

Living Church News

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The Power of God's Spirit

Dear Brethren and Friends,

We are the people of God! God has not called most of this world to understand His will. But He *has* called most of you reading this article. Jesus said, "No man can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44).

Brethren, you and I have had that calling. And that calling brings with it a special *responsibility*. For Jesus also said, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him *much will be required*" (Luke 12:48).

As Pentecost approaches, we need to meditate on the **power** of God's Holy Spirit! For that Spirit was "poured out" on the early Christians (Titus 3:5–6)—and we too can be filled with this very Spirit of God if we fully surrender and seek God with all our hearts. However, we *must realize* that we are living in an exceedingly sinful age. We should not assume that we are "okay" with God just because our standard is a little higher than that of the society around us. For God's Spirit has *not* been poured out on *this society*. Rather, the world around us has been **drenched** with *Satan's spirit*—his cynicism and sarcasm against the things of God, his *rebellion* and his total unwillingness to let the Creator "tell him what to do." No matter how much "churchianity" may talk "religious talk" and describe its love for "sweet Jesus," its people will **not** surrender their hearts and minds to literally **do** what God says, to **obey** His Law or to let Him genuinely **rule their lives**. As the Apostle Paul was inspired to tell us, "The carnal mind is **enmity** against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

The upcoming day of Pentecost should focus our minds on our absolute need, living in this worldly and confused society, to **seek God with all our hearts!** If we are to be filled with God's Spirit, we must do *everything* we can to walk with God, talk with God and let God **rule** the thoughts and intentions of our minds. We must constantly "feed" on Jesus Christ (John 6:57), and fill our minds with God's word continually. As David did, we need to pray, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

Brethren, it is *so easy* for you and me to get caught up in our daily routines, and to become so absorbed in entertainment or in talking to people about merely physical things, that we **forget** we are the *bondslaves* and *ambassadors* of Jesus Christ, who must constantly **give** of our time, talents, energies and resources to help prepare for the Kingdom of God, and who

must constantly be “overcoming” in every phase of our lives to become more like Jesus Christ—and more fit to become those kings and priests whom He is preparing to assist Him in ruling the cities and nations of this earth.

Are we doing all of this?

One of the hardest things for anyone to do is to genuinely take correction and act on it! Are you willing to be shown where you are wrong, accept that correction in a right attitude, pray about it and then try to respond positively—through Christ in you—to make the changes necessary in your life? Sadly, most people resent correction. They often get their feelings hurt, and feel badly toward those who give the correction—even though it may have been given with every good intention to point out real problems in the individual’s life, which need to be solved for the person’s ultimate good!

How To “Feed on Christ”

Dear brethren, we all need to read the Bible regularly with the attitude of letting it correct us! For instance, notice this instruction from Paul: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1–2).

When we read these verses, do we sincerely ask ourselves, “Am I actually becoming a living sacrifice in the hands of God?” Do we ask, “Am I seeking to have my mind ‘transformed’ and ‘renewed’ through God’s Spirit and through Christ living within me?”

We need to study the Bible constantly with that attitude! We should literally be “crying out” to God to fashion us, mold us and make us more like Jesus Christ in every phase of our lives!

A few years ago, thousands of religious youth in this country were wearing “WWJD” bracelets, T-shirts, and other paraphernalia. As many of you remember, those initials stood for, “What Would Jesus Do?” However, most of the young people wearing “WWJD” did not remotely understand that in order to find out what Jesus would do, they would need to study the Bible to see what He really did do when He was here on earth! So, for me personally, I have turned the slogan around and I try to make a habit of asking myself regularly, “What would Jesus really do?” Perhaps you will want to appropriate this same habit in your own meditation.

Thinking of it this way, I can focus my mind on remembering that I must become genuinely sure of what Jesus would do, so that I am not just imagining in some sentimental way what He might do. This reminds me that I need to study, meditate and be sure that I am following the genuine example of Jesus of Nazareth as He walked in human flesh. Yet, as we all know, I cannot always do that, unless I am actively seeking God’s help through His Holy Spirit, so that it is actually Christ doing these things within me by that Spirit.

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What Is the “Fruit” of Rebels?

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

If there are any decisions or teachings in God’s Church that you have *come to disagree with*, should you flee or start your own church? What is the “fruit”—the actual result—of those who do? What does it lead to, in nearly every case?

Dear brethren, in my 58 years in God’s true Church, I have seen dozens of individuals who have become upset about something, disagreed with something or thought they have seen “new light” on some religious idea, then left the Church of God to go off on their own. In many cases, these people—mainly *ambitious men* who want to be “in charge”—will not only leave the established Body of Christ, but will go out and “recruit” others to try to *start their own church!*

How does the Eternal God look on this type of behavior? Is the Bible clear about His divine attitude toward those who, in effect, *rebel* against a good and decent true Church of God that is doing God’s Work and is teaching the Truth—however imperfectly?

I write “however imperfectly” because *none of us* is totally perfect. I do **not** mean to use this as an excuse for any kind of *doctrinal* error or *wholesale apostasy* such as took place in our former association! But, again, what is almost always the **result** of such rebellion?

The Eternal God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to establish the Church. Jesus said, “I will *build my church*, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). The Apostle Paul reminds us that Jesus Christ is the active Head of God’s

Church. For God, “put *all things* under His feet and gave Him [Christ] to be **Head** over all things to the Church, which is *His body*, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22–23). Paul also instructs us to be “endeavoring to keep the **unity** of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is *one body* and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:3–4).

So Scripture constantly encourages unity—not an attitude of divisiveness. It was *Satan the Devil* who first fostered the attitude of divisiveness when he said, “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:13–14).

Throughout the Bible, God clearly indicates that He *does not appreciate* those who have an attitude that causes *division*. He does not countenance *rebellion* against constituted authority, and does not support those who try to hinder in any way those human servants whom He is actually using to preach His Truth and do His Work.

Even though the sons of God’s servant Samuel were indulging in dishonest, illegal and ungodly behavior, the elders of Israel were shown to be **wrong** when they used Samuel’s faults as an excuse to rebel against God (1 Samuel 8:7). For, in spite of being old and a little slow to act on these problems, Samuel absolutely *was* God’s true servant, teaching the Truth and doing God’s Work at that time. So God **condemned** those who rebelled against His true servant—and our nations have *suffered terribly* ever since, when God removed His

direct government from Israel clear down to our time!

More Recent Rebels

Most of you realize that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong did not “appoint himself” into the ministry. Rather, he was ordained by the established, historical Church of God. He tried to cooperate with that Church for years, but finally felt he had no choice but to leave because they *would not* grow in grace and in knowledge and *would not* even accept key doctrines such as God’s Holy Days and the identity of modern Israel, along with other important points. Yet, even after separating from them, he tried to cooperate for many years, holding campaigns with and for them, and trying not to cause any huge division.

In my case, most of you know that I personally tried to cooperate with the Worldwide Church of God for a few years after Mr. Armstrong’s death, and allowed myself to be put in a kind of “internal exile” while waiting on God to show me clearly what to do. Finally, after the *God Is...* booklet came out and other major doctrines were being changed, God showed me that I **had** to leave, rather than go along with the greatest apostasy in the modern history of God’s Church!

I was **not** trying to rush off and “start my own church.” In fact, my wife wanted me to leave *one year earlier* and I resisted, telling her, “Honey, I have *always* taught loyalty and unity. So I’m **not** going to leave until I am *absolutely sure* that these men have totally rejected God’s way!”

Like Mr. Armstrong, I had already been ordained by a leading minister in the historical Church of God. Mr. Armstrong had ordained me himself, in front of the entire Headquarters congregation, on December 20, 1952. Like

Mr. Armstrong, I did not go off and “appoint myself.” For God is *very stern* about the matter of **anyone** trying to “appoint” himself as a minister of Jesus Christ, or giving himself some “big title” that does not come directly from God.

God inspired Paul to give us this instruction regarding the ministry, which certainly applies today just as it did in Paul’s day, “And *no man* takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was” (Hebrews 5:4). So those who break away and ordain themselves, or “appoint” themselves as so-called apostles or prophets, are not obeying or honoring the living Jesus Christ!

Jesus Christ said, “And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12).

It is vital that each of you brethren carefully *think through* whether you should follow some disgruntled member, deacon or elder who decides to *rebel* against the established Church that is preaching God’s word and is, in fact, **doing** God’s Work. Every Bible example of this kind of behavior shows that God Himself regards it as a form of *rebellion!*

Having watched so many men down through the years try to exalt themselves by practicing this kind of behavior, I have been fascinated to see how it has almost *always* worked out—to see that the “fruits” of such self-exaltation showed it to have been *absolutely wrong!* I recall one young “smart aleck,” back in 1953, who began to accuse Mr. Armstrong of “Armstrong extravagance.” This young man apparently thought he would tear the Church apart by his accusations, and he actually convinced two or three of the leading Ambassador College students to resign from their positions and to prepare to leave the college. One reason I was brought back down from Portland, Oregon was to help settle

this situation. What happened to the leader of this rebellion? He went off and virtually disappeared—after managing to take only two or three people with him—and most of us *never heard of him again!*

Later, one teacher and a leading student at Ambassador College began to criticize Mr. Armstrong, charging that in one of his earlier booklets he had copied or paraphrased too much from other material. I looked into the charge carefully, and saw that it was at least partially accurate. So, I went to Mr. Armstrong about the matter, and he sincerely explained, “Rod, I have been as busy as a one-armed paper hanger, and I had to *quickly put together* a lot of material that I wrote during those years. If you want to help me look into it, we can straighten it out now.”

So I got together with Mr. Armstrong, Dr. Herman Hoeh and these two men, and we went through the booklet in question—carefully *removing* any material that was not correct, and rewriting the rest of it so it did not directly copy anything from another book. Mr. Armstrong was all for this, and was glad that I could help in that instance.

But, did these two men—an associate professor and a leading student—try to cooperate and be loyal to Mr. Armstrong and to the Church as we worked to resolve the problem? *Of course not!* These men were looking for an excuse to **leave!** This was apparent from their attitude at the time, and in fact that is exactly what they did.

What happened to them?

Although I know their names and have asked about them over the decades since, I never heard *from them* or *about them* again! In a sense, they “disappeared.” Where will *they* be when the Great Tribulation begins, and God is looking down from heaven to see who has been **loyal** to His Work and who is worthy

to be taken to the promised “Place of Safety?”

The “Fruit” of Rebellion

Still later, a couple of elders back in the Midwest started to complain, becoming very upset and self-righteous because the Church was not using palm branches in observing the Feast of Tabernacles. Those elders came out to see Mr. Armstrong about this, and also met with me and with others. They were *very adamant*, pushy and self-righteous. Mr. Armstrong explained how we keep the *genuine intent* of Scripture in the way we observe the Feast of Tabernacles and other Holy Days, and that it is up to the “Body” of Christ to decide the exact details of **how** these matters are to be administered (Colossians 2:16–17, KJV). But, again, these two elders apparently had already made up their minds. So they **left** and tried to start a “church” on their own. *What happened?* Again, they simply *disappeared* into the mists of time, and essentially vanished from the scene—accomplishing **nothing** and in *no way* being used to do God’s Work in preaching the Gospel and helping others!

More recently, we have seen a number of former Living Church of God elders *rebel* and try to “start something” on their own. Some simply wanted to “do their own thing.” Others professed to be “upset” about some doctrine or decision. One way or another, each thought he was justified—even righteous—for leaving to do his own thing. But look at the fruits. In **no case** has God even remotely used any of these rebels to powerfully preach the Truth to the world, or to genuinely strengthen people and help them grow—loyally and humbly—“to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). In most cases, these men’s little groups have fallen

apart and come to **nothing** because of the selfish, divisive, bickering spirit that was in these rebels in the first place. Their spirit of rebellion attracts other rebels, who eventually rebel against those rebels, and they all drift apart, away from the Work that God is doing.

I realize that some disgruntled members have accused me of changing our teaching about the Gospel. Some have even rebelled and left the Church because of this accusation. Dear brethren, let me assure you that I still believe what I learned at the feet of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, and I strive to teach it faithfully. Yes, I am

Brethren, *why* do some leading men get it into their heads to try to exalt themselves and—in one way or another—*rebel* against those whom God has shown by the “fruits” that He is using to preach His Truth and do His Work? Is it the same spirit Satan had when he said, “*I will be like the Most High*”? Each of us needs to *think very soberly* about this matter.

For if any of you drift into that kind of attitude or behavior—if *any* of you brethren follow such a man in his rebellion against God’s true servants—you are *in terrible trouble* with the God who gives us life and breath. *Please understand that!*

them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” Paul then was inspired to write, “Therefore, let him who thinks he stands **take heed** lest he fall” (v. 12)!

Notice a vital Old Testament example of how we ought to “take heed.” Moses and Aaron were very human, and no doubt made some human mistakes. But was this a good reason for a number of leading Israelites to try to overthrow them? Remember what happened: “And they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty **leaders** of the congregation, representatives of the congrega-

Brethren, why do some leading men get it into their heads to try to exalt themselves and—in one way or another—rebel against those whom God has shown by the “fruits” that He is using to preach His Truth and do His Work? Is it the same spirit Satan had when he said, “I will be like the Most High”? Each of us needs to think very soberly about this matter.

human, so certainly I sometimes mis-speak or make some point unclearly, but this *does not mean* I have changed what I believe or teach. The Church has certainly “grown” in some small technical points, but *not* in any ways that contradict Mr. Armstrong’s plain teachings about the Gospel or about so many other foundational matters of Church doctrine and practice.

Most of you brethren understand this, and you see the fruits of how this Church is *powerfully preaching* the true Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Sadly, a few have gone into rebellion because of alleged mistakes and “changes.” But eventually these rebels always make their own mistakes, and some of their own people—who have become “picky” and lost sight of the “big picture”—accuse *them* of making “changes.” Then, these rebels who were slow to forgive others always demand that people forgive them quickly for *their* mistakes! They should all read the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18.

Certainly, *if* I or *any one* of our leaders should rebel against God’s commandments and start to completely dismantle the *basic truths* that we have been preaching for the past 50 years, *that is a different matter!* But we in the Living Church of God have **not** ever done this, and after 58 years of loyal service, I am sure that I will **not** make that kind of mistake!

In His inspired word, God tells us, “Jesus Christ is the **same** yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). He clearly shows that Jesus Christ was the “Rock” who followed ancient Israel in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:4). He was the “God of Israel” who dealt with them during all those years, acting for God the Father. In all the ways He dealt with them, He was showing us the “mind of God,” which is why the Bible tells us, “Now these things became *our examples*, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted” (v.6). God repeats the same thought again in verse 11, “Now all these things happened to

tion, *men of renown*. They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, ‘You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?’ So when Moses heard it, he fell on his face” (Numbers 16:2–4).

Certainly, Moses acted with confidence in dealing with situations around him. He sometimes had to correct powerfully these rebels and others. But what was **God’s opinion** of him? “*Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth*” (Numbers 12:3). You see, brethren, *God looks on the heart!* He knew that Moses, in his heart, was so deeply surrendered to do God’s will that He considered him the **most humble** man on the entire face of the earth!

However, those human “men of renown” could not see Moses’ sur-

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Always Be Ready to Give an Answer

By Richard F. Ames

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15, KJV).

Over the millennia, men and women of faith have lived and died in the faith. Throughout their lives—and by their lives—the faithful servants of God have given an answer. They have given a defense of their faith and their hope—the same faith and hope we share with them. We all have a great hope in the resurrection. We look forward to Christ’s second coming, and to the coming Kingdom of God. Whether you have been living God’s way of life for a month, a year, a decade or more, you can give an answer. If you believe the Bible and strive to live by it, you can give an answer. If you know what you believe, you can give an answer. If you have God’s Spirit flowing out from you, and you renew it every day through prayer, meditation and Bible study, you can give an answer. If you are doing God’s will, you can give an answer.

Some years ago, I received a phone call from a Church member who was being pressured by a friend who told her, “If you’re not going to eat pork, then you’re going to have to do everything the Old Testament says. You can’t eat any pears from your pear tree until after seven years.” This member felt that she was being put on the defensive. She started “backpedaling.” She said she did not remember reading that in the Bible, then afterward she told me she felt she had let God down because she did not have an answer for the friend who was pressuring her.

How would you handle such a situation? Could you answer that question? How would

you answer an argument against your faith, particularly when you are not familiar with the specific biblical point your attacker is raising? Would you become flustered and feel that the attacker must actually have solid proof that your foundational beliefs are wrong? Or would you be able to say respectfully, “Thank you for caring about me, but I’ll have to research for myself what you’re saying about that scripture”?

As many of you probably realize, this Church member was responding to a deceptive argument. She later discovered that her friend was misrepresenting Leviticus 19. This taught our Church member a valuable lesson: Do not take for granted that a critic or accuser has all the facts, or is representing them accurately. Prove the truth for yourself!

This Church member appreciated my counsel that she did not need to feel pressured to know everything “on the spot.” Critics want to make you think they have found the “loose brick” in your faith, and that if that brick is removed your whole spiritual house will fall down. Of course, people have for millennia been trying to find a loose spiritual brick that will bring the Church down, but they have not found one—and will not find one!

Regarding God’s laws for agriculture, His people have proved for themselves that they work. Many of you may be familiar with the agricultural program at Ambassador College in Big Sandy, Texas, where my wife and I lived for twelve years. This program sought to apply God’s agricultural principles to actual working farm-



land—to the fruit trees and to the crops—and they even implemented the biblical land Sabbaths. This program was especially blessed. One county agent saw it for himself. He had seen the land before the program began; it had become virtually worthless after being overworked by cotton farming. Seven years later, after the land rest, that agent returned and saw the land fertile and productive. He said he could not believe his eyes upon seeing the transformation. God’s ways really do work!

Have you put your spiritual house in order? Have you built your beliefs on a sure foundation? Many scriptures use a house as a symbol of your belief system. God’s Church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20). And: “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

So, what is your spiritual foundation? Is your house built upon a rock (Matthew 7:24–27)? Some in God’s Church are new in the faith, and are just starting to learn. It may take them some time to come to a deeper conviction and understanding, as they internalize the truth as part of their godly character.

Make Yourself Ready

How do you become ready to give an answer? How do you state your faith, and prepare to describe your faith? Many scriptures remind us that we are to talk often to one another, and exhort one another. One simple and practical way to do this is to ask questions at the dinner table (Malachi 3:16; Hebrews 10:25). We read in the biographies of many famous world figures that they learned about the world while seated at their parents’ dinner table. Before he became President of the United States, John F. Kennedy discussed world issues at the dinner table with his father Joe Kennedy, who was for a time Ambassador to England. At dinner, you can ask your family members, “What is God like? What is the Bible? Why keep the Sabbath?” Those sound like simple questions to most of us, but more than 99 percent of the world’s population cannot answer them adequately. Do not assume that you are safe because you think you know the answer now; there are tens of thousands of our former brethren who thought they knew the answers, but who eventu-

ally apostatized and fell away. Did they really know the answers to those questions? Yes, we need to speak often to one another, as Malachi reminds us (Malachi 3:16–17). We need those answers to form our deepest convictions, and we need to live by every word of God.

How else can we prepare ourselves to answer? Many men have the blessing of having a Spokesman Club available in their congregation. This helps “iron sharpen iron” (Proverbs 27:17). We need to expose our ideas to others who have wisdom and experience. How often do we see people come up with the weirdest, most way-out ideas, because they have isolated themselves from being cross-examined? Many of our former brethren, who for years were kept on the right path because they were in the community of the faithful, have gone off in their own little isolated communities, and they argue against all wise judgment. Seeking after branches and twigs, they have lost the “trunk of the tree.” When a minister isolates himself from the body of Christ, and no longer has a multitude of counsel other than those who are his “yes men,” he can easily fall into error. Scripture tells us, “A man who isolates himself, seeks his own desire, he rages against all wise judgment” (Proverbs 18:1).

If we are to give an answer for what we believe, we obviously need to *know what we believe*. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). We need to know God’s word and study it regularly.

One tool that can help you prove and strengthen your beliefs from God’s word, and can help you be ready with an answer, is the Church’s *Statement of Fundamental Beliefs*. I hope you already have a copy of this and have read it; if you do not, you can order a free printed copy or can download one from the Church Web site. It is not a complete exposition of every detail of our beliefs, but it is meant as a thorough overview, agreed upon by Dr. Meredith and the Council of Elders. Although we often hear of well-meaning people who look at the hundreds of Church of God groups and say, “we’re all the same,” the truth is that we are not all the same! There are real differences and distinctions, and you should not just assume that some group is a doctrinally sound part of the Church of God simply because

it says it is. You need to prove the Truth for yourself, from God's word.

But have you even read all of God's word? How long does it take to read through the whole Bible? In the back of one of my copies of the *New King James Version*, there was a one-year reading program. I completed it in a year and a half. For some people it may take a little longer, and some may proceed more quickly, but it can be done. And you will benefit from it. Remember, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly furnished for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Remember, according to the literal translation of the Greek, all of Scripture is "God-breathed"—the Greek word is *theopneustos*—so we can have great confidence when we read it. We also have a responsibility to know it and to respond to it. Have we internalized the foundational doctrines of the Church? The sixth chapter of Hebrews lists six basic doctrines: (1) repentance from dead works, (2) faith toward God, (3) baptisms, (4) laying on of hands, (5) resurrection of the dead and (6) eternal judgment. The seventh doctrine, by the way, is our going on to perfection, having laid the foundation of those six doctrines.

Those doctrines are the basis of God's plan of salvation for you, and He has made that plan well-known through the annual Holy Days and the weekly Sabbath. Have you studied those doctrines thoroughly? Do you really believe them? Are you so convicted of them that they are a part of your very character? You need to be *thoroughly* convicted.

An Awkward Question?

Has anyone ever asked you, "Are you saved?" How did you respond? When I was in high school, one of my friends asked me, "Dick, are you saved?" I replied, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, if you were to die tonight, do you believe you'll go to heaven?"

I wanted to end the awkward conversation, so I said "yes" and my friend did not get an opportunity to "save" me. The problem was that I did not know the Truth at that time, and I was just oblivious. I thought everything was fine, until God called me several years later and showed me differently.

The truth is, we *have been* saved, we *are being* saved, and we *shall be* saved. We have been saved

from the death penalty by accepting the shed blood of Christ (Titus 3:4–5). We are "among those who are being saved" (2 Corinthians 2:15). And we shall be saved by Christ's life (Romans 5:10). Remember, "he that endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

Another common question is, "Do you love Jesus?" Many of us in God's Church can sometimes feel offended by this question, because it can sound so "Protestant," and can remind us of the apostasy in our former association. But in general it is a good idea to give the questioner the benefit of the doubt, and you can probably answer helpfully after you discern the questioner's attitude and approach.

There are several ways you could answer that question. One would be to ask your questioner, "Which Jesus are you talking about? Are you talking about the false 'Jesus' who is said to have done away with His Father's commandments?" Most likely, though, you can hold that response in reserve. But it is a good exercise to ask yourself, "Do I love Jesus? What does it mean to love Jesus?"

We know that to love Jesus is to keep the commandments (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3). I hope you are showing your love for Jesus by keeping the commandments! And I hope you do love your Savior, who gave His life for you, and who sits today at the Father's right hand as your High Priest and intercessor!

Years ago, I remember asking my Ambassador College students to share with me their personal proofs of God's existence—not just the "traditional" seven proofs which we all know. One student gave a response that I remember to this day. He said: "I know God exists, because if He didn't call me and I didn't make changes in my life, I would be dead now. I know that God exists because I see the evidence in the change in my own life."

That student saw God's personal concern for his life. I could say something very similar: if God had not called me, I would probably either be dead or in prison by now. I know that God—the true Jesus of the Bible—shed His blood for me, and if He had not covered my sins with His blood, I would end up dead for all eternity. I love Jesus, the Christ, because I belong to Him! He is the Passover Lamb who was sacrificed for me. Here is how Paul expressed this thought: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, hav-

ing now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:8–10).

We can also reflect on Dr. Meredith’s favorite verse: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, KJV). And we can be profoundly thankful for the love God showed by allowing His Son to die for us (John 3:16).

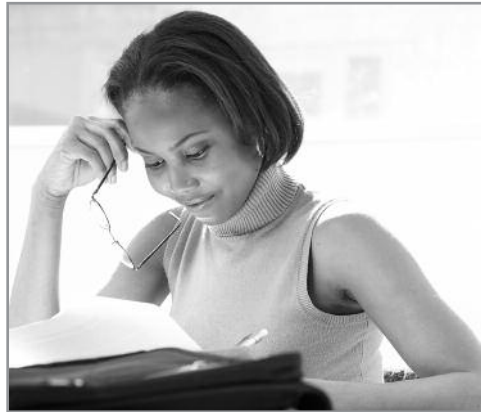
It is not unbiblical to express our deep emotional response to our Savior and His love for us. The Psalms express King David’s heartfelt love toward God. We should not be deceived by a false sentimental Jesus, but there is a right sentiment we should have for the true Jesus of the Bible, who will soon return as King of kings and Lord of lords. We should not let ourselves be pressured into some false or superficial declaration of “Praise the Lord” or that we “love Jesus.” But as you grow closer to God in your development as a Christian, I hope you can say, privately, to your Lord and Savior: “I love you” from a meaningful and genuine place in your heart.

Answer in Faith

When we answer someone, we must have an attitude of faith. Are you ashamed of Jesus Christ? Do you become defensive or nervous when people ask you about your faith, or your relationship with Jesus Christ? There is no reason in the world why we should become defensive or nervous about Him. We read: “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38). So we want to be careful never to be ashamed of our Savior.

How should you answer if a person comes at you with an aggressive or critical question? Notice Christ’s example. “Now when He came

into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, ‘By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?’ But Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things’” (Matthew 21:23–24). Jesus then asked them whether the baptism of John came from heaven or from men. “And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, “From heaven,” He will say to us, “Why then did you not believe him?” But if we say, “From men,” we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.’ So they answered Jesus and said, ‘We do not know.’ And He said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things’” (vv. 25–27). Following Jesus’ example, it is sometimes appropriate to answer an aggressive or challenging question with another question.



appropriate to answer an aggressive or challenging question with another question.

Remember, though, it is not a good idea to become hostile or arrogant in our responses. Imagine how someone would react if you said to them, “You asked me if I’m a Christian; well, I’ll tell you, these millions of so-called Christians in this world are no more converted than a tad-

pole!” When we give an answer for the hope that lies within us, our answer should reflect that hope, not bitterness.

How would you answer the question, “Are you a Christian?” What, in fact, is a Christian? Most people in the world would simply say, “It is someone who accepts Christ.” But is that the Bible’s definition? Notice: “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His” (Romans 8:9). In other words, unless Christ is in us—unless we let Him guide us to live His way—we are not Christians. Remember Christ’s admonition, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things I say?” (Luke 6:46). And: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

A true Christian, of course, will be found doing the Work that Christ commissioned the

Church to accomplish. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20).

Often when people ask us questions or challenge our beliefs, they are doing so honestly and humbly, and we can help them by answering in an honest and reasoned way. However, we may sometimes recognize that our questioners are not reasonable, and that no matter what reasoning we try to use to help them, it just comes back in our face to cause more contention. Jesus told us that we are not to cast our pearls before swine, and we know it is not our job to “convert” people to our beliefs. The book of Proverbs tells us, on the one hand, “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him” (Proverbs 26:4). On the other hand, as the next verse counsels us, “Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes” (v. 5). So both principles are there, and we need to discern which is right in each circumstance.

I remember a time, many years ago, when I was driving somewhere with one of my college friends. I said something silly to him, but he just ignored me. Because he did not respond, I thought to myself, “I had better not be silly or foolish in his presence anymore!” So there is a time not to answer a fool, but with God’s help we can discern when it is appropriate to answer.

Ready to Answer?

How can we always be ready to give an answer? If we want to be ready to give a reason of the hope that lies within us, we must have hope and faith. Abraham, called the “father of the faithful,” was strong in faith. He was fully convinced that God could do what He had promised (Romans 4:20–21). Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). So it is vital that we read the Bible regularly. As we do so, God will bring to our remembrance the truth of His word, through His Spirit (John 14:26).

If we are to be able to give an answer for what we believe, we need to believe the true Gospel. Contrary to what some critics have charged, the Living Church of God has not changed what we believe about the Gospel. It is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Christ preached that Gospel, and it is also called the Gospel of Christ—since He is


the King of the coming Kingdom of God. Some brethren may think it is wrong if we sometimes choose to express the truth of the Gospel in our own words, but in fact this is something we each need to do. We need to internalize doctrines and make sure they are truly our beliefs—beliefs we can understand and express to others. Not that we change things to suit our own ideas, but that we express the “trunk of the tree” unchanging truths in ways that are meaningful to us.

To give an answer, we need to seek God’s wisdom. That wisdom is the wisdom from above (James 3:17). When we answer, we must be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16). We must also be filled with God’s Spirit. Christ told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would teach them what to say (Luke 12:11–12). If we are brought before magistrates for interrogation, we should not worry about planning ahead what to say. If we have been keeping close to God, and we are filled with His Spirit, God promises to guide our words.

Finally, we must have a fervent love for God the Father, and for His Son. Remember when Jesus, after His resurrection, was testing Peter. Peter had betrayed Jesus and denied Him three times, just as Jesus had foretold. We read: “So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed My lambs.’ He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep’” (John 21:15–17).

How would you answer if Jesus asked you, “Do you love Me more than these?”

If you have lived God’s way of life for years, you have basically answered this question by your deeds, and by the faith that motivates your deeds. When you have made mistakes you have repented, and you have remained willing to grow and to overcome. Your life experience should be an answer for others who seek evidence of what you believe.

Brethren, as we continue to draw closer to God, let us always be ready to give an answer! 

God Hates Gossip!

By Dibar K. Apartian

Do you know what scourge victimizes more people every year than all the sicknesses and accidents in the world? It is the deadly poison of gossip.

The Bible explains that Satan the Devil is the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). One way he “accuses” us is by spreading rumors and causing gossip.

Satan introduced gossip into the world shortly after God created Adam and Eve. He spread rumors about God. Satan told Adam and Eve that God had lied to them. He tempted them to doubt God’s loving concern, and to question His wonderful plan for all mankind to inherit eternal life.

God told the man, after putting him in the Garden of Eden: “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16–17).

God’s command was clear. But Satan put doubts in Eve’s mind. He led her to question why God had forbidden her to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Satan wanted Eve to feel that God was keeping from her something that was good for her.

Notice how Eve answered Satan (who appeared to her in the form of a serpent), when she described God’s order. She told

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 3:2–3).

Why did Eve add the last part of that sentence? Where did she hear it? God did not forbid her to touch the tree. Did she invent the idea that God had forbidden her



from touching the tree, or did Satan insinuate this into her mind? Whether this twisting came from Satan or from Eve’s own desire to think of God as too harsh, it shows the power and damage of gossip—of spreading falsehood.

No doubt, the more Eve reasoned in her own mind, the more she believed she was right. She even became convinced she was telling the truth when she repeated this twisting of God’s instruction. She soon “knew” that God was really harsh and unjust.

Just think: If you repeat something often enough, you end up believing it. In this case, that is what Satan wanted Eve to do. If he could convince her to believe God was unjust, he could deceive her. Once Eve had been deceived, the stage was set for Adam and Eve both to disobey God by taking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Why Gossip?

The carnal mind always seeks its own way, its own aggrandizement. It wants to be right. Self-justification is one way to achieve that goal. Accusation is another. Both help to shield our own mistakes. The carnal mind likes to be exalted. It will distort facts or twist statements to preserve its own presumed integrity. You may not realize it, but self-justification is linked to gossip.

Do you realize how often, during conversations, you only hear what you want to hear, and not necessarily what was said? Likewise, when you repeat only what you wanted to hear, you present the information in such a way that you end up appearing innocent of any errors.

But God commands: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16).

Do you grasp the depth of that commandment? Bearing false witness against someone can involve not only lying, but also

accusing, gossiping and spreading rumors.

If you are truly a Christian, you should never take part in any of these activities. You should not accuse others—not to defend yourself, not to cover your mistakes and not to make yourself look good in the eyes of others. Put simply, the ninth commandment forbids lies, accusation, gossip and spreading rumors. That is what bearing false witness is!

As a Christian, you are to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:39). But how can you love your neighbors if you accuse them or gossip about them? How can you love them if you have a part in hurting their friendships, their jobs or even their family relationships through your gossip?

Satan wants you to bear false witness. He would like to cause division between you and your brethren. He would like to destroy your home, and he would do anything to divide or destroy the Church.

Again, when you gossip, you bear false witness against your neighbor, but God says, “You shall not bear false witness... You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Romans 13:9).

Stop and ask yourself: How much of what you hear is true? And how much of what you say—or repeat—is true? We all tend to repeat what we hear—or believe—without checking the facts. We usually take for granted what we hear or read.

Remember, gossip is never the entire truth. It might be part of the truth, or a shaded truth, or a truth out of context, yet it is never the whole truth. But there is really no such thing as “half-truth.” A lie is a lie, whether white, black or shaded.

Here is a simple rule to remember: Before you say or repeat any-

thing about your neighbor, be sure you have all the facts (and by definition the facts will be true). Then ask yourself, “Am I loving my neighbor as myself when I repeat this?” If not, you are breaking God’s commandment.

When you hear gossip, stop and ask yourself: “Why am I listening to this?” Gossip is a poison that will affect your mind and your heart. Do you seek out those who are always ready to share some new gossip? If so, you are just as guilty as the ones who are spreading the gossip. Remember what Paul wrote to the Philippians: “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

Sometimes you can be unintentionally guilty of gossip. You may not think you are doing any harm, but gossip always harms. Whether you justify yourself by distorting the facts, or accuse someone because he is accusing you, gossip is always destructive. Ultimately, the penalty for gossip is death.

The Golden Calf

Consider what happened when Moses, who was talking with God, delayed his return from the mountain. The Israelites were concerned about him, but especially about themselves. What would they do if something had happened to Moses? Who would lead them? How would they survive in the wilderness?

They had no faith. In their fear they began to doubt God’s love for them, and they decided to go after other gods. They told Aaron, “Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the

man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him” (Exodus 32:1).

The Israelites built a golden calf and began to worship it. They forgot the Almighty God who, with tremendous miracles, brought them out of the land of Egypt. They forgot His loving promises.

“Go, get down!” God instructed Moses, “For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them” (vv. 7–8).

Moses, returning hurriedly, saw what was taking place and was horrified. He could not believe his eyes. “What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?” Moses demanded of his brother Aaron (v. 21).

Aaron was in charge of the people in Moses’ absence. He was therefore responsible for their conduct and behavior. He could have—and should have—stopped the making of the golden calf. But he was afraid of the people!

Did Aaron readily admit his guilt? Did he easily accept his share of responsibility, or did he justify himself? He told Moses: “Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. For they said to me, ‘Make us gods that shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him’” (vv. 22–23).

Notice how Aaron justified himself. He considered his task impossible, since he knew he was dealing with a rebellious, stiff-necked people whose minds were set on evil. How could anyone reason with such a people?

So what did Aaron do? He let them act as they pleased! And how did he explain the calf? Well, it just

came into existence by itself, according to Aaron! He told Moses: “And I said to them, ‘Whoever has any gold, let them break it off.’ So they gave it to me, and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out” (v. 24).

Simple, yes? All you need to do to produce a golden calf is to gather all the gold you can find and cast it into a fire—and out will come a golden calf! Such was the meaning of Aaron’s self-justifying explana-

As Christ said: “For John [the Baptizer] came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’” (Matthew 11:18–19).

Strangely enough, many of the people who accused Jesus or spread rumors about Him had never seen Him. They only believed what they

resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:42–44).

It is hard to believe, but people even accused Jesus of being possessed by a demon (v. 48)!

Indeed, Christ’s persecutors could not understand Him. They had regard for their father the devil, who is a liar. They believed the lies, and not the truth. As one old saying goes, “If you don’t want people to believe you, just tell them the truth!”

As a Christian, you are to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:39). But how can you love your neighbors if you accuse them or gossip about them? How can you love them if you have a part in hurting their friendships, their jobs or even their family relationships through your gossip?

tion. Aaron spread a story that just happened to put him in the best light possible.

Strange as it may sound, it is with reasoning like this that the human mind tries to justify itself. It puts the blame on others, instead of acknowledging its own share of guilt or responsibility. Aaron’s way of describing events is not much different from the way we would describe happenings in our own lives. In a parallel situation, our human nature will cause most of us to present a matter so as to picture ourselves blameless.

Gossip About Jesus

Was Christ a drunkard? Of course not! But His persecutors claimed He was. They spread rumors about Him.

Actually, people saw wrong in whatever Jesus did. When He drank wine, He became a drunkard in their eyes. When He ate with the publicans, He was classified as being one of them. Christ was accused no matter what He said or did. His enemies constantly spread rumors about Him.

had heard, and they had heard from His enemies that Christ was a drunkard and a glutton.

Even though Jesus never broke God’s commandments, He was accused of breaking every last one of them. When he healed on the Sabbath, they said He broke the Sabbath. When He said that those who do His Father’s will are like members of His own family, people implied that He was neglecting His mother, brothers and sisters (Matthew 12:46–50). People did not even believe Christ was born of the Holy Spirit; rather, they called Him illegitimate—one born of fornication (John 8:41).

To His false accusers, Christ said: “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own

Yet there is no excuse for members of God’s Church to behave like those who do not have God’s Spirit. We must always tell the truth. We must never say anything that could hurt or harm our neighbors—never gossip, never spread rumors.

Today the world still hates Christ, because it does not understand His teachings. People still spread false rumors about Him, His teachings and the message He brought from His Father.

“If you were of the world,” Jesus told His disciples, “the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also” (John 15:19–20).

Today this prophecy is being fulfilled, much as it was in the days of the early Church. Not only unbelievers, but also those who once called themselves believers, are attacking the Church.

“It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him

through whom they do come!” (Luke 17:1). We had better heed this strong warning.

Rumors About Christ’s Resurrection

Enemies even spread rumors about Christ’s resurrection. On several occasions, Jesus foretold that He would be persecuted, arrested and crucified, but would rise again after three days and three nights. Did His persecutors believe Him? No! They thought He blasphemed God, and they did everything in

secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard” (v. 66).

What happened then? Christ rose from the dead, just as He had prophesied. The guards were powerless to stop the Lord’s angel from rolling back the stone and opening the door. When they returned to the city and told the chief priests what had happened, the chief priests advised the guards to deny the events and to spread new rumors.

When the chief priests and the Pharisees “had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they

But whatever the cause, gossip is sin. It breaks the ninth commandment. God hates gossip.

“These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:16–19).

Practically every one of the seven evils mentioned in these verses has something to do with lying,

Satan will put evil thoughts into your mind. He will incite you to justify yourself, to blame others and to accuse them. But God wants you to recognize your mistakes and repent of your sins. God tells you not to justify yourself, not to judge others, not to accuse. God alone is the Judge, and vengeance is His.

their power to prove Him wrong.

After Jesus’ death, the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate to ask him to prevent, by every possible means, the fulfillment of His prophecy.

They told Pilate: “Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise.’ Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead.’ So the last deception will be worse than the first” (Matthew 27:63–64).

How curious! Not only did they fail to believe Christ; they also suspected everyone else. They wanted definite action and assurance from the governor.

Pilate, as usual, found a way to shun his responsibilities. He turned the matter over to the religious authorities, and told them to do whatever they considered necessary. “So they went and made the tomb

gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, ‘Tell them, “His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.” And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure” (Matthew 28:12–14).

Thus was a complete, heinous fabrication perpetrated (v. 15). Those who persecuted Christ stopped at nothing. They adopted every despicable means to cause division among the brethren and to stop the proclamation of the Gospel. Satan was their chief counselor. One way or the other, they let him lead them.

The same is true today. Satan still wants to divide the Church and stop the proclamation of the Gospel. Those who persecute the Church are still led and influenced by him.

Examine Your Heart

Remember, gossip’s root cause may be self-justification, jealousy, a spirit of vengeance or simply vanity.

gossiping, spreading rumors and sowing discord among the brethren.

God told His people: “You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:16–18).

As God’s people—His Church—it is time that we wake up and obey His commandments seriously and from the heart. It is high time that brethren everywhere stop spreading rumors, stop seeking vengeance and stop bearing grudges against each other.

Stopping Gossip

Has gossip become such an ingrained habit in your life that you do not know how to eradicate it? Do

you really want to change? Since gossip is one of the devil's tools, you can only overcome it by using the tools of love God gives you through His Holy Spirit.

Satan will put evil thoughts into your mind. He will incite you to justify yourself, to blame others and to accuse them. But God wants you to recognize your mistakes and repent of your sins. God tells you not to justify yourself, not to judge others, not to accuse. God alone is the Judge, and vengeance is His.

Get down on your knees and ask God daily to help you examine your heart, to help you stop gossiping. Do not ever say anything that will hurt your brother. Keep your mind constantly on God and His Gospel.

The Gospel is good news; gossip is bad news. Idleness often produces gossip. Therefore, be so busy doing what is right in God's sight that you will not have time to be idle. Replace gossip with Gospel!

The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to Titus, tells us how to overcome

gossip, whatever our age or occupation. He tells the older men to “be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience” (Titus 2:2). If older men would follow this advice, they would never have time to gossip.

To the older women, Paul commands “that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed” (vv. 3–5).

Those were not just words. They are commandments of God.

Paul asks young people to “be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you” (vv. 6–8).

Do you want to have good friends? If so, then be a good friend yourself. Do you want other people to speak well of you? Speak well of them. If you want to be helped, first help others. If you want brethren in the Church to be better Christians, be a better Christian yourself. If you want others to stop gossiping about you, stop listening to gossip about others. You can break the cycle of gossip. God commands it!

Simple, yes? The truth is always simple, but the carnal mind makes it seem complicated.

Why do we gossip? Is it to exalt or justify ourselves, or to deflect attention from our own mistakes? Is it to seek vengeance on someone who has hurt us? Whatever the reason, it is wrong. God hates gossip! God is love, and wants each of us to show love to one another. When we gossip, we are not showing love. If we all show patterns of good works in all things, there should not be any gossip in the Church of God. LCN

Three Simple Rules:

Here are three simple rules that will help you stop gossip.

First, before you repeat anything about anyone, ask yourself, “Do I have all the facts?” If not, what you say may not be true. You will be spreading rumors. God commands you to “Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Second, before you repeat anything you have heard about anyone, ask yourself, “Could I tell this thing in the presence of the person involved?” If not, then you should not tell it in his absence. In other words, do not say anything about anyone that you would not be willing to say to that person's face.

Christ said that the merciful shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7). But how can you be merciful if you spread rumors about your neighbor? Christ also said that the peacemakers shall be called the sons of God (v. 9). A gossip is not a peacemaker.

The third rule is just as simple as the first two. After you have obtained all the facts, and after you have ascertained, in all honesty, that you can repeat in the presence of the person involved what you have heard about him, ask yourself: “Will saying this do any good? Will it help? Is it really beneficial?”

If the answer to any of these questions is “No,” do not repeat what you have heard!

A Most Precious Gift from God

By Don Davis

Looking back over the years, you can probably remember many wonderful gifts people have given you. Some of those gifts were physical: perhaps you received a bicycle or a video game console, or a beautiful suit or dress. Some of those gifts were emotional: think of a treasured friendship, or the love between husband and wife, or between parents and children.

All those gifts are great blessings. But God has given an even more amazing gift to those He has called to be His sons and daughters. The gift of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, through which Christians today are begotten as future full members of God's family, is by far the most precious gift any human being can receive. It is a "down payment" on eternal life in the Kingdom of God; a promise of power and glory forever, ruling under Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother.

God has given us a series of annual Holy Days to help us remember His plan for us. The Day of Pentecost is the time He has set aside for us to commemorate the coming of His Spirit, which He has made available to His firstfruits—to us!

In 2008, Living Church of God brethren will assemble in their congregations on June 8 to observe God's annual Feast of Pentecost. In the Old Testament, this annual Holy Day was known as the Feast of Weeks. This was a celebration of the smaller spring harvest, which brought in the first of the fruits of the year's agricultural produce. "And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end" (Exodus 34:22). The Feast of Weeks spiritually signifies those in the first resurrection—the saints whom God has called in this age, who will join Christ at His second coming to rule the earth during the Millennium (Jude 14–15). Others will receive their opportunity for salvation later, as pictured by the final annual Sabbath in

God's sequence of Holy Days, the Last Great Day (For a detailed explanation of all seven annual Holy Days, read Dr. Roderick C. Meredith's informative booklet, *The Holy Days: God's Master Plan*).

The book of Acts records that the Apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ were all gathered in one place on the first Day of Pentecost [Feast of Weeks] after Christ's death and resurrection. What happened then? "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with

the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1–4). Speaking in "tongues," under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God is always in the form of a known, living language and is for the edification of the hearers. "And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6). The miracle of tongues is also in the hearing, not just in the speaking. Wildly disorganized, unintelligible,

"whoop-and-holler" babbling, in the guise of religion, may well be fostered by a spiritual influence but not one sent by Jesus Christ. "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:26–33).

Before this great event, God had empowered only a few prophets with His Spirit down through the centuries. King David of ancient Israel had knowledge and understanding that only God could impart through the Holy Spirit. David knew he possessed this special gift from his Creator when he prayed: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You" (Psalm 51:10–13).



David understood that he could not do the Work of teaching God's Truth unless he had the power of God residing in and working through him. Notice also how David acknowledged that he could lose God's Spirit if he failed to repent of an ongoing sin.

It was that Spirit which revealed to David that there were two members of the God family, when he wrote: "The LORD [the Father] said to my Lord [the Word, who became Jesus Christ], 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.' The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power; in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth. The LORD has sworn and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'" (Psalm 110:1–4; Hebrews 7:1–28). The "Word" came as a humble carpenter, teaching human beings the way to peace and announcing the coming of God's government to the earth. The Spirit of God showed David that Christ would return to the throne of His Father, and would sit with Him until the end of this age, when He will return to the earth in power and glory, to rule and to punish those who hate God's ways (Luke 19:27).

God revealed His truth to King David, who recorded it under His inspiration for our benefit. Those today who are able to understand what David wrote—who joyously accept what they read in the pages of the Bible, and look forward to Christ's return with love and eager anticipation—can do so only because, through the Holy Spirit, God is revealing His truth to them as He did to David.

Our Hope of Glory

Though we now suffer in this flesh, and endure afflictions for the sake of Christ and His Church, we do it by the power of the Holy Spirit which God the Father has put within us. The Apostle Paul understood that his trials were in the service of God's people. "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, [Paul was saying that his afflictions, as outlined in 2 Corinthians 11:22–33, were different in nature, but parallel to, Jesus Christ's own] for the sake of His body, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:24–27). We who strive to follow Paul as he followed Christ will emulate

his example of preaching a warning to all mankind, teaching the wisdom of God, such that all might be presented as perfect in Jesus Christ.

Our Righteousness Is Useless

Hundreds of millions of professing Christians mistakenly believe they are "born again" and headed for salvation, even though they have never been baptized according to the Bible's requirement and have never received the Holy Spirit. What does God require? Here is what the Apostle Peter said on the Day of Pentecost in 31AD, at the founding of the New Testament Church: "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call'" (Acts 2:38–39).

This sounds appealing, so it is natural that people hearing this would want it for themselves. But can we force God to give us His Holy Spirit? Can we demand it of Him? No! God the Father must select—or call—those to whom He will offer His Spirit. Jesus said: "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me" (John 6:44–45).

Once the Father has called people as potential recipients of the Holy Spirit, He and Jesus Christ continue the training and testing that is meant to bring them to request baptism, as they lay the foundation of going on to perfection (Hebrews 6:1–2). It is amazing how even some who call themselves Christians neglect the vital role of Christ in their salvation. Without Jesus Christ, there can be no salvation for any of us! As the Apostle Peter told the Sanhedrin, responding to a question about a miraculous healing: "let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief corner-stone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:10–12).

Once we were selected, the Father and Christ began to work with us. Even though we were still in our sins, They patiently drew us toward an understanding of what we were. "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your

impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’ (Romans 2:4–6). At first, some of us fought against our calling, but God in His mercy and kindness still worked with us, leading us to a place in our lives where we sought to be baptized, and to receive His Holy Spirit.

The Proper Form of Baptism

God’s ministers sometimes meet prospective Church members who believe they are already “saved” Christians who possess the Holy Spirit. They enthusiastically insist that their previous baptism was valid, and object to the suggestion that the ceremony might not have been acceptable in the eyes of God. Sometimes they have even had a

prayer asking God to grant them the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 6:2; Acts 19:6). Their previous “baptism” is invalid.

Tending God’s Gift

Have you ever given someone a live potted flower, or received one as a gift? Store-bought plants often come with a tag containing some basic instructions for care and feeding, such as: “For this plant to bloom, place it in sunlight, keep it warm, and water daily to maintain soil moisture.” When those instructions are followed, a tiny store-bought flower will grow and produce big, healthy, beautiful flowering blossoms that give joy to all who behold it. But what happens if you neglect the instructions for its care and feeding? A plant kept in the dark corner of a cold shed, receiving no care and no regular

If we follow the Instruction Book that God has given, we who have the Holy Spirit will enjoy the fruits of what God has planted within us.

minister lay hands on them, professing to ask God to grant them the Holy Spirit.

However, a few questions about the previous baptism will quickly reveal the facts of the matter.

- Did the minister counsel them before baptism about the need for repentance from sin, and the importance and meaning of Christ’s sacrifice (Hebrews 9:11–15; Hebrews 6:1–3)? Without understanding the need for repentance, no valid baptism can occur.
- When they were baptized, did they understand what sin is (1 John 3:4; John 8:34)? If not, they had no idea what they needed to repent of.
- Did they profess repentance of all their sins, and accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, High Priest, and soon-coming King (1 John 4:12–16; 1 Timothy 6:13–16; Acts 4:10–12)? Unless one genuinely intends to make Christ one’s Lord, Master and “Boss,” no true baptism has occurred.
- Were they fully immersed in water (Acts 8:38–39; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22; John 1:29–34)? Scripture is plain about the proper form of baptism, which outwardly pictures the complete spiritual cleansing—indeed, the death of the “old man” and begetting of the new—which occurs at baptism. God does not “sprinkle” our sins away.

If any of the above is missing, it does not matter whether the minister laid hands on them and offered a

watering, will die before too long. The once-beautiful gift will become a pot with a dead stick in it. No amount of attention after the plant has died will ever bring it back to life.

The same principle applies to us, once we have received God’s gift of the Holy Spirit. That living gift also came with a set of instructions, which we find in God’s inspired word—the Bible. Scripture helps us keep God’s precious gift “watering” us in the light of His truth. “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:6–7). The warmth that nurtures a plant in the above example can be equated with the family atmosphere gained by congregating on the Sabbath and Holy Days with others who have God’s Spirit, “that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:3–4). As members of the body of Christ, we need the Holy Spirit to “water” us daily, to keep us nourished and growing spiritually. We do this by studying and applying the word of God constantly “that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her [the Church] to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:26–27).

If we follow the Instruction Book that God has given, we who have the Holy Spirit will enjoy the fruits of what God has planted within us. “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9–11). What are these fruits with which we are to be filled? “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no [penalty of the] law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22–26).

Never Let the Spirit Die Out

Many people wrongly believe that once they have the Holy Spirit, their salvation is assured. The “once saved, always saved” doctrine is a damnable heresy that can lead

those who accept it into the Lake of Fire! We *can* lose the most precious gift of all, if we do not strive to keep it alive within us. “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4–6).

We cannot earn salvation through our own righteousness. Without God, our condition is pitiable: “But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isaiah 64:6). But when God freely gives us His Holy Spirit, He is giving us a part of Himself. Not one of us deserves this most precious gift of all. Keeping this in mind, we should always remain grateful for this wonderful gift, and should be diligent in using it—to the glory of our Father, and of Jesus Christ our Elder Brother and Savior—so They can accomplish in us the glorious purpose for which it was given. ☞

Upcoming *Tomorrow’s World* Telecasts

WGN: Sunday, 6:00 AM ET

VISION (Canada): Sunday, 5:30 PM ET; Monday–Friday, 3:00 AM ET

WORD: Friday, 1:30 AM ET

Air Date Broadcast Title

May 4	Should Christians Observe the Sabbath?
May 11	The United States in Prophecy
May 18	Tomorrow’s World: What Will It Be Like?
May 25	From Stress to Success
June 1	What Is Your Real Goal?
June 8	The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

For additional stations and times, check the Television and Radio Log on page 31 of your *Tomorrow’s World* magazine.

Prepare for the Feast of Tabernacles 2008!

Attending the Feast of Tabernacles is a highlight of the year for God's people. The reality of the Kingdom of God should become ever clearer to us each year as we gather together to celebrate our part in God's plan and look forward to the establishment of God's government here on the earth.

The Feast of Tabernacles will not begin until Monday night, October 13, this year, but the Festival Office is at work year-round, helping to prepare a joyous, millennial Feast experience for all the brethren. God has placed His name at a variety of millennial sites this year, as Living Church of God brethren begin to plan their attendance at the 2008 Feast of Tabernacles.

Brethren in the United States have been assigned to a site based on the location of the congregation they attend (not necessarily the state where they live).

The sites and assignments are:

- **Branson, Missouri**
Arkansas, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Tennessee
- **New Braunfels, Texas**
Colorado, Louisiana, New Mexico, Texas
- **Newport, Oregon**
Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming
- **Prescott, Arizona**
Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah
- **Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin**
Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, Wisconsin
- **Sunset Beach, North Carolina**
Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, Vermont, West Virginia

Canadian brethren will keep the Feast at:

- **Lethbridge, Alberta**
- **Orford, Quebec**
- **Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island**

International travelers may choose to keep the Feast in Evian, France; Llangollen, North Wales; Ocho Rios, Jamaica; and several dozen other sites around the globe.

For some brethren living in the northeastern United States, the Orford, Quebec site may be the closest to their

homes. The meeting hall in Orford will have room for about 300 international transfers, so there should be ample space for U.S. travelers who have their passports in order and would like to keep the Feast with their brethren in Canada. Please note that the majority of sermons at the Orford site will be in English, and there will be translation provided for the two French-language sermons. Of course, French translations will also be provided for the English-language sermons there.

Some overseas sites are maintaining their own lists of registered attendees, apart from the MyLCG registration system. Even so, if you plan to keep the Feast overseas, it is important that you register on MyLCG so that we can free your previously assigned space for a potential transfer.

Preparing for the Feast involves much more than saving your second tithe, sending in your tithe-of-the-tithe, making housing reservations and keeping your car well-maintained for travel. It involves time spent in prayer, Bible study and meditation on what the Feast means to God's people now, and what it pictures about the amazing future God has planned for each of His firstfruits.

Truly, God is preparing a great future and a place for each of us in His family. He has called us to learn how to rule and teach this world in the ways of peace and happiness. The Feast of Tabernacles is the best place to train for the awesome events to occur in the days and years just ahead. The Feast gives us a foretaste of the Kingdom of God. Let us all look forward to having the "best Feast ever!"

—William Bowmer and Rod McNair

Feast Registration

Feast registration begins at noon on Sunday, May 4. Even if you plan to attend your assigned site, you should register to confirm the number of people attending and your interest in the various events at your site.

You may register by logging in to the MyLCG area of the www.cogl.org Web site. If you do not have Web access, please give your registration information to your congregation's Festival Advisor.

Transfer approvals will be issued beginning on May 18. Please *do not* make housing reservations until you have received your transfer approval.

What Is the “Fruit” of Rebels?*(continues from page 5)*

rendered attitude. They were instead filled with their own *lusts* and their own **desire for power**. So they came up with various “excuses” to react against Moses and Aaron, and they tried to overthrow those human leaders whom *God* had chosen—and whom He was using to do His will.

What was the result?

“And the earth opened its mouth and *swallowed them up*, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods” (Numbers 16:32)! Yet, amazingly, “on the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel **murmured** against Moses and Aaron, saying, ‘You have killed the people of the LORD’” (v. 41).

Wow! Israel’s people were so out of touch with reality that they could not see there was *no way* Moses and Aaron could open the earth and swal-

low up all those rebels! They tried to blame it on the human leaders—**refusing** to acknowledge that it was the great God of Israel who was dealing with them because of their *rebellion* and their *sins*!

Brethren, the lesson for all of us today is that we are to seek the kind of peace and unity that God wants us to have **within** His true Church! We are to be “endeavoring to keep the **unity of the Spirit** in the bond of **peace**” (Ephesians 4:3). We should be very careful and *very prayerful* **not** to allow ourselves to begin to “murmur” against those God is using to do His Work and preach His Truth.

God’s true ministers *will* be human. For we are not perfect *yet*, but we are trying. And we are growing in grace and knowledge—just as are all of God’s true people. So each of us should overlook the human frailties in our brethren—including the ministry—and do all we can to

build a sense of **unity**—a sense of “family”—and a deep sense of **brotherly love** within God’s Church.

As God looks down from heaven, He is watching each of us to be *absolutely sure* if we will—as demonstrated by our “fruits”—continue to be **loyal** to Him and to His government *throughout all eternity*! God simply *cannot afford* to allow a bunch of potential “rebels” to be given eternal life and **total power** in His coming government. So He tells us in His word, “I, the LORD, search the heart, I **test** the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings” (Jeremiah 17:10).

May God grant each of us a heart of sincere *humility*, of **surrender** to His Word and His government, and a spirit of *love* and **unity** so we can become **full sons** of God in His loving Family throughout all eternity! Be sure that **you**, personally, strive with all your heart to attain that awesome goal. ☐

The Power of God’s Spirit*(continues from page 2)***Our Spiritual GOAL**

Brethren, let us constantly review the “fruits” of the Holy Spirit as listed by the inspired Apostle Paul, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22–23).

Then, as each day goes by, let us strive to live *that way of life* through Christ within us. As Paul wrote, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (v. 25).

As conditions in our world grow even more fraught with danger and turmoil during these “last days” of our present society, let us truly go “all out” in showing our God that we intend to be His *genuine* servants. Let us show Him that we realize we must truly “come out” of this world and **give** our lives to Him with all our hearts. Let us prove to Him that we know we can *only* become the genuine people of God through the power of the Holy Spirit truly living within us—day by day and hour by hour.

We must all be willing to *grow spiritually*, “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge

of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). We must each think carefully about how we may more *fully* reflect Jesus Christ in every phase and facet of our lives.

Remember, as Paul explained, we need to grow so that we may **not** be “carried about with every wind of doctrine” through the trickery and cunning of misguided men. Satan will always try to find our “weak point” and cause some situation or even some false minister to be there to take advantage of that! What will be *your* “sticking point”? What is it in your character that Satan may spot so he can in some way turn you bitter, or in some other way turn you away from the true Church of God and your part in doing His Work?

In every way, we must truly be **strong**. We must be those “spiritual rocks” whom God will choose to do His Work—not only now, but **forever**! May God guide each one of us to make this commitment to our Creator! May He inspire each of us to do *our part* enthusiastically to use the **power** of God’s Spirit within our lives!



Births

Katelyn Ruth Barilski was born on November 15, 2007, weighing 8 pounds, 1 ounce. Mother Debbie was anointed for a fibroid tumor shortly after learning she was pregnant; she and husband Darren thank God that Katelyn was born healthy and strong and are grateful for God's intervention and the prayers of the brethren.

Larry and Sandra Bell of Reno, Nevada welcomed their first child, a baby girl, on December 31, 2007. *Rowen Elizabeth Bell* weighed 6 pounds, 9 ounces, and was 19½ inches long.

Geoff and Mandy Cox are happy to announce the birth of their third child, *Logan Joseph Cox*, on November 14, 2007. He weighed 8 pounds, 9 ounces, and was 21¼ inches long. Three-year-old sister Elise and 18-month-old brother A.J. are excited about their baby brother.

Brian and Jennifer Frank, of the Kingston, Ontario, Canada congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their son, *Jacob Nicholas Frank*. He was born on January 28, weighing 8 pounds, 3 ounces. Jacob was welcomed to the family by his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Ken and Colleen Frank and Mr. and Mrs. Winston and Edna Gosse, and by his big brother Zachary.

Matthew and Rebecca Kidney of the Akron, Ohio congregation announce the birth of their daughter, *Victoria Joy Kidney*, on December 10, 2007. She weighed 8 pounds, 6 ounces, and was 20½ inches long. She joins her older brother Hayden.

Emylie Kathleen Kowalski was born on October 2, 2007. She weighed 7 pounds, 6 ounces, and was 20 inches long. Emylie is the daughter of Steve and Amy Kowalski, who attend the Traverse City, Michigan congregation.

Ordination

Mr. Gilbert Foster of the London, England, congregation was ordained as a deacon on January 6 by Regional Pastor Mr. Rod King. Mr. Foster has been actively serving the London brethren for several years.

Anniversary

Reiner and Sharon Luken of Elgin, Illinois, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on January 27. Reiner marked the occasion by inviting the Chicago congregation to a surprise celebration for Sharon at a local restaurant. The Chicago brethren presented the Lukens with an embroidered quilted throw as a memento of this special occasion.

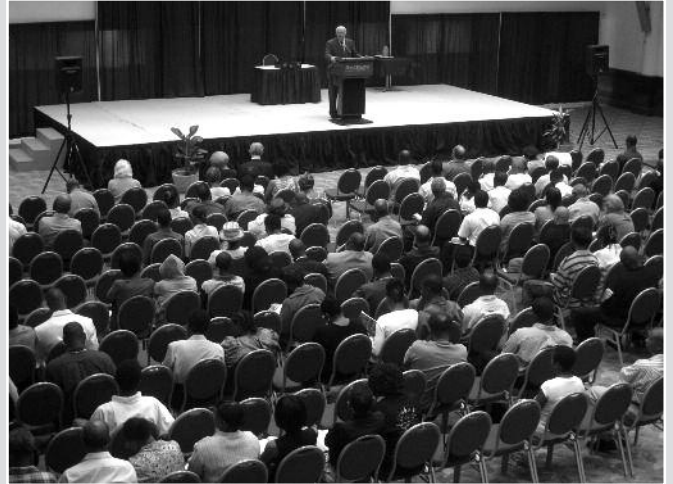
Wedding

Annette Frank and Charlie Triplett were united in marriage on December 30, 2007 in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Mr. Gerald Weston performed the ceremony attended by family and friends from across the United States and Canada. Their parents are Mr. and Mrs. Ken Frank of Fredericksburg, Virginia and Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Triplett of Missouri. The happy couple live in Columbia, Missouri.

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@lcn.org).

Public Bible Lecture

Evangelist Richard Ames gave an exciting, inspiring and well-received presentation, “Prophetic Events Just Ahead,” to more than 130 *Tomorrow’s World* subscribers who gathered at the Sherbourne Convention Center in St. Michael, Barbados, on February 24.



In Loving Memory

J. Rodney Branson, a deacon serving Living Church of God brethren in Coffeerville, Texas, died on January 8. He was 70 years old. He is survived by his wife, Reba Strange Branson of Coffeerville; three daughters, Susan Kay Branson Young of Telephone, Texas, Lou Melton of Coffeerville and Rebecca Lynn Branson Crofutt of Bells, Texas; one son, Jerry Dale Branson of Bliss, Mich.; four grandchildren, Jason Glenn Melton of Oxford, Rodney J. Branson, Jimmy Branson and Beth Bardo, all of Coffeerville; one great-grandchild, Charles Matthew Bardo. He was preceded in death by two brothers, Hubert Lynn Branson and William Harold Branson.

Edna Martha Dyck of the Tonasket, Washington congregation, died on December 30, 2007. She was a deaconess and a shining example of loyalty to God’s Work, and service to all who knew her both within and without His Church. A hairdresser by profession, she was baptized in 1967 and lived in the Okanagan Valley of southern British Columbia for more than 40 years. Mr. Eldon Davis officiated at a memorial service in Okanagan Falls, British Columbia, on January 26.

Marvin Pepper died suddenly on January 16; he was 73 years old.

Canada’s Red Deer, Alberta congregation is mourning the loss of this quiet long-time Church member who had a fantastic memory for statistical details. He will rejoice in the resurrection when he is reunited with his beloved Church family. Funeral services were conducted on January 24 by Mr. Stuart Wachowicz.

Mehm Pho Saw, of Thailand, died February 25 after a short illness. He was 57 years old. He leaves his wife, Phyu Phyu Aye and two teenage sons, Bom and Isaac. Mr. Mehm Pho Saw was actually Burmese, living in the border area between Myanmar and Thailand. He and his wife were baptized in early 1995. Though he was healed of a severe and drug-resistant form of tuberculosis when he was baptized, he struggled with health problems resulting from damage caused by the disease and its treatment. Despite his “often infirmities” he served diligently and faithfully, teaching others who became interested in the Truth after seeing his example. He studied the Thai and English languages so that he would better be able to share the Truth he had come to understand and love. He loved God with an unusual passion and zeal, and was

fully involved in doing the Work up to the very end. In December 2007, the local high school awarded him an “outstanding father” prize from among 500 fathers, which he appreciated as recognition of the fruit of God’s way of life. With his wife and sons, he set a fine example of a true Christian family in an area with many different religions. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Larry Sutton, of the Lufkin, Texas congregation, died on February 14. He was 75 years old. He is survived by his wife Flora, son Perron (Malina) Sutton, daughter Tammy (Daniel) Friz, and granddaughters Emily, Elizabeth and Olivia Friz. He was baptized into God’s Church in 1962. Family and friends will miss his big smile and warm gentleness. Mr. Daniel Friz conducted the funeral on February 24.

Rosalie Turk, a long-time member of God’s Church, died on February 17. She was 84 years old. Predeceased by her husband, elder Don Turk, she is survived by four children—Tom Turk, Donna (Glenn) Bechthold, John (Paula) Turk and Don Turk—as well as seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. She will be greatly missed by her family and friends.

Commentary

Everything Counts!

By J. Davy Crockett, III

“Don’t sweat the small stuff—and it’s all small stuff!” So goes the popular saying. We often look for ways to avoid stress and to avoid the consequences of our actions. Yet, when it comes down to it, we know we are ultimately responsible for our actions, and *everything* counts.

Good habits and basic virtues pay big dividends over time, while foolish pursuits and get-rich-quick schemes seldom bring good results. There are some positive examples in modern times, of wise men who understood this principle and there are definitely some ancient characters whom we can emulate.

Some of America’s early national heroes—like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln—rose from obscurity to become recognized as men of character and renown. Later, Theodore Roosevelt—a sickly child—overcame physical weakness, and by sheer drive, perseverance and courage accomplished great things.

Anciently, Abram, who became Abraham, was a tremendous example of perseverance, self-control and obedience. The result? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God” (James 2:23).

Down the line we see that Jacob (who became Israel) and his son Joseph enjoyed God’s intervention in their lives for special purposes. In each case, the special relationship these men had with God was predicated upon their obedience to their Creator. So it remains in our day. God still requires His people to be careful to obey His laws and to do His will.

Solomon, King David’s son, wrote extensively on this subject, so his wisdom is recorded for us. He wrapped up the book of Ecclesiastes with these words: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14).

In the New Testament, Jesus said, “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:36–37).

So we see that what we say and what we do, even in small things, is very important—in this life, and in the life to come. We find this principle emphasized in a parable praising the faithful servant. Jesus said, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things” (Matthew 25:23).

How about each of us? Does it really matter what we do as we live our daily lives? The Bible makes it very plain. Again and again, the book of Revelation praises those who “overcome.” Its next-to-last chapter stirs us with these encouraging and motivating words: “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (Revelation 21:7).

As you reflect on your daily activities, in matters public and private, always remember: “Everything counts!”

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.