom and the power we need to succeed in our struggles against the pulls of Satan, self, and the society in which we now live. With His Spirit, instilling in us His wisdom, we can succeed! “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead

nor seek His knowledge and His wisdom. We who have remained faithful must not let our guard down and grow lax. Satan knows he has but a short time left to try to turn us astray, so we must take seriously the admonition to: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after

Are we gaining wisdom? Are we studying the Bible, and meditating on what we study? Are we taking the time to pray, each day, to our Creator who wants us to use His wisdom in every aspect of our lives? If so, we are heading on the right path toward gaining the precious knowledge that will guide us safely along the narrow way into the Kingdom of God.

godly wisdom, and it is vital to set a consistent pattern of study. Many in God’s Church have found it helpful, along with their regular Bible study, to take time each day to read one chapter from the book of Proverbs, and to meditate on how we can apply it in our lives. On the first day of the month, read Proverbs 1, then continue on each day until you are reading Proverbs 31 at the end of the month. Repeat this process every month, and over time you will find that each reading will give you new insights you had not seen before. You will gradually see that you are, in fact, growing in godly wisdom!


The lessons, laws and principles we find in the Bible are a vibrant communication from our Creator, who earnestly desires to share His spiritual knowledge and wisdom with you and with me. Through Christ living in us, God is instilling His very nature in each of His begotten sons and daughters, providing us

by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:1–4).

In the final analysis, only the wise will be saved. Those who have wisely taken advantage of the opportunities God has offered to receive His Spirit will be given eternal life. “The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, [those who unwisely refuse to repent, when they have received correction and the knowledge of God] but He blesses the home of the just. Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble. The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the legacy of fools” (Proverbs 3:33–35). The prophet Daniel was told that in the end-time, “Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand” (Daniel 12:10).

Many whom we once called our brethren no longer follow Christ,

you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 5:8–11).

Are we gaining wisdom? Are we studying the Bible, and meditating on what we study? Are we taking the time to pray, each day, to our Creator who wants us to use His wisdom in every aspect of our lives? If so, we are heading on the right path toward gaining the precious knowledge that will guide us safely along the narrow way into the Kingdom of God. “When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things, from those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness” (Proverbs 2:10–13). 

FESTIVAL 2007: A Feast to Remember!

Living Church of God brethren from all around the world gathered in more than 30 countries at more than 40 sites this year to observe the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day from September 26 through October 4. Here are excerpts from reports sent from some of those sites (a few had not submitted reports by press time):

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

More than 1,200 of God's people kept the Feast in a tent—many for the first time in decades—at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The tent brought back old memories for many, and helped create new memories for all. God blessed the weather overall, with a reminder of “living waters” when the rain fell on this drought-stricken area on the morning of the Last Great Day. The crashing surf and natural beauty of the South Carolina coast, the peace and tranquility of the Kingston Plantation, and the meeting hall within walking distance from most accommodations helped create many fond memories for Feastgoers.

Brethren commented about the power and depth of the messages, fellowship and special music, designed to prepare us to reign with

Christ in His Kingdom. Positive and peaceful attitudes abounded, as did the love and concern God's people showed for each other.



An anonymous “sand writers” dug messages each morning in the beach sand—poignant reminders of the theme of the previous day's sermon. Eleven

“little ones” were blessed in a very memorable Blessing of Little Children ceremony. The Family Day activity at Ripley's Aquarium reminded God's people of His creation and what it may be like in the Kingdom, when the creatures of the sea are tame. Many also enjoyed food and fellowship as they danced to the entertaining music provided by a fabulous Church band.



Overall, the Feast in Myrtle Beach was relaxing, exciting, uplifting, inspiring and memorable. Nearly everyone expressed a desire to return to this location in the future.

Branson, Missouri

Branson, Missouri—a growing town, half an hour south of Springfield, offering a wide variety of attractions—this year served for the first time as home to the Living

Church of God's Feast of Tabernacles observance!

An average of about 450 people, including many first-time Feastgoers, met each day at a brand new convention center in Branson,—a community widely considered America's capital for music and family-oriented entertainment.

Many took advantage of the countless sights and attractions amidst Branson's millennial wooded hills—from musical shows and comedy performances, to amusement parks and museums. The meeting hall's proximity to the very popular

Branson Landing along Lake Taneycomo was a special blessing, giving members easy access to an eclectic collection of shops and restaurants, including a stunning

choreographed “fountain and flame” musical show every hour on the hour.

Scheduled activities included luncheons for deacons and elders and the seniors, a pizza party and putt-putt outing for the teens, a riverboat dinner and show for our singles, a Family Day full of children's games—and a Dinner Dance at the convention center, complete with souvenir photographs, printed on the spot!

Yet, with all there was to do and see, the consensus was clear: what made the Feast special this year were the powerful sermons. Dr. Roderick C. Meredith began our Feast with a pair of powerful messages drawing a sharp contrast between the corrup-

tion of this present society and the beautiful world to come. Dr. Douglas S. Winnail followed later, addressing our need to be peacemakers in today's world so that we can be peacemakers in tomorrow's, and explaining the importance of proper perspective and holding fast to what is truly important. The sermons, sermonettes and Bible Studies harmonized beautifully to make this year's Feast in Branson one to remember!



New Braunfels, Texas

More than 460 Feastgoers met in the south-central Texas town of New Braunfels, situated where the Comal and Guadalupe Rivers meet, to celebrate the 2007 Feast of Tabernacles. Many brethren enjoyed water activities such as river float trips during their stay. Some took advantage of the close proximity to San Antonio to tour the Alamo, visit Sea World or Six Flags Fiesta Texas theme parks, or stroll down the world-famous San Antonio Riverwalk. Others spent the entire time in New Braunfels, feasting at the excellent restaurants or just spending time with family and friends.

The scheduled activities were designed to promote togetherness among all age groups, highlighted by Family Day which featured booths for each of the Lost Tribes of Israel—down to their modern national identities. Dance lessons were offered at the same time, followed by a Fun Show, dinner and a dance. Singles spent an evening at the San Antonio Riverwalk, cruising the river and eating at a fine restaurant. Teens enjoyed themselves during an afternoon of touring a spectacular natur-

al cavern, then playing games and eating pizza at a local arcade. Many teens provided entertainment for the annual Seniors Luncheon.

For many, the messages were the highlight of the Feast. Evangelist Richard Ames was the first guest speaker, giving sermons titled “Count Your Blessings” and “Love Your Family.” Regional Pastor Lambert Greer was the final guest speaker, giving sermons about Jesus Christ and the

Feast and on the meaning of the Last Great Day. Pastors Martin Fannin and Phil Sena gave the other sermons. God appears to have blessed the Feast in New Braunfels once again this year.

Winter Park, Colorado

One hundred and thirty-four brethren assembled for this Feast of Tabernacles at Winter Park, Colorado, an awesome location in this high alpine region, offering spectacular beauty with hues of brown, gold, green and of course a light dusting of snow on the towering Colorado mountain peaks surrounding the Winter Park area.



Brethren enjoyed eight days of inspiring and Spirit-filled messages. From Mr. Randy Kobernat's sermonette on being a “Sweet Savor” to God, and Mr. John Whitfield's sermonette on the ordinal value of “God is One,” to the Last Great Day messages from Dr. Jeff Fall and Mr. Lambert Greer on our awesome future, each speaker brought something special. Mr. Vernon Damron's sermonette on the “Little Things”

and Mr. Wayne Pyle's messages on the Blessing of Little Children and the coming Third Temple spiritually fed everyone with meat in due season. Mr. Bob League, Mr. Dan Hall and Mr. Gene Hilgenberg, and site coordinator Mr. Ben Whitfield, rounded out the Festival messages, discussing “Team Building in Order to Fulfill Our Mission”, “Preparation of the Bride in the Future World of Peace,” and “Looking to the True Source,” for what God provides to us. A Bible Study chaired by Mr. Bob League instructed us to realize that if we are going to be kings and priests in Tomorrow's World, we need to be teachers as well.

A professional square dance caller came all the way up from Colorado Springs to provide us an unforgettable evening. An enjoyable afternoon of fellowship and delicious food made for a beautiful Family Picnic, followed by a Family Fun Show. An Ice Cream Social and afternoon movie was provided for

teens and families. Brethren also appreciated the beauty of Rocky Mountain National Park, just a short distance away. The elk were in full bugle, the cows and the bulls were gathering for the migration to lower winter pastures and the mountainsides were just spectacular with many snow-capped peaks soaring over 14,000 feet. Fond memories of this year's Feast still linger as brethren begin to prepare for next year's Feast season.

Newport, Oregon

The spectacular power of God's creation was on display to 270 excited brethren gathered in the beautiful coastal town of Newport,

Oregon to keep the Feast of Tabernacles 2007. Waves from the Pacific Ocean roared along the sandy beaches, and the tide pools were filled with crabs, starfish and anemones. Sea lions gathered along the rocks as seals in the marina dove to catch their breakfast. Several brethren had the opportunity to spot the migrating gray whales. Local attractions included the Yaquina Head Lighthouse, the Marine Discovery Cruise, the Oregon Coast Aquarium & Science Center, the Rogue Ales Brewery and a scenic drive along the Oregon coast.

Guest speaker Mr. J. Davy Crockett, III spoke of the “Times of Refreshing,” and also on “Our Role in the Kingdom of God.” Festival Coordinator Mr. Glen Gilchrist spoke on “The Importance of Holiness”—which tied in very well with Mr. Weston’s admonition to “Recapture True Values”—and gave a Last Great Day message on “God’s Great Hope for Mankind.” Other sermon topics included “Love in Action” and “Jerusalem, Past, Present and Future” by Mr. Rod Reynolds, “Preparing the Bride,” by Mr. Eldon Davis and “Israel, Prepare to Meet Your God” by Mr. Gary Ullerick.

Brethren enjoyed the scheduled activities, designed to encourage fellowship and a return to true Christian values. For the children and teens, there were several socials before services, and the younger children served by creating cards for brethren who were unable to attend the Feast. There was a youth carnival, a teen bowling activity, a Singles Cruise, a Seniors Luncheon, a Fun Show, a Square Dance and a more formal Dinner-Dance. Family Day took

place on a bluff overlooking the sea, offering the delights of a barbecue, games (including sand volleyball) and fellowship. A few brave souls tested their mettle surfing in the Pacific Ocean waves. Even a short-lived Oregon rain squall did not dampen the spirits of those who attended.

Oxnard, California

Oxnard, known as “the City that Cares,” welcomed 230 brethren to its



Attendees were from all parts of the U.S. and Canada and participated in a variety of area activities.

The messages were encouraging and well-received. Dr. Jeff Fall emphasized that we are in training and soon will move on to our real careers in the Kingdom of God. He stressed that God’s way of life works for us, and that our Father has “healing in His wings.” Mr. J. Davy Crockett, III spoke on “All Things New,” explaining that the former predictions have come to pass, and we are now being prepared to make all things new. Mr. Harold Way gave a sermon explaining how Christ will rule with authority, while encouraging us never to lose a “teachable” attitude. Other topics included, “Love,” “Working Out Our Own Salvation,” and “The Feast Pictures Hope.”

oceanfront shores for the 2007 Feast of Tabernacles. Many resided in the gathering hall at the Mandalay Beach Resort/Embassy Suites Hotel.



Mr. Chris Connelly directed the choir’s several selections. The Children’s Choir sang about “Uncle Peter” to the delight of the audience. Singles enjoyed a reception at the Embassy Suites, and Family Day was an enjoyable gathering at the Oxnard Beach Park. Children held the traditional sack race and played various games. The setting could not have been better; the view was spectacular, and the beach and ocean were attractions for some. On Monday, the seniors held their luncheon on-site while the teens enjoyed their own activities. Tuesday was the busiest day, with the Deacons-Elders Luncheon, Family Night Dinner, Fun Show and Dance all scheduled. There was a nice variety at the Fun Show, and many remarked on the exceptional talent displayed. Brethren also enjoyed a variety of restaurants including an Irish Pub and the exceptional fresh fish offerings at noted restaurants.

Western Shore, Nova Scotia

We were truly blessed here, as we were met with a premium of fall colors and moderate temperatures—the locals call it an “Indian Summer.” Services were conducted each day in the Bluenose-A Room of the Oak Island Resort. We averaged 93 in attendance, and it was common to hear people comment that they were awed at how friendly the brethren were.

Mr. Jim Arnaldo started the Feast with a sermon titled, “Many Called—Few Chosen,” and went on to give one more sermon, a split-sermon and two sermonettes. We also heard from Mr. Dwain Crisman (an elder from

Dallas, Texas), Mr. Fritz Winnail (a deacon from Tampa, Florida) and Mr. Hiram Shannon (a member from Tampa).

The Friday night Bible Study gave a comprehensive look at the book of Haggai. Family Day consisted of a Dinner-Dance and a trip to Ross Farm, where we learned what life was like on a Nova Scotian farm 100–175 years ago.

That evening, we all met together again for a scrumptious dinner and dance. Mr. Arnaldo gave a special presentation to the seniors, encouraging them to remember the importance of their role in God's Church. Young and old alike were able to hear his wise words.

Western Shore, with its true charm and breathtaking beauty, truly provided the brethren with a millennial atmosphere in which to rejoice! For some brethren, it was their first Feast, and for one lady it was her 47th!

Magog, Quebec

Thanks to the changing colors of the local foliage, the Quebec Eastern Township area was of great beauty here during the Feast of Tabernacles. The Magog and Orford areas have a millennial setting and are close to the American border. It is a tourist area, too; people are bilingual in restaurants and stores, a fact appreciated by our monolingual French or English brethren. We averaged 180 brethren at services, with a high of 190. The first and last day meals together were real highlights, bringing great fellowship and an atmosphere of peace as almost everyone was able to relax.

An atmosphere of true Christianity prevailed throughout the eight days. As for the messages,

both sermonettes and sermons were focused on the Millennium and the Kingdom of God in which we (members of the Body of Christ) will be very active with our elder brother, Jesus Christ. The visiting ministers did a great job in bringing us new perspective on our rejoicing at the

Feast, reminding us that we are children of light for the world around us.

The Dinner-Dance was most appreciated, and the music well chosen. The

Family Day activity was a visit to a bee farm, which was informative and greatly appreciated by all. What a nice way to see God's creation in action!

Red Deer, Alberta

Beautiful Red Deer, Alberta was the Church's western Canada site for the 2007 Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day. An atmosphere of unity and love, along with inspiring messages, set the stage for what

many called "their best Feast yet." Highlights of the Feast (besides the messages) were an enjoyable dinner and dance, and Family Day in the famous Lacombe corn maze. Feastgoers took advantage of the many restaurants in Red Deer, along with buffet meals at the Red Deer Lodge. Visitors came from California and Boston in the United States, and Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Ontario in Canada. The festival survey revealed that of the more than

180 Feastgoers here, more than 90 percent recommended the Red Deer site for the Feast in 2008.

Arklow, Ireland

Visitors outnumbered the "locals" this year as 174 of God's people met in Arklow, Ireland. They came from all over the world—from Canada and Australia. Others were from South Africa and Switzerland, and one each from Trinidad and Romania. It was a treat to hear our Scottish elder, Mr. Robert Storrier, give his sermonette followed by Mr. Ken Frank, Area Pastor serving Virginia and Maryland in the United States. The accents this year were Irish (both northern and southern), Swiss, Australian and South African.

One young lady, asked to rate the sermons on a scale of ten, answered: "Twelve!" Speakers referred to the parables of Jesus Christ where He said, "The Kingdom of God is like..." to show that God expects more from those to whom much is given, and that we should not be discouraged if we do not feel we have great talent or opportunity. Mr.

Breaux painted a colourful picture of Tomorrow's World, while Mr. Felber's five-point outline of how the world stands on the brink of

destruction brought a sobering reality to those listening, then the contrast with what lies beyond gave hope and vision to all.

Mr. Karl Beyersdorfer recounted the amazing story of the abolition of slavery in England and America—a practice that is now re-emerging all over the world as



British and American influence wanes.

Activities included a Dinner-Dance, a games evening, and trips to Wicklow Jail and the Waterford Crystal Company. Weather was cool and overcast at times, though the last afternoon turned to warm sunshine for those who wanted to tour the green Irish countryside.

The Entrance, Australia

The 180 brethren who kept the Feast at The Entrance this year experienced one of the most peaceful, happy and inspiring Feasts ever!

The Entrance derives its name from the narrow channel that divides the mainland and connects Tuggerah Lake to the sparkling blue waters of the Pacific Ocean off the Central Coast of New South Wales. We met in the newly constructed auditorium at the “Diggers” RSL club. We were welcomed by the friendly staff and over the next eight days we developed a

wonderful relationship with them. Perhaps they were a bit taken aback by the warm

smiles, well behaved children and the general respect that was extended towards the auditorium as a whole.

Evangelist and Regional Director Mr. Bruce Tyler opened the Feast by reminding everyone of our individual responsibility to be an example to the community and an Ambassador for Christ. We were blessed to have a visiting minister, Mr. Irv Woelfle, from the United States, who gave us inspiring spiritual meat, expounding on what it means to “Reign as Kings.” In another sermon, Mr. Woelfle showed that Christ’s example while on the

earth gave us a glimpse of what His Kingdom will be like. Mr. Michael Gill admonished us to be visionaries; he discussed four “Vital Keys to Happiness” and reminded us of the exciting plan that God is working out for all mankind.

On Sunday evening, we had a good old Aussie Bush Dance in the Auditorium. Each dance was introduced by the “Caller” of the band, who gave us a short history lesson regarding that piece. Some dances were in small groups of four, others in eights or tens; some involved everyone in a large circle. Other activities included a Seniors’ Luncheon, a Youth Day and lots of time for everyone to just fellowship and discuss our exciting future and the challenges God’s people will face in the years ahead.

Taupo, New Zealand

More than 105 attended the Feast of Tabernacles in Taupo, New Zealand. This was a 50 percent

increase over last year, and reflects the growth that has been taking place within the Church in

New Zealand. Thirty people here attended their first-ever Feast of Tabernacles. We were also delighted to have with us visitors from Australia and the United States.

The theme set for the Feast was “Dwelling Together in Unity,” and this was thoroughly displayed. Most activities were arranged as “open” events; everyone was welcome to attend the activity arranged with seniors in mind, and the children’s activity was also open to all. There was a very high level of participation.

Visiting ministers came from Australia. Mr. and Mrs. Mal Jennings were with us for the whole Festival. Mr. Jennings performed songleading duties and spoke several times. In one sermon, he urged us to value very highly the royal crowns that God has reserved for us. In another, he likened our Christian life to a race for which we need stamina and unconquerable determination.

Our Regional Director, Mr. Bruce Tyler, was also with us for a couple of days. He spoke on how the Feast heralds true freedom for the world, and on the spiritual meanings behind physical elements of the Old Testament tabernacle.

Feastgoers enjoyed a variety of planned activities. These included a swim at thermal hot springs for children and a gourmet luncheon at a “mosaic café” for seniors. Teens-and-twenties met to make and cook individual pizzas and get to know each other. Many visited the Waimangu Thermal Valley, where they roamed among geysers and hot mud pools and colourful silica terraces.

We also enjoyed a family games evening organized by Craig and Debbie Hill. Activities included last-man-standing, a general knowledge quiz, play-dough pictionary and a finger-foods supper. Steve and Kate McKenzie organized a successful variety show, in which Feastgoers displayed a wide range of skills including playing the trumpet, telling jokes, demonstrating a martial art, juggling and singing.

The Feast certainly prefigured the time when Christ will reign and this world will be full of the peace and knowledge of God, and all will dwell together in harmony.

Kandy, Sri Lanka

An intimate group of God’s people gathered at Kandy in Sri Lanka for the Feast of Tabernacles 2007, at the Hotel



Topaz, perched on the top of a mountain overlooking the City of Kandy and providing a 360-degree view of blue mountains and wooded green valleys.

The sermons and sermonettes gave an excellent foretaste of the soon-coming Kingdom of God, which will be a blessing to all mankind by being based on God's holy unchangeable laws and ways of life.

No Feast in Sri Lanka would be complete without a cricket match, where just about everybody takes active part. The annual Talent Show showcased much wholesome entertainment. Participating members, especially the youth and children, showed their prowess in singing,



dancing, music and acting. The enthusiasm of the brethren was infectious.

One afternoon was spent at a world-famous elephant orphanage where a successful experiment in conservation is ongoing. Sri Lanka's elephants are a subspecies of the Asian elephant, and have been tamed and put to work, logging in the forests where vehicles cannot go. Members were delighted by the friendly and playful baby elephants, as well as the antics of the 75 elephants bathing in the nearby river. This peaceful scene was a wonderful encounter with a portion of God's creation.

Papua New Guinea

We had a very wonderful and enjoyable Feast all throughout the eight days with 52 in attendance.

The DVD sermons given by Dr. Meredith and other ministers were

very encouraging. The weather was just perfect all throughout, and the picnic at the Wom Beach was just beautiful. Wom Beach is the very spot where the Japanese army surrendered to the Australian forces during the fierce Pacific campaign in the Second World War. The names of the Allied soldiers killed can be read from the concrete markers. Wom war memorial site is a reminder to the brethren of what we human beings cannot achieve by ourselves—world peace. We are all looking forward to the day when our Lord shall come and there shall be true peace and prosperity under His rulership.

Homa Bay, Kenya

One hundred and six brethren kept the Feast of Tabernacles 2007 at Homa Bay in Nyanza Province.

Despite different languages and cultures, Feastgoers learned to communicate and cooperate, enjoying a full plate of meaty spiritual food, encouraging us all to be watchful and prepare for God's soon-coming Kingdom.

Sermons and sermonettes, given by Mr. Henry Cooper and Mr. Simon Muthama respectively, were truly inspiring. Mr. Cooper noted that obedience is the key to preparing for the Kingdom. Other sermons covered the law of tithing, the need to learn and enjoy and the meaning of the Holy Days.

An evening talent/family show was well attended, giving everyone an opportunity to participate. Everyone, from the youngest child (age 5) to the oldest (a 75-year-old

gentleman) took part. A football game between the older men and the teens was wonderfully played; the older men won, 2–1. Children enjoyed nature DVDs each evening. The Ireland congregations were



appreciated for sponsoring a BBQ Luncheon for the 15 senior citizens present. Mr. Cooper

also blessed nine children.

After eight event-filled days, all expressed appreciation for God's master plan for humankind, and were already looking forward to next year's Feast!

Glentana, South Africa

In Glentana, a quiet and pretty coastal holiday and retirement village near the southernmost tip of Africa, 95 of God's people gathered to experience a very positive and unified atmosphere, with excellent sermons and sermonettes setting a very clear focus on where we are now and what we are working toward as God's Church. Included were our guest speaker from Canada, Mr. Gerald Weston, two Church members from New York, and a couple from New

Zealand who had attended God's Church from many years back.

Several commented on how much they had learned and how much clearer



God's purpose and the scriptures had become to them during the Feast. It was a great blessing having Mr. and Mrs. Weston with us this year, as we greatly benefited from their very car-

ing presence as well as Mr. Weston’s inspiring sermons.

Activities included a singles event, a Senior Citizens lunch, and a Family Day barbeque with a children’s activity. In the wider surrounding area there were opportunities to visit a game farm (Mr. and Mrs. Weston even rode an elephant!), an ostrich farm, a crocodile farm, a forest canopy tour, shark cage diving, helicopter flights and various drives through beautiful scenery and forest walks.

All in all, this was an outstandingly uplifting spiritual Feast, providing much opportunity for young and old to share fun-filled and profitable activities together, which we look forward to year by year.

Tobago

More than 60 brethren kept the 2007 Feast of Tabernacles in Tobago.

One highlight was the skit, “Israel: From Samuel to Solomon” enacted by hard-working and dedicated members displaying their acting talents. The audience found the skit both entertaining and educational. Other activities included a Bible Bowl, and a family outing to Canoe Bay Resort where brethren participated in a variety of competitions and enjoyed refreshments and fellowship.

Dress at the Dinner Dance on Tuesday was “cowboy” or “Caribbean”—but most chose “cowboy.” Five elderly brethren were placed in seats of honor and given small tokens of our appreciation. A bag of Caribbean sweets was placed in front of every chair, which turned out to be a big hit. After dinner we had a short talent show, where Church members displayed their



singing and other talents, followed by the dance.

Georgetown, Guyana

In the garden city of Georgetown, Guyana, a lively little group of brethren from the Living Church of God gathered at the Radisson Suites Hotel to observe the Feast of Tabernacles.

In addition to the timely sermons, highlights of this year’s Feast included a visit to the Splashmin’s Fun Park & Tropical Resort, a site beautifully decorated with colorful flowers, green plants and trees, situated in the sandy and hilly region of the country.

Brethren met for services in a tent, carpeted with well-cut green grass, in a location plentifully endowed with citrus and other trees. With the blue tarpaulin over our heads, palm trees shading us, and a refreshing breeze gently blowing, the setting was almost Millennial. The hotel staff was impressed by the smiles, courtesy and positive attitudes of our brethren. We indeed had a wonderful Feast, and were grateful for God’s many interventions on our behalf.

Ocho Rios, Jamaica

Brethren from the United States and Canada joined Jamaican brethren to keep the Feast at the Sunset Jamaica Grande Resort

and Spa, in the North Coast resort town of Ocho Rios—home of the world famous Dunn’s River Falls. The

“buzz” of the fellowship among the brethren continued from opening night through to the Last Great Day. It was truly amazing to see the warmth and love that flowed among the brethren, as

reflected in the attendance at the main activities: the Night of Biblical Presentations (a story from the Bible presented as a skit, and a Bible Bowl with 214 in attendance) and the cookout at the beautiful Cranbrook Flower Farm (with 190 in attendance even though it was raining), where Feastgoers enjoyed the local cuisine with entertainment and games. Brethren also enjoyed a Singles Mingles, a Seniors Luncheon and a Spokesman Club meeting.

Average attendance at services was 217. The messages were great, reflecting on God’s Kingdom and our part in it. The sermons and sermonettes were positive, powerful, inspiring and encouraging. Our overseas visitors commented on the love and hospitality extended to them by the Jamaican brethren. They also commented on the beautiful location of the site and the available attractions.

Davao City, Philippines

Here in southeastern Mindanao, 82 excited brethren kept the Feast with abundance and thanksgiving. We appreciated

the three-day visit of Regional Pastor Mr. Dayrell Tanner and his wife, whose genuine concern and love for



the Filipino brethren was noted. In his messages, Mr. Tanner emphasized the meaning of the Feast and the importance of faith and honesty to God and to His laws. Bible studies were held for the brethren, including separate studies for the youth and married couples, covering topics such as Christian living and character building and development. The brethren felt they were tasting peace typical of God's Kingdom as they dwelled together for eight days in one accord, peace and harmony.

Aside from the spiritual meat, which is the primary purpose of the Feast, brethren enjoyed swimming at the beach and taking part in the Festival talent show. The singles saw a movie, followed by food and fellowshiping. The seniors showcased their unfading talents during their night together, and ball games were played with sportsmanship and fun. Everyone had their parts as participants or spectators.

The Feast turned out to be a training ground for the young people as future leaders in the Church. They were the front-liners in ushering, special music, physical arrangement and activities. It was wonderful seeing them serve happily. Festival 2007 was a glimpse of spiritual enlightenment, rejoicing, sharing and service!

Maranding, Philippines

Fresh colors of the newly painted and landscaped facility greeted Feastgoers in Maranding. Local brethren were joined by two guest families, the Tanners from Australia and the Rosenberrys from Nevada in the United States.



Brethren coming from northwestern Mindanao area experienced a long evening of fellowship as dinner was served after a "Welcome" ethnic dance presented by the Cagayan de Oro and Iligan brethren. We appreciated the inspiring and uplifting messages on DVD, as well as the messages delivered by our local

and foreign ministers. The youth and the singles very much enjoyed the physical and social activities, including a picnic at Aurora Spring Resort. A swimming contest was the main sport on that day, which involved the children, the youth and the singles. At the farewell party, there was great joy among the brethren, who felt their hearts had been charged with spiritual power.

Don Carlos, Philippines

The town of Don Carlos is a peaceful place located in southern Bukidnon, where brethren met in a facility surrounded by fruit trees and flowers. Brethren here warmly welcomed Mr. & Mrs. Dayrell Tanner with a "Barrio Fiesta" consisting of delicious foods and native dance presentations,



hosted by the San Fernando congregation. Messages on DVD

were translated into the native dialect for easy understanding, allowing a total environment of rich spiritual and physical food during the Feast.

A picnic provided the brethren a refreshing outdoor activity where everybody was busy with their preparations. A picnic at Luwan-Luwan Spring Resort gave the brethren a refreshing outdoor activity. The youth and the singles—especially the ladies—enjoyed video sing-along even more than swimming. By the time the Last Great Day arrived, many were still feeling that they were in the middle of the Feast; they had enjoyed it so much that they were sad to go home, and they eagerly await next year's Feast.

Malacca, Malaysia

The Feast of Tabernacles this year was held at the Legacy Hotel in the historic city of Malacca, Malaysia. A total of 65 were present, out of which seven were visitors from Australia, the Philippines and the United States of America.

Visiting minister Mr. Gaylyn Bonjour and his lovely wife

Leona enhanced the atmosphere with their presence and easy mingling with the local membership. Mr. Bonjour's inimitable laughter could be heard reverberating all around in testimony of his presence!

Sermons and sermonettes touched on the various aspects of the Festival and its prophetic fulfillment. The festival coordinator, Mr. Rajan Moses, worked in unison with Mr. Bonjour in providing spiritual sustenance for the attendees, supplemented by the video sermons.

Three group luncheons were organized for the weekly Sabbath and the Holy Days to give God's people the opportunity to fellowship together over a meal. On other occasions,



brethren ventured out in small groups to enjoy meals together. The brethren visiting from overseas were not left out in this regard; they were taken for a ride, literally, to permit them to savour Malaysia's varied cuisine.

Organized activities catered to brethren of all ages. Little children had their share of fun over kiddies' games, with breaks in-between that allowed them to partake of provided snacks. For a family outing, the brethren took a trip to the zoo nearby. A special function this year was the Senior Citizens' Wine-n-Dine, which featured intense fellowshiping over an assortment of food and wine.

Mr. Bonjour agreed to bring back an excellent report of the Festival site here in Malaysia. We sincerely hope it will pave the way for an "exodus" of brethren from all over the world to keep the Feast of Tabernacles with us in the years ahead!

Eygurande, France

Nearly 130 people of diverse nationalities, from ten different countries, celebrated God's Feast of Tabernacles at the l'Abeille resort in a millennial setting near Eygurande, France, in a hilly region of France called the Massif Central. This mountainous area is accentuated by green forests, pastures and valleys, adorned by healthy-looking cows and sheep grazing freely. The l'Abeille resort was private and attractive, with a very helpful and amiable staff serving us. The fellowship throughout the Feast was out-

standing. Different languages and nationalities did not hinder the brotherly love and camaraderie. Sharing delicious and abundant family-style meals—especially the local blue cheese and bread—greatly contributed to the family atmosphere.

We received spiritual nourishment in preparation for God's soon-coming Kingdom from Messrs. Dibar Apartian, Rodger Bardo, Yvon Brochu, Marcel Ginier and Charles Ogwyn, and from other fine speakers who taught us how to become servant leaders, as true kings and priests should be.

During the Feast, we also enjoyed exciting and educational activities. We traveled to the neighboring Department of Puy de Dôme, known for the more than 100 inactive volcanoes called Chaîne des Puys. We toured the Puy de Lemptégy, a source of versatile volcanic rocks, and also "rode" a thrilling three-dimensional volcanic-eruption-simulator that had many of us shouting and laughing!

At the Talent Show, brethren from Martinique presented a couple of joyful dance numbers typical of the French Antilles. We also enjoyed the remarkably talented musical and dance performances of children and adults from France, Holland, Switzerland and the United States.

Speaking of music, the French-speaking brethren were able, for the first time, to sing songs to God during the Feast out of the new Living Church of God French Hymnal, *Psaumes et Cantiques*.

Orap, Vanuatu

Sixty-one of God's people gathered to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in Vanuatu, meeting in Orap Village on the island of Malekula. Everyone slept in tents or temporary buildings, and all meals were prepared and shared communally. This reflects the culture of the Melanesian people, and helped make this year's Feast special.

Feastgoers were richly blessed with the spiritual food of sermons on DVD. Vanuatu elder Jerry Sam, and members Christophe Tarey and Noel Meten, also spoke on Feast themes.

A spirit of love and joy ruled throughout the feast. Members enjoyed great fellowship and participated in many activities, including a picnic, games for adults and children, a Fun Show and a farm visit. Everyone appreciated the Feast, looks forward to the next one, and hopes that visitors from other lands will come and share it with us.

—Compiled from reports by: Eilon Benitez, Jongkoy Benitez, Frank Best, Johnny Bolences, Conie Casing, Henry Cooper, Peter Devis, Michael Elertson, Lascalles Fraser, Fitzroy Greeman, Lynn Jacobson, Shana Jewsbury, Rod King, Jerry Sam, Deborah Lincoln-Strange, J.B. Muller, Simon Muthama, Kinnear Penman, Jacques Secours, Phil Sena, Wallace Smith, John Soosay, Zig Svalbe, Bruce Tyler, Pieter van der Byl, Ben Whitfield and Scott Winnail



Enthusiasm and Zeal*(continues from page 4)*

anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you” (Philippians 3:13–15).

Indeed, real spiritual maturity is found in “giving” of ourselves to our Creator and to our fellow human beings. It is found in “emptying” ourselves in service, as Jesus Christ Himself did. It is found in *zealously* praying that

our service to Him be the *passion* of our lives!

Others may yell and scream during football or soccer games, or at “rock stars” and other entertainment “idols.” But our fervent dedication and *worship* must be to the Great *God* who gives us life and breath. Our total passion and worship must be to the *true* Jesus Christ who *died* for us and who is now sitting in *glory* at the right hand of the Father.

We must not allow *anything* to come between us and our heartfelt relationship with our Creator and Savior. We must *never* turn aside or waver from this path. Then, we will be able to say, with Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7–8). ☐

Faith for Healing*(continues from page 2)*

and the medical profession will **not** be able to give whatever help they might otherwise have given to those in distress.

Brethren, please *think this through!*

It is not a question of *whether* you may need God’s help, and *whether* you should trust in Him for healing! As these events come upon us, it will be *crystal clear* to those who understand that the **only** true deliverance can come from the God who gives us life and breath, and who tells us that He is, indeed, our “Healer!” All over the world, the ministry and all our brethren must build **faith** in Christ.

We must build genuine **faith** in God’s promises. Always remember the basic promise of healing, which applies to everyone in God’s true Church: “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the *prayer of faith* will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:14–16).

Mr. Armstrong often asked Dr. Herman Hoeh or me to join him in prayers over *hundreds* of anointed cloths. I had the honor of hearing God’s apostle pray for the sick as we, together, anointed these cloths and laid our hands upon them. Afterward, I was able to check regularly with the mail receiving department, and I came to find—over the experiences of many years—that about *one-third* of those receiving the anointed cloths were healed *very quickly*. Another *third* were healed after many weeks or months. Apparently, *another third* were **never** healed in this life. Some of the differences in these responses result-

ed, no doubt, from circumstances that only God may fully understand. Also, as Jesus said, “According to your **faith** be it unto you.” From Scripture and the many clear examples in your Bible, it is obvious that as we grow in faith, *many more* healings will take place.

However, it is vital to realize that even *Jesus Christ Himself* could not perform many dramatic healings in an atmosphere of *cynicism* and *doubt*! Remember, when Jesus came to His *own* city and family, “Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching” (Mark 6:5–6).

So, God does *not heal* when the attitude of faith is not there—and when there is cynicism and doubt. Brethren, I call upon all of you to join with me and all our ministry to begin, more than ever, to *cry out* to God for a literal “outpouring” of His *Spirit of faith* that more of our brethren may be healed! This will certainly be a tremendous encouragement to all of our brethren—and to the people of God in other fellowships around the world. It will also be a “sign” to outsiders to begin to realize *where* God is truly working. Certainly, what a **blessing** it will be to those individuals personally involved, to be able to be rid of the sicknesses, diseases or infirmities for which they have been anointed.

Please do join me in praying about the matter of faith and healing. And let us *rejoice* wholeheartedly that God has blessed our recent Feast of Tabernacles observances, and that *He* is moving us forward in so many ways as we complete the Work of Christ over the next several years.

With Christian love,



Ordinations

Mr. Steven L. Bode was ordained as a deacon on the Feast of Trumpets, September 13, 2007, by Mr. Rand Millich and Mr. John Turner. He serves in the Kansas City, Missouri congregation.

Mrs. Debra Carper was ordained as a deaconess by Mr. Rand Millich and Mr. Brian Pomicter on the Sabbath of September 8, 2007. She serves in the Omaha, Nebraska congregation.

Mr. Robert G. Croyle was ordained as an elder on the Feast of Trumpets, September 13, 2007, by Mr. Val Burgett. He serves in the Bluefield, West Virginia congregation.

Dr. Richard Franz was ordained as a deacon on the Day of Atonement, September 22, 2007, by Dr. Douglas Winnail and Mr. Jack Lowe. He serves the brethren in Atlanta, Georgia.

Mr. Wallace Hay was ordained as a deacon by Dr. Scott Winnail and Mr. Joe Brown on the Sabbath of September 8, 2007. He serves in the Thomasville, Georgia congregation.

Mr. Stephen Moody was ordained as a deacon on the Sabbath of August 18, 2007, by Mr. Martin Fannin. He serves the congregation in Asheville, North Carolina.

Mr. Tony Peacock was ordained a deacon by Dr. Scott Winnail and Mr. Gilbert Baust on the Feast of Trumpets, September 13, 2007. He serves in the Jacksonville, Florida congregation.

Dr. John G. Riehm was ordained an elder on the Feast of Trumpets, September 13, 2007, by Mr. Lambert Greer. He serves the brethren in Louisville, Kentucky.

Miss Christine Sullins was ordained a deaconess by Dr. Scott Winnail and Mr. Joe Brown on the Sabbath of September 8, 2007. She serves in the Thomasville, Georgia congregation.

Wedding

Jacob Kidney and Krista Smith of the Akron, Ohio congregation were married on July 22, 2007 in the beautiful Butterfly Gardens of the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster, OH. The ceremony was conducted by Mr. Rodger Hagmaier.

Anniversaries

Fred and Joyce Mullet of the Akron, Ohio congregation observed their 50th wedding anniversary on July 8, 2007. On the following Sabbath, they were honored with a cake reception after services. They have been baptized members of God's Church since 1964.

Norman and Bessie Oliver of the Akron, Ohio congregation observed their 50th wedding anniversary on August 30, 2007. They were honored with a cake reception after services on the following Sabbath. Norman has been a baptized member since 1959, and Bessie has been a baptized member since 1967.

Chris and Helen Sullins celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on July 5, 2007. The Thomasville, Georgia congregation presented them with a cake after services. Mr. and Mrs. Sullins have two daughters, two grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

In Loving Memory

Edward Smith, 75, of Springfield, Missouri, died peacefully on July 21, 2007. He was a rock in the Springfield congregation, where he served in many ways. Baptized in 1964, he had been a Marine in Korea, and had served his country well. Always full of stimulation, and a joy to talk with, he was a man of many varied interests, including horticulture, coin collecting and stamp collecting. His friends will deeply miss him, and await seeing him again in the Kingdom.

Richard (Dick) Swanlund, a faithful long-time member of God's Church, died on July 10, 2007. He was 69 years old. He will be well-remembered for his faithfulness; he was always willing to help in the Peoria, Illinois congregation he attended. Funeral services were conducted by Mr. Irv Woelfle at the Oakland Chapel in Princeton, Illinois.

Conscientious Objector Status for Young Adults

United States law currently requires all males to register with the Selective Service Administration within 30 days of their 18th birthday. Keeping in mind the biblical guidelines of Romans 13:1–2, the Church advises its young men to comply with this requirement, and to do so retroactively if they have previously failed to do so.

At present, there is no draft. However, if a draft is reinstated, current regulations will give conscientious objectors as little as nine days to document their status if they have not already done so. As a result, it would be wise to begin documenting your conscientious objection now, so that if the military reviews your claim it will already be established, and not be seen as the hasty action of someone simply afraid to fight.

Current Selective Service regulations apply only to men; however, it may also be wise for young women to document their conscientious objector status as soon as possible, so that they will be ready in the event that the draft is extended to women.

Our *Official Statement of Fundamental Beliefs* teaches that a true Christian will be a conscientious objector to military service. If you are a young adult in the Living Church of God, and would like more information about establishing conscientious objector status, please write to the following address for an information packet:

Living Church of God
PO Box 3810
Charlotte, NC 28227
Attn: Conscientious Objector Packet

We want to hear more about the happy milestones in the lives of our brethren. If your family has had a birth, marriage or major anniversary, please ask your local pastor to send word to the *Living Church News*, PO Box 3810, Charlotte, NC 28227-8010 (or to send e-mail to lcn@lcg.org).

Commentary

What Are the Odds?

By J. Davy Crockett, III

It was a family gathering. Three generations from far and wide, taking advantage of the Labor Day weekend to honor the patriarch of the family, who was to turn 88 the next day. He had served his country with distinction as a young pilot in World War II, and later in the Korean Conflict. When asked about his wartime experiences, the Colonel usually responded by quietly saying, "I don't study war anymore."

This gathering was unusual in that there was a guest present; a young Japanese student who had only a few days before arrived in the United States on a cultural exchange program. Everyone had welcomed him, and he quietly observed the family interact.

The doorbell rang. An elderly neighbor, also 88, was stopping by because he saw a car parked there with a license plate that said, "WWII Veteran." The two old-timers shook hands warmly and visited for a moment.

"What was your service?" the visitor exclaimed.

"United States Air Force" the Colonel replied.

"Well," the visitor said, "I spent 24 months in the South Pacific in the United States Navy."

Here were two men who had done their part to defend the nation, and who had lived to enjoy the freedoms we are blessed with in the U.S.

What made this scene poignant and very unusual was the presence of the young Japanese student, whose grandparents were undoubtedly the enemy in the conflict about which these two veterans reminisced. He sat quietly as the two men chatted, then was introduced as a guest of the family. The grizzled veteran of the South Pacific theater of WWII, who had spent two years of

his life fighting against this young man's homeland, graciously shook his hand before leaving.

What are the odds of meeting a child of your old enemy in your own neighborhood?

As I watched this scene unfold, it impressed upon me how much can change in a generation. Our nation's old enemy is now an international business partner and valued ally. Men who laid their lives on the line in war with that enemy can let old hatreds and animosities die, without carrying a grudge or continuing the battle.

God's people look forward to a time, described in the Bible, when war will be no more. When Jesus Christ returns to bring the Kingdom of God to the earth, "He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4). And: "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:7).

The Apostle John wrote: "God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:3-4).

What are the odds that this wonderful scenario described in your Bible will come to pass? If you understand that the Bible is the true revelation from the Eternal God, who has been working out His plan on the earth since the beginning, you know you can count on it!

The above is adapted from one of the many commentaries, discussing vital topics facing our world, available at the www.lcg.org and www.tomorrowworld.org Web sites.