

# Living Church News

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## Are You a “Half-Hearted” Christian?

Dear Brethren and Friends,

Perhaps the greatest danger facing those Christians within God’s Church today is the danger of becoming “Laodicean.” For that spirit—the attitude of the Laodicean era of the Church—is the attitude that *will pre-dominate* today. That is the spirit God describes as influencing most people even within the greater Church of God community in our day. Notice God’s direct warning about this: “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, *because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth*”’” (Revelation 3:14–16).

It is clear that these Laodicean people *within* God’s Church are not predominantly people who break God’s laws. God does not accuse them of gross sin or of any form of idolatry. Rather, they are simply “taking it easy.” They are “lukewarm.” And our Creator obviously wants His people to be “on fire”—profoundly zealous, and deeply appreciating their calling to become *full* sons of God! We all need to examine ourselves as to whether we are yielding to that kind of attitude. We also need to think deeply about the Apostle Peter’s warning, “For the time has come for **judgment** to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now ‘If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?’ Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:17–19).

Here, in one of the last books written in the New Testament, we find Peter’s warning that even “the righteous one is *scarcely saved!*” So it is vital that none of us think that we can “dance along the edge” of God’s Church and barely make it into God’s Kingdom by doing so. Rather, before He gives us eternal life, awesome *glory* and the *power* of being a *full member of His family*, God intends to make **absolutely sure** that we have gone “all out” and have *totally surrendered* our hearts, minds and wills to His way!

Many of you older brethren remember Mr. Armstrong’s impassioned statement, given in love to the brethren a number of times, “Brethren, I am afraid only about *half* of you in God’s Church are really converted!” Later, near the end of his life, Mr. Armstrong suggested that “only a *tithe*”—a

tenth—of Church members were truly converted. He often used the term, “conquered by God” as a way of defining deep and total conversion. By that, He meant to describe those who would truly surrender to do *anything* and *everything* they could to enter into God’s Kingdom—and who would be willing to do it *God’s way* and in submission to Jesus Christ’s real leadership, personally and in His Church! One key to testing ourselves in this manner is to honestly assess whether we genuinely “go all out” in *seeking, serving and obeying the God of the Bible*—not some imaginary “God” as worldly people often do. Do we let *anything* come between us and wholeheartedly obeying our Creator?

In a message to our forefathers—and to us today—God describes the time when Israel would come into its inheritance and “beget children and grandchildren” and begin to turn aside from obeying Him (Deuteronomy 4:25). Then He describes how the peoples of Israel would have to be scattered and taken into slavery and made “few in number.” “But from there *you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice*” (vv. 29–30).

The key in this is that, eventually, every truly converted Christian will need to “seek” God with *all his heart and with all his soul!* This wholehearted approach is reiterated again and again throughout the Bible. For God does not want “half-hearted” Christians! Mr. Armstrong often quoted a passage from Hosea in the *Moffatt* translation to show that we should all put our “whole hearts” in our prayers. For God does not appreciate “half-hearted” prayers! In describing the lackadaisical approach of modern Israel, God said to our forefathers, “Though it was I who redeemed them, they have lied to me; *they never put their heart into their prayers, but howl away for corn and wine beside their altars; these willful rebels of mine*” (Hosea 7:13–14).

Without realizing it, brethren, many of us today do not pour our *entire being* into our prayers, nor do we truly “seek” God as we study, pray and attempt to give our lives to Him. The time is coming when *many of us* will be brought down and perhaps will even go through a *part* of the coming Tribulation. Many of God’s people will be put through all kinds of trials and tests even before the full-scale Tribulation begins, when most who are faithful will be taken to safety. Most of you realize this, for even ancient Israel was allowed to go through the *first three* punishments God placed upon ancient Egypt before He finally put a “difference” between His people and the Egyptians. Similarly, *many of us* may have to lose jobs or properties, or suffer a degree of hunger or deprivation, sickness, persecution and all kinds of other troubles even *before* the full-scale Tribulation begins.

Even though it might appear “bad” at the time, God will cause those trials to work out for good if they truly *drive us to our knees* and help us to *wholeheartedly* seek and obey our Father in heaven!

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# Give Your Life—Your Time—to God!

## *Editorial*

By Roderick C. Meredith

In sermons over the years, I have sometimes brought out a vital key to Christian living that many have not understood. It involves how we give our lives to God.

The Apostle Paul exhorts us: “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).

If our body is given to God and our mind is “renewed,” just *how* do these actions express themselves in our daily lives? Should we watch the same amount of television as our neighbors do? Should we spend the same amount of time “shooting the breeze,” going to ball games, reading novels or just “kicking back”—as the kids say—and doing nothing?

If not, *why* not?

The key element in all of this is the proper use of your **time**. When you give your life to God, you should realize that this means giving your **time** to God! For your life is composed of just so much time.

Jesus commanded: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). Obviously, if you “seek first” God’s Kingdom and His righteousness, you will use your **time** as is needed to do this. You will have to learn to discipline yourself in your

use of this very precious element in life. Most people are not “time conscious.” They just sort of “wander” through life—letting things happen to them here and there, wasting time and not accomplishing nearly as much as they could.

However, true Christians should be filled with zest, enthusiasm and **purpose**, as they have a real reason for living. They have genuine goals and projects that they want to accomplish! Zealous converted Christians will want to be sure to take **time** for proper Bible study, for fervent and intensive prayer and for practicing the art of meditation—thinking things through carefully and truly contemplating God’s law and all its ramifications as King David did (Psalm 119:97). And they will set aside time for **fasting** regularly, to spend extra time in a situation of humility and purpose—seeking God intensely.

The true Christian will realize that we are now “in training” to **rule** entire cities and perhaps nations in Tomorrow’s World. As the Apostle Paul said: “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?” (1 Corinthians 6:2–3).

In order to be genuine “overcomers” (Revelation 2:26) and be prepared to rule in Christ’s soon-coming Kingdom, true Christians will want to organize their time, their thoughts and their lives, constantly “growing” not only in biblical knowledge but in real understanding. They will also want to be taking

time to serve others and to do their part in the very Work of God in any way they can. As Christian soldiers “in training” they will want to set aside time to do those things that will genuinely prepare them for the real future which Jesus Christ promises. They will want to be “successes” in their calling as true Christians.

Again, the Apostle Paul tells us: “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the **time**, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15–16). The Greek word used here for “redeem” means essentially the same as “redeem” in the English language. It means to “buy back” time—just as you would “buy back” your watch from a pawn shop if you had to borrow money by pawning your watch. Your time will be “taken away” from you, unless you take energetic steps to “grab on to it” before it slips away!

Satan has organized this world so that—if you are not *very* careful—you will find yourself watching inane programs on the television, talking aimlessly on the telephone, reading things that do not help you grow toward your Christian goal and doing other things that simply “kill” your time. Satan knows that if he can simply “take your time” then he will end up taking your very *life*! Your life is your **time**.

So, as the Apostle Paul said, you must “redeem the time”—*use* your time properly before it slips through your fingers.

Effective managers and top business executives all know the vital importance of the proper use of **time**. Peter Drucker, the world-renowned “dean” of management

experts, emphasized in his writing this aspect of success. Drucker was for decades a highly respected consultant to top executives who run multi-billion dollar companies all over the world—as well as to top executives and managers in education and public life. In his outstanding book, *The Effective Executive*, he tells us:

Effective executives know where their time goes. They work systematically at managing the little of their time that can be brought under their control.... Effective executives, in my observation, do not start with their tasks. They start with their time. And they do not start out with planning. They start by finding out where their time actually goes. Then they attempt to manage their time and to cut back unproductive demands on their time. Finally they consolidate their “discretionary” time into the largest possible continuing units. This three-step process, *recording* time, *managing* time, and *consolidating* time, is the foundation of executive effectiveness.

Effective executives know that time is the limiting factor. The output limits of any process are set by the scarcest resource. In the process we call “accomplishment,” this is time.

Time is also a unique resource. Of the other major resources, money is actually quite plentiful. We long ago should have learned that it is the demand for capital, rather than the supply thereof, which sets the limit to economic growth and activity. People—the third limiting resource—one can hire, though one can rarely hire enough good people. But one cannot rent, hire, buy, or otherwise obtain more time.

The supply of time is totally inelastic. No matter how high the demand, the supply will not go up. There is no price for it and no marginal utility curve for it. Moreover, time is totally perishable and cannot be stored. Yesterday’s time is gone forever and will never come back. Time is, therefore, always in exceedingly short supply.

Time is totally irreplaceable. Within limits we can substitute one resource for another, copper for aluminum, for instance. We can substitute capital for human labor. We can use more knowledge or more brawn. But there is no substitute for time.

Everything requires time. It is the one truly universal condition. All work takes place in time and uses up time. Yet most people take for granted this unique, irreplaceable, and necessary resource. Nothing else, perhaps, distinguishes effective executives as much as their tender loving care of time (pp. 23–26).

We can appreciate that highly effective Christians are also noted for their “tender loving care of time.” They learn—in their use of time—to seek *first* those things that involve the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. For instance, even though the prophet Daniel was apparently second in command of the magnificent Persian Empire—needing to make important political and management decisions daily, with problems coming to him from every direction—he knew that his contact with God must come *first*, no matter what! Even when in danger of his very life for praying to the God of heaven, we read: “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three

times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days” (Daniel 6:10).

Daniel’s “custom” was to pray to God three times a day. That took **time**. But, though no doubt busier than most of us in his executive responsibilities, he knew that this use of his time was essential.

Even though Jesus Christ had been very God and had been with the Father from eternity, once He became flesh He knew that He **needed** to “take time” to pray in order to keep that close fellowship with His Father—the Source of all wisdom, love and power. Mark 1:32–34 describes an occasion when Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons brought to Him after the Sabbath. But notice the very next verse: “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He **prayed**” (v. 35).

In order to tap the “source” of His power, Jesus got up a “long while” before daybreak so He would have **time** to pray to God before anything else could intervene! This is a vital lesson for us.

In all of our Christian lives, brethren, we must learn to think through our use of **time**. Simple as it sounds, we must be sure that we “take time” to really study God’s Word and “feed” upon it, to pray fervently and unhurriedly to God, to meditate and to *fast* before our Creator so that we have the spiritual strength that can come only from contact with God. Then, we must **take time** to serve one another genuinely and do the things God wants us to do in order to be fully pleasing to Him.

This vital key to the proper use of **time** is something every one of us needs to learn and practice—especially in this confused society where Satan is able to distract us and cause us to “kill” time so quickly and so easily. ☐

# Tools and Principles for Bible Study

*How to study Scripture, and why it is important*

By Douglas S. Winnail

Over the years, God's Church has emphasized *four* keys to spiritual growth: prayer, Bible study, meditation and fasting. The Bible shows that individuals who were close to God, and whom God used mightily, employed these tools in their own lives. Yet many Christians find it an ongoing challenge to keep a proper perspective on these tools, and on how to apply them most effectively for spiritual growth. Too often, when we come into the Church, we bring with us a lot of "baggage" from our previous experience that prevents us from understanding and using these tools as powerfully as we should.

Some have carelessly assumed that prayer, Bible study, meditation and fasting identify one as a Christian. Yet many people outside the Church of God—even those who say they place importance on these practices—look at them as little more than *rituals* or *routines* to be accomplished. Many brethren, before coming into the Church, had learned certain formulaic prayers, which they were taught to repeat over and over. To some, Bible study may mean reading a few verses each day, or reciting a few scriptural passages as part of a worship service. Meditation may mean gazing at an altar, or repeating a word or phrase to induce a trance-like state of mind. For Roman Catholics, "fasting" may mean nothing more than abstaining from meat on a specified day. For many Protestants, fasting means less than that; it is little more than something they watch on the news when someone goes on a hunger strike—a relic of Bible history, not something they actually expect Christians to do.

For many sincere professing Christians, prayer and Bible reading are pursuits they use to try to *feel spiritual* or to endure a time of crisis. When their lives are going well, these activities often seem unnecessary. A surprising number of people read the Bible in order to appear spiritual to those around them, or simply to avoid feeling guilty for not reading it! Christ, however, advised that

there is more to Christianity than prayer, Bible study, meditation and fasting, valuable as they are. *Real* Christians, Christ tells us, will keep the commandments of God and show love for others (John 15:9–17).

Individuals who come into the Church from false religions may have wrong ideas about Bible study, but those who come into the Church from a non-religious background—as do an increasing number of people today—often have *no idea* at all about how to approach their study of Scripture. Many do not realize the degree to which Eastern religious ideas have influenced their perceptions of prayer, meditation and fasting, and how much those ideas *differ* from biblical instructions. Even their ideas about Bible study may be wrongly formed—if they have been formed at all. In this article, we will

focus on one of these tools for spiritual growth. We will examine *why* Bible study is important, and *how* to actually study the Bible. We will also see how prayer, meditation and fasting relate to Bible study.

## The Right Approach

It is fashionable today, especially in some "educated" circles, to view the Bible not as the inspired word of an Almighty God, but rather as a primitive attempt on the part of ancient Hebrew people to formulate some sort of concept of God—a concept considered unrealistic and largely irrelevant to anyone living in the 21st century. This skeptical, critical, cynical and derisive view of Scripture has discouraged many today from even looking into the Bible as a source of important, helpful and even vital information. It is amazing how today's modern "sophisticated" views contrast with the outlook most people held only a generation or two ago, and how they contrast dramatically with the attitudes displayed by biblical personalities such as David, whom God calls a "man after My own heart" (Acts 13:22). David, though in the high office of a



king, described God’s word as “my meditation all the day... a lamp to my feet and light to my path” (Psalm 119:97, 105). David did not meditate by repeating a mantra again and again. He studied, and considered how to apply, the word of God in everyday life. David saw the commandments of God as *more valuable than gold* (Psalm 119:127), and he realized that those who lived by the commandments would be *blessed* (Psalm 119:1–2).

Jesus taught Christians that the meek—the teachable—will inherit the earth, and that “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness... shall be filled” (Matthew 5:5–6). David clearly exemplified this attitude when he wrote: “Your word I have hidden in my heart... Teach me Your statutes.... open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.... Make me understand the way of Your precepts.... The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.... Your law is my delight” (Psalm 119:11, 12, 18, 27, 160, 174). David had a *prayerful* attitude about Bible study—he asked God to help him understand what he read. Daniel not only studied God’s word; he also *fasted* to show God his earnest desire to grasp the scope of God’s plan for His people (Daniel 9:1–3; 10:12).

The prophet Isaiah describes the attitude that God desires in a person, saying that “on this one will I look: on him who is poor [humble] and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:2). The proper attitude for approaching Bible study is respect for the word of God instead of doubt and cynicism, and a desire to learn instead of criticize. To develop this attitude, we must *prove* for ourselves (1 Thessalonians 5:21, KJV) that the Bible really is the inspired word of

## How to Study the Bible

Studying your Bible involves much more than just casually reading an occasional chapter from Psalms or Proverbs, or thinking about a “devotional” passage from one of the Gospels. Bible students understand that God’s word is their “sword” (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12). Sharpening our knowledge of Scripture will help us draw closer to God, and will be a continuing aid in our Christian lives.

No Bible reference book is a substitute for the Bible. There are many very helpful resources that can help us better understand Scripture, but we should always be careful not to let some other tool take the place of God’s word. Also, when a research tool appears to contradict the Bible (as is far too often the case with commentaries and “Bible helps” prepared by secular scholars who do not have God’s Holy Spirit), a mature Christian needs to be able to evaluate the tool for what it is, accepting its help where appropriate, but rejecting it in those areas where it plainly contradicts solid biblical truth.

With that in mind, here are some steps you can take to become more knowledgeable about the Bible, and more proficient in your Bible study:

### 1. Become familiar with the Bible

- a. Read the Bible regularly.
- b. Read Bible stories to your children—and learn the *lesson* of each story.
- c. Read and outline books of the Bible—learn the content of each book.
- d. Play Bible games (e.g. Bible trivia).

### 2. Obtain a Bible dictionary

Bible dictionaries define terms used in the Bible, and provide useful background information about biblical subjects.

### 3. Use a Bible handbook

Bible handbooks (*Halley’s*, *Unger’s*, *Eerdman’s*, etc.) outline the content of each book in the Bible and provide background information, explaining when and to whom the book was written and offering other useful context for your Scripture study.

### 4. Consult Bible concordances

Bible concordances list words used in the Bible. A concordance is a helpful tool to find words, and to find verses where the word is used. A *short* concordance (such as *Cruden’s*) lists only some verses where a word is used in the Bible. An *exhaustive* concordance (*Strong’s*, *Young’s*) lists every occurrence of a word in the Bible, and some concordances also provide the meanings of Hebrew and Greek words.

### 5. Review several Bible translations

The *New King James Version* is the standard translation used in Living Church of God publications, and on the *Tomorrow’s World* telecast. It (like the *King James Version*) is a word-for-word translation from the Greek and Hebrew. Other translations, however, can sometimes be helpful for understanding the meanings of Bible verses. *The Bible in 26 Translations* is one useful tool in this regard. Bible students should be aware, however, that some newer versions of the Bible are not word-for-word translations, but instead translate

“thought for thought,” and by adding their own interpretations often stray far from the original meaning of the text.

6. **Examine Bible commentaries**  
Bible commentaries give detailed explanations of what Bible scholars think a verse means. Sometimes commentaries can be very helpful, sometimes not. Single-volume commentaries often provide very little information. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (available on CD and also as a multi-volume set) provides some very useful information about the Bible.
7. **Use Hebrew and Greek lexicons**  
Hebrew and Greek lexicons provide detailed information about how biblical words were used at the time when the Bible was written. A lexicon is useful for more advanced study of Scripture.
8. **Read books about Scripture, Church history and other Bible topics**  
Broaden your knowledge by selecting books that go into more detail about subjects related to the Bible. Learn to *evaluate* books by comparing their content and ideas with the Bible itself. You may find that taking a Living University course (or several) can help you develop your ability to evaluate books about the Bible, in the structured environment of a college course where you can deepen your knowledge of God’s word.
9. **Study subjects and doctrines**  
Make a notebook of the main verses that support each biblical doctrine. Find out what the Bible really says about various subjects by looking up all the verses that mention a particular subject. Use a concordance and other Bible helps to support your study.
10. **Take the *Tomorrow’s World Bible Study Course***  
The *Tomorrow’s World Bible Study Course*, published by the Living Church of God, is a good place to begin learning what the Bible is all about. It presents an overview of major doctrines and teachings found in Scripture. You can take it as an online course, or as a traditional printed course. To enroll, go online to [www.twbiblecourse.org](http://www.twbiblecourse.org).
11. **Read Church booklets and articles**  
The Living Church of God publishes many booklets and articles that address specific biblical topics. By studying these materials and the Bible at the same time, you can come to understand a variety of important subjects from Scripture.
12. **Develop a personal program for Bible study**
  - a. Set a regular time and place to study the Bible each day.
  - b. Keep your Bible study books and materials in that place.
  - c. Pray before you study—ask God for guidance and understanding.
  - d. Map out a program of study for a year—set some goals.
  - e. Do extra Bible study on the Sabbath.
  - f. Review and meditate on what you have studied.
  - g. Practice explaining Scripture.

Christians who follow the steps outlined above—maturely and wisely using the vast range of Bible helps provided by the Church and other sources as part of their personal program of ongoing daily Bible study—can look forward to drawing closer to God and deepening their understanding of His word.

—Douglas S. Winnail

God and not just ancient Hebrew literature. If you take the proper approach, Bible study can become extremely informative, profitable and exciting. But just *why* should we study Scripture?

## Grow in Wisdom

One of the keys to success in life is learning how to make *wise* decisions—and how to avoid making bad decisions and foolish mistakes. Sadly, many never develop this vital quality—hence the saying “we grow too soon old, and too late smart.” The God of the Bible, who is described as a loving Father, understands this human frailty and has filled Scripture with dozens of practical principles. The book of Proverbs is loaded with information to help anyone who studies its content develop wisdom, understanding, discretion and judgment (Proverbs 1:1–6). Solomon stated, “The fear of the LORD is the *beginning* of knowledge... and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). The correct approach to every important subject is found in the word of God, yet fools will despise this approach. We are not born with wisdom. But by studying the word of God, earnestly praying to God for guidance, and seeking and listening to wise instruction from older, more experienced individuals, we can *grow* in wisdom (see Proverbs 2). This biblically based approach will lead to a longer, fuller and richer life (Proverbs 3:1–2, 13–16).

The Rock of Israel reveals that effective leaders rule with wisdom (Proverbs 8:15). David wrote that studying the commandments of God made him wiser than his enemies, and gave him more understanding than his teachers (Psalm 119:98–99). The Bible warns young

people about the dangers of trying to live life in the “fast lane” (Proverbs 7), about the folly and lack of understanding that leads to fornication and adultery (Proverbs 6:32) and about the consequences of pride, gossip, laziness and even talking too much (Proverbs 11:2, 9, 13; 12:13, 24). The Bible repeatedly emphasizes the value of obtaining wise counsel, being willing to show mercy, carefully choosing one’s friends, and disciplining children (Proverbs 11:14; 12:15; 13:20, 24; 21:21). Having a transcending vision and purpose for your life is also mentioned (Proverbs 29:18). In fact, it is only in the Bible that the true purpose of life can be found (see our booklet *Your Ultimate Destiny*). Considering the *gold mine* of wisdom contained in God’s word, it is startling that so many today have been “programmed by society” to ignore studying the Bible!

### Develop the Mind of God

We marvel at the ignorance of “educated” people who ridicule anyone who actually tries to live by the commandments of God. But even converted Christians sometimes wonder why it can be such a struggle to make time to study those commandments, as revealed in the Bible. However, Scripture holds the answer. We are all subject to spiritual influences, from God and from Satan. Unless we have repented, received God’s Holy Spirit and are making a determined effort to stay focused on God, we *will* be influenced by Satan. The Apostle Paul reveals that “the carnal mind is *enmity* against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Romans 8:7). Unconverted people do not necessarily say that they hate God, but they will argue, twist and try to reason around the very clear intent of Scripture, because they simply do not have the mind of God!

This is why Paul wrote to the Philippians: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). Christians with the mind of God will be humble and teachable, and will sincerely desire to follow God’s instructions in the Bible. They will *make time* to study the Bible, and will really strive to live “by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). We cannot live by the Bible if we do not study what is in it! Paul told Timothy to diligently study Scripture (2 Timothy 2:15), and said that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). When we read, study and meditate on God’s word, and are willing to be led by the Holy Spirit, we will learn to think like God thinks (Isaiah 55:8–9), and we will further develop the mind of Christ within us (1 Corinthians 2:10–16). Regular Bible study is an important tool to foster this kind of spiritual growth. But there is more!

### Prepare to Rule

Bible prophecies indicate that today’s Christians are ultimately called to *rule* on this earth with Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:4–6; 5:10; 20:6). As future kings and priests, we will function as *civil and religious leaders* in the coming Kingdom of God. Jesus told His disciples that their reward would include *governing* cities and regions (Matthew 19:28; 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–19). Daniel explains that the saints who rule with Christ will turn many to God’s way (Daniel 12:3). Isaiah reveals that the saints of God will be *teachers* in the Kingdom (Isaiah 30:20–21) and that the laws of God will be promulgated from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2–4) to the whole world (Isaiah 11:9). However, before we can rule by the laws of God and teach those laws to others, we must first *study*—and come to understand and learn to live by—what God has recorded in His word. This is why Scripture provides specific instructions about Bible study.

When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, he advised them that they were to learn, remember, obey and not alter the commandments of God (Deuteronomy 4:1–8). Parents were to teach their children about God, and to obey His laws (Deuteronomy 4:9–10). Moses also emphasized that future leaders of Israel were to make *personal copies* of God’s law, and *study the law daily*, so they would be able to rule wisely and in a godly manner (Deuteronomy 17:14–20). This is one reason why David meditated on the law daily (Psalm 119:97). Ezra followed these same instructions before returning to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity, “for Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10). Ezra is later shown effectively teaching and explaining the meaning of Scripture to the people of Israel—in public meetings—as a result of this diligent preparation (Nehemiah 8:1–8).

The New Testament continues this theme. God chose as Jesus’ mother a woman well-versed in Scripture (see Luke 1:46–55). Jesus, after receiving careful parental training, was able at age 12 to discuss Scripture with such skill that He amazed religious leaders in Jerusalem (Luke 2:41–47). He said that we are to live by every word of God (Matthew 4:4). He taught in the synagogues of all Galilee (Matthew 4:23) and sent out the twelve apostles and then 70 others to preach and teach “all things that I have commanded you” (Luke 9:1–2; 10:1–2; Matthew 28:19–20). As the Church grew, deacons were appointed, who were “full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). That wisdom came from studying and meditating on the word of God. Paul mentions

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# “No, Thank You, I’m on a Diet...”

By Dibar Apartian

**T**wo out of three American adults are overweight. Obesity has reached epidemic proportions in the United States, where more than \$35 billion dollars are spent annually to treat this condition. Diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and certain types of cancer are said to be directly linked to obesity.

How much have you personally spent on weight-loss related products and services? What has been your personal contribution to this huge amount spent on obesity treatments? Are you, like millions of others, worried about your weight? If you had the means—and the willpower, of course—how much would you be willing to spend, or to sacrifice, to get rid of your excess weight?

Obesity is something most everyone hates. But is obesity merely physical? Can there be a spiritual “obesity”? There certainly can be—and there often is! Actually, spiritual obesity is much worse than physical obesity. Moreover, there are no “spiritual girdles” for sale to deflate expanded egos, swollen pride and morbid vanity.

Are you as willing to struggle to reduce your spiritual obesity as you are to eliminate your physical fat?

## Through the Eye of a Needle

What a pity it is that most people are more concerned with their physical condition than with their spiritual development! How many of those who faithfully follow the instructions contained in the various crash-diet handbooks are refusing to pay attention to the instructions given in another Manual—a much

more important one—which, if followed can help us all get rid of our spiritual fat? Few seem to realize that excess spiritual calories are far more harmful than excess physical calories.

To overcome spiritual obesity, one must follow a *spiritual diet*. This is the only way to have peace of mind, and to experience healthy spiritual growth.

Jesus Christ’s disciples were often unable to understand His parables. They were astounded by a statement He made about the rich. A young man approached Jesus to ask what he was supposed to do in order

to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:23–24).

The rich young man was *too fat* with pride of possession to be able to pass through “the eye of a needle.” He was in dire need of a *spiritual diet*; he had to learn to detach himself from his material wealth—the obstacle that produced in him the carnal qualities that would keep him out of the Kingdom of God. Sadly, he thought the price was too high for him to pay. He did not wish to slim down in the way Christ had instructed; he did not realize that he was far

A young man approached Jesus to ask what he was supposed to do in order to inherit eternal life. Christ told him to keep the commandments. But the young man was not satisfied with that answer. He had kept the commandments as a matter of form since his childhood. What did he lack? What else was there to do?

to inherit eternal life. Christ told him to keep the commandments. But the young man was not satisfied with that answer. He had kept the commandments as a matter of form since his childhood. What did he lack? What else was there to do? When Christ told him to sell all that he possessed and give it to the poor, the young man walked away sorrowful and depressed, because he was very wealthy and was unwilling to give up his physical riches for the Kingdom of God.

Turning to His disciples after the young man’s departure, Christ said: “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say

too overweight with selfishness and the love of the world.

## The Narrow Gate

On another occasion, Christ gave His disciples the following teaching: “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13–14).

A “narrow gate” and “difficult way” are certainly larger than the “eye of a needle.” Nevertheless, to negotiate them does require much

spiritual “thinning down”—maintaining a spiritual diet that consists of disciplining ourselves, mastering our nature and deflating our ego.

Generally speaking, we are all very tolerant of ourselves. We condone in ourselves what we are not willing to overlook in others. It seems as though—so far as we are concerned—the “golden rule” is a one-way street: we want everyone to treat us well, regardless of how we treat them. This is tantamount to entering through the wide gate and following the way that leads to destruction.

Anyone who has ever followed a diet of any kind knows that one has to learn to say “no” to items that the diet forbids. Following a spiritual diet requires as much determination and strength of will—if not more. If you can learn to say, “No, thank you” when physical food is concerned, you can also learn to say, “No, thank you” to thoughts or acts that are not permitted in your spiritual diet.

Jealousy, selfishness and vanity have a similar effect on your mind as fattening foods have on your body. They bog you down, and bloat you, producing the spiritual obesity that not only hinders you from going through the eye of a needle, but also from entering “the narrow gate.”

Flattery, gossip and spreading rumors may provide you with “interesting” conversation—much as sugary products may excite your taste buds—but they will add greatly to your spiritual *avoirdufois*. The next time someone offers you a serving of these spiritually harmful delicacies, be sure to summon the courage to say to yourself—or to those who are around you—“No, thank you, I’m on a diet!”

### Our Diet Handbook

Most of humanity today rejects the only Handbook that is the true

authority on spiritual dieting: the Holy Bible.

Why? One reason is that people fail to understand that the Bible really contains all the essential principles in life—both physical and spiritual—that we so desperately need to keep our bodies and minds in good shape. The fact is that no matter what your beliefs may be, they cannot alter the truth: that the Bible is the one indispensable Handbook that helps us enter the “narrow gate” that leads to eternal life. It is our guideline—our Manual, our instruction Book—that contains all the necessary ingredients we need to maintain a good spiritual figure.

One of the most basic ingredients it teaches us is *gratitude*. Have you ever really considered what you have brought into this world? What have you contributed to it? How much have you done for others? What discoveries have you made that were not made before you? The Apostle Paul wrote: “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content” (1 Timothy 6:6–8).

Paul’s tribulations taught him to practice what he preached. He could honestly write: “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:11–13).

Gratitude, indeed, is one of the most efficient spiritual calorie-burners. It will allow you to lose many unnecessary spiritual pounds. All God has created is good; the laws He has prescribed are good for us. The

“Way” He instructs us to follow is the only one that leads us toward the goal for which we have been created.

When you seriously consider all these factors, you cannot help but feel a *deep gratitude* toward your Creator. Gratitude creates a desire to share with others, to help them to come to this understanding and to help them be grateful—whatever their problems.

Another effective calorie-burner our Creator recommends in our spiritual diet is *humility*. Have you ever tried to use it—generously? Neither pride nor vengeance has any place in humility. Nor does selfishness. The Bible tells us, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3–4).

We must not confuse humility with weakness or lack of character. It takes tremendous courage and strength of character to be truly Christian. Perseverance requires of us a tough struggle against the obstacles and temptations in life. But God helps us to overcome. He gives us His Spirit of love and courage when we repent of our sins and are baptized.

You can be very strong, yet very humble. In fact, the more humble you are, the stronger you become. “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:5–7).

Examine your *behavior* and *thoughts*. Why do you act the way you

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# Dealing with Distraction

By J. Charles Ogwyn

**A**s Delta Airlines Flight 5191 left its gate at Bluegrass Airport, near Lexington, Kentucky, nothing seemed unusual. It was the morning of August 27, 2006, and as the pilots taxied toward the runway they made light conversation. That morning's flight would have been like any other, were it not for a fatal error—the pilots took their plane to the wrong runway.

Within a few minutes, the flight was over. All the passengers, and most of the crew members, were dead. Because the pilots had become complacent and distracted, they failed to follow proper procedures—procedures that, if followed, would have stopped them from using a too-short runway.

That horrible accident is a graphic illustration of the danger associated with distraction. No, distraction does not always lead to physical death, as it did for those aboard Flight 5191 that morning. But sometimes it can lead to something far worse—the loss of salvation, and of eternal life as part of God's family.

As Christians, we face many distractions along our journey through this life. If we do not identify and avoid these distractions, we may fail to reach our ultimate goal—to be part of the Kingdom of God.

What is distraction? To be distracted is to turn aside. Jesus Christ tells us to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). Anything that tempts us to turn aside or to detour from that

instruction is a distraction. Our goal as Christians is to follow Christ's instruction—and all it entails—with singleness of purpose. This is the challenge we have been given, and we know that once we put our hand to the plow, we must not turn back (cf. Luke 9:62).

Christ told His disciples, “No servant can serve two masters” (Luke 16:13). Serving the world precludes service to God. Though

(see James 1:17), but we must not pursue pleasure in an unbalanced way that becomes a distraction from our eternal goal.

Although the pursuit of material gain—riches and pleasures—has been the downfall of many, there are other distractions that Christians must face and overcome, lest we reap a bitter result. In Matthew 14, we read of Christ in the midst of a storm, walking across the water toward the boat

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we do reap many rewards in this life, our primary reward is not to be had in this life. To reap the reward God has for us—to obtain the crown that has been reserved for us—we must not let ourselves become distracted.

In the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus illustrates what will happen to those who have received God's word if they let the distractions of this life go unchecked. We read that the seed sown among thorns are “those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity” (Luke 8:14). Life offers many pleasures, but we must recognize those pleasures for what they are—temporary—and we must not let them distract us from what is eternal. Not all pleasure in this life is evil

where His disciples were. At first, the disciples—not recognizing that it was Jesus approaching—were startled and alarmed by the image of a man walking on water. But Christ then spoke to His disciples to comfort them, and Peter asked to come to Christ on the water. When Peter jumped out of the boat, he began to do what seemed physically impossible—he walked on water. But as soon as he became distracted, he began to sink.

It was not materialism or pleasure-seeking that distracted Peter. Rather, his attention was diverted from our Savior by the presence of physical danger. He became distracted by an obstacle that was—until that point—no threat at all. Only when he let his attention be diverted did he face any real danger. Essentially, while he was on

his way to meet Christ, he became concerned about not making it. As a result, he came up short, and began to sink before Jesus reached down to rescue him. As long as Peter's attention was fixed on Christ, he could do the impossible with his Savior's help. However, once his attention was distracted away from Christ, he began to falter.

If we keep our attention firmly fixed on our Savior, and on preparing for His return, we can draw help and strength from Him—and we can make progress toward our goal. But if our attention is diverted—even temporarily, as Peter's was—our forward progress comes to an abrupt halt. Like Peter's walking on water, the task we have been given—overcoming our carnal nature and building God's holy and righteous character—is *humanly* impossible. But we *can* do it—with God's help through His Holy Spirit. If we doubt this—if we become fearful about our ability to make it into the Kingdom—we become distracted from the source of our strength and the reason for our progress, and in essence we repeat Peter's mistake.

### **Distracted by Need?**

Peter needed Christ, and so do we. Our Savior teaches us this lesson in many ways, just as He taught it differently to various of His followers as recorded in Scripture. We read that Martha was busy preparing food for her guests while Jesus was teaching His disciples at her home (Luke 10:38–42). Martha's sister Mary chose not to help in preparing the food; instead, she devoted her attention to Christ's teaching. This annoyed Martha, and she took her concern to Jesus, expecting that He would chastise Mary for failing to help. Much to Martha's surprise, Jesus praised Mary and corrected

Martha, saying “you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (vv. 41–42).

Notice that Christ did not deny the value of what Martha was doing. Still, He admonished Martha for placing too much importance on the physical. Although Martha was sincere and conscientious—both wonderful character traits—she let the pursuit of physical nourishment distract her from seeking spiritual nourishment. Martha was confused about what Christ wanted from her, so she kept busy by attending to what was far less important—a physical meal for her guests.

We must never forget that our heavenly Father knows our needs, and that if we are first and foremost seeking His Kingdom and His righteousness, He will provide those needs for us (Matthew 6:32–34). Christ could easily have fed all those who were gathered at Martha's house, just as He had earlier fed loaves and fishes to the multitude (Luke 9:11–17).

Being distracted by the physical, Martha had missed out on a rare opportunity to actually sit at her Savior's feet, where she could have listened to Him speak, asked Him questions and heard His answers. She must have deeply regretted her choice later, but by then the priceless opportunity was gone.

Some distractions may be easier to recognize than others. Distractions that appeal to the lust of our flesh, or to the lust of the eyes, may be obvious, compared to the more subtle distractions that appeal to our pride of life (1 John 2:16). But every type of distraction can be equally devastating spiritually. Whether we turn aside because we fear or lust after the phys-

ical, or because we “need” to do something else, or because our pride may be at stake, we must always be on guard against the terrible consequences of distraction.

The problem of distraction is serious, but we should never lose hope that we can overcome it. In the pages of Scripture, and in the lives of those around us, we can find many wonderful examples of people who continually press forward toward the goal, without deviation. These people are following biblical principles which, if put into action, provide a safeguard against distraction.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13–14).

Paul was not complacent. He did not take success for granted. Rather than take it as a foregone conclusion, he worked actively to attain his goal. He made it a practice not to look backward; instead, he pressed forward to reach his objective. Paul could easily have become distracted if he had allowed himself to dwell on the trials that were behind him (2 Corinthians 11:23–27). Yet he did not waste his time dwelling on why his life had turned out as it had, or lamenting over his past mistakes. He did not play the “What if?” game. Once he put his hand to the plow, he kept his attention on his task, working toward its completion and encouraging others to do the same.

### **Advice for Kings**

Ancient Israel's kings faced great distractions. Some, like King Solomon, show the sad result of dis-

traction (1 Kings 11:1–8). Others, like King Josiah of Judah, set a tremendous example of dedication without distraction.

God inspired His instructions to Israel's kings to be recorded in Deuteronomy 17—not only for the kings' benefit, but for ours today. Any king who followed those instructions would be able to focus on his task, and rule with wisdom. If we follow those instructions today, we too will be kept from distraction.

We read that the king should not become sidetracked by the acquisition of horses (Deuteronomy 17:16). Horses were used to pull chariots, so great numbers of horses represented not only wealth, but also military might. In ancient Israel, as today, God as a loving and protective Father wants His chosen

5:10). Solomon learned the hard way that gaining material possessions does not provide happiness, and that the pursuit of riches is merely a distraction from what is most important in life. We have Solomon's example, so we need not learn the hard way ourselves.

God also forbade the king from multiplying wives (Deuteronomy 17:17). Kings and wealthy men in those days often had many wives, but God warned against this practice. He was not trying to keep the king from enjoying life; rather He sought to protect him from the inevitable sad consequences that follow certain choices.

Not only did God warn the king what not to do; He also gave direction regarding what the king should do. The king was to write out a personal copy of God's word

ment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel" (v. 20). The goal was to foster humility in the king, and to encourage him to follow God's way, which would lead to physical blessings for him and for his kingdom.

Sometimes, we may be tempted to become complacent. When we read Scripture, we may feel, "Oh, I've read this before." Similarly, over the course of his reign, a king might read the same passages of Scripture many times. But this was not to encourage complacency; rather, God established this pattern for the king's benefit, to give him a constant check against distraction—against deviating from the course God intended.

The pilots on Delta 5191 had followed the established procedures

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The problem of distraction is serious, but we should never lose hope that we can overcome it. In the pages of Scripture, and in the lives of those around us, we can find many wonderful examples of people who continually press forward toward the goal, without deviation.

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people to rely on Him to fight their battles.

God also warned the king against multiplying to himself silver and gold (v. 17). This advice is just as appropriate today as when it was written millennia ago, as we see so many in our society being distracted by the desire for wealth. These precious metals are not only a symbol of wealth; they are often the cause of much suffering and grief. Even Solomon, who greatly multiplied silver and gold to himself, came to recognize this as a vain pursuit (Ecclesiastes 2:8–11).

Solomon went on to write: "He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase" (Ecclesiastes

(vv. 18–19). Not only did this ensure that the king had his own physical copy of Scripture; it helped him retain the words of Scripture in his mind. This was not mere "busywork"—in essence, God was prescribing daily Bible study for the king. As a king faithfully read God's word daily—reading words he had copied for himself—he would become deeply knowledgeable about God's laws and statutes, which—if abided by—could keep him and his subjects free of many of life's potential distractions.

These instructions were given so that the king's "heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the command-

many times, but they became complacent. Had they faithfully followed procedures, their flight would have been a success instead of a tragic failure.

Satan offers us many distractions, hoping to keep us from reaching our goal. But our Father in heaven loves us as only a perfect Father can. He desires our fellowship, and looks forward to us becoming Spirit and being a part of His family for all eternity. To help us achieve that objective, He has given us procedures to follow—principles we can apply, with His help and His Spirit—to avoid distraction and press forward with singleness of purpose toward His Kingdom. ☐

# Seven Pillars of Wisdom

By Don Davis

**W**hy do we need wisdom? Without it, we will struggle physically and spiritually throughout our lives. Though obtaining wisdom can be hard work, God makes it available to those who love Him and who are willing to learn and follow His ways.

Wisdom and discretion can protect us from many of life's trials and heartaches. "My son, let them not depart from your eyes—keep sound wisdom and discretion; so they will be life to your soul and grace to your neck. Then you will walk safely in your way, and your foot will not stumble. When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes; for the LORD will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught" (Proverbs 3:21–26).

Obtaining wisdom is as labor-intensive as building a physical structure such as a house. "Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars" (Proverbs 9:1). The Hebrew word for hewn, *chatsab*, means to cut or carve wood, stone or other material. Those who have ever hewn stone or wood know it requires strenuous effort!

In Scripture, God has given us His blueprint for wisdom. There are many ways to build a house; tastes and materials may vary depending on one's circumstances, and floor plans may differ, but all structurally sound houses will share certain features or characteristics in common.

What might be the seven pillars that uphold a house of wisdom? The Apostle James lists seven aspects of godly wisdom: "But the wisdom that is from above is first *pure*, then *peaceable*, *gentle*, willing to *yield*, full of *mercy* and *good fruits*, *without partiality* and *without hypocrisy*" (James 3:17). Let us consider each of these pillars, and how we can erect them in our lives.

## Pillar 1: Be Pure

How can we be pure? The first pillar of wisdom requires us to realize that we, in and of ourselves, cannot be pure and clean before God. "What is man, that he could be pure? And he who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous? If God puts no trust in His saints, and the heavens are not pure in His sight, how much less man, who is abominable and filthy, who drinks iniquity like water!" (Job 15:14–16).

Are we sometimes proud of "being good"? What does Scripture say about the idea that we are "good" in and of

ourselves? "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). Without purity, we cannot build our house of wisdom. But how, then, can we become pure in God's eyes? The Apostle Paul gives us the answer: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin" (Romans 7:24–25).

Only Jesus Christ dwelling in us, through the power of God's Holy Spirit, can make us acceptable to the Father. It is not that we merely "acknowledge Christ's sacrifice" on our behalf; we must work with the gift He has given us—the Holy Spirit—to clean up our minds and put sin out of our lives. As our carnal human nature is replaced by righteous, godly character, God's very purity will begin to become apparent in our lives. "Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him *purifies himself*, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:1–3).

As Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

## Pillar 2: Be Peaceable

Paul wrote to Timothy; "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and *peaceable* life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:1–4).

We cannot achieve true peace without Christ's righteousness. We lose peace when, in self-righteous pride, we insist on having our own way. "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that

friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously’? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble’” (James 4:1–6).

Where there is lust for power, position and pleasure, there is pride—and there is no peace. We cannot build our house of wisdom with pride and an argumentative spirit. We must love one another and approach those around us with humility. The Apostle Paul told Titus how to gain and maintain peace. “Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be *peaceable*, gentle, showing all humility to all men” (Titus 3:1–2).

We should allow God to fight the battles that the world forces upon us. If we find our carnal human nature being attracted to strife and dissent—if we are always eager to hear about other people’s problems, and to put them down so we may feel better by comparison, we will not have peace. “But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned” (vv. 9–11).

For some, peace will only come after traveling the hard road of correction. “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11).

As Christ taught us, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9).

### **Pillar 3: Be Gentle**

God loves those who have a meek, soft and gentle spirit. “Let your *gentleness* be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:5–7).

We often think of women as more naturally gentle than men—an attribute that helps them as nurturers in the family. But Scripture shows us that God values gentleness in men, too—and that a gentle man is not a “wimp.” A meek person is not timid or fearful. Meekness, more than anything else, is humility before God. This is the attribute of true gentleness. Moses, though a firm and strong leader, was gentle. “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3, KJV).

Christ Himself is shown to be gentle. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am *gentle* and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28–29). Yes, Scripture shows us that the Son of God—the same Jesus who cast the money-changers out of the temple, and who is described as having eyes like a flame of fire (Revelation 1:14)—is gentle. He is our example.

Patience is an often-overlooked attribute of gentleness. An impatient person is usually not gentle and humble in enduring trials. Notice what Paul wrote: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and *gentleness*, with *longsuffering*, bearing with one another in love, 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; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:1–6). A house of wisdom is not complete without the pillar of gentleness.

Remember Christ’s words: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

### **Pillar 4: Be Willing to Yield**

No house divided against itself can stand. Our house of wisdom will not survive if those within it cannot get along with each other. Paul explained the attitude wise Christians should have toward each other: “Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.... submitting to one another in the fear of God” (Ephesians 5:17–21).

In today’s society, many households are in turmoil because men and women did not grow up with a proper example of how a husband and wife should work together and yield to one another according to scriptural principles. How should they conduct themselves? “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5:22–24).

Too many men misuse the above passage as a license to abuse their wives emotionally—or even physically. A Christian man must not do this; he has an obligation to create a loving home environment that will foster peace and cooperation, and build mutual respect among family members. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.... So hus-

bands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church” (vv. 25–29).

The example of a peaceful, happy home, where the members yield to one another and respect each other’s roles and responsibilities, sets a pattern that should extend into the community. Christians should obey the laws of men so long as they do not contradict the laws of God. We must show respect (and pray for!) those who occupy offices of authority. “Therefore *submit* yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king” (1 Peter 2:13–17).

God places great value on our willingness to yield. But we are not to compromise with evil, or yield to sin. God promises to give us the grace and strength to obey His law and bring forth its fruits in our lives. The Apostle James explained, “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.... Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” (James 4:6–10). Maintaining a humble and submissive attitude is a requirement for salvation.

As Christ said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit [humble, lowly], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3).

### **Pillar 5: Be Full of Mercy and Good Works**

God shows amazing mercy and patience in dealing with His begotten children. “And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping *mercy* for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation” (Exodus 34:6–7).

No, God in His mercy does not encourage the unrepentant to continue in their sins! He intervenes in their lives, and their children’s lives, desiring that they might come to repentance. Yet because He may wait patiently before passing final judgment against an evil work, impatient human beings may sometimes get the wrong

idea. “Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God” (Ecclesiastes 8:11–13). Eventually, those who practice sin will pay its penalty.

We must show love toward all people, whether or not they have repented of what we may consider to be their sins. We need to remember that it is up to God—not up to us—how and when He will deal with a sinner. “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Romans 12:19).

Notice what Christ taught that our attitude toward forgiveness should be. “Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him” (Luke 17:3–4).

If someone comes to you seeking forgiveness, and you do not forgive, you are in danger of losing God’s forgiveness. “So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:12–13). If we want mercy from God, we must be willing to extend it to those around us. And our good works will even include our doing good to those who consider themselves our enemies (Matthew 5:43–48).

Christ reminded us, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

### **Pillar 6: Be Without Partiality**

Have you ever been tempted to spend time with your wealthier or more successful brethren, instead of with a needy widow or a poor family? Do you avoid the poor because you want to be around wealth—or do you avoid the wealthy because you are scornful or jealous of their success?

What is God’s attitude toward partiality? “God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods. How long will you judge unjustly, and show *partiality* to the wicked?... Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; free them from the hand of the wicked” (Psalm 82:1–4).



God calls it *sin* when we have the ability to do good, yet do not do it (James 4:17). God is impartial, judging all according to His law, whether we understand it or not. “Tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. *For there is no partiality with God*” (Romans 2:9–11).

Too often, people judge by appearances and show favoritism to those who outwardly seem successful. God, however, looks at the attitude and the heart. “My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with *partiality*. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy

something else. Those who profess to follow Christ must not deceive others about their thoughts and actions. The Apostle Peter exhorted: “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, *hypocrisy*, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:1–3).

Hypocrites’ actions do not match up to their words. Christians know the right words—God has given them to us, in Scripture. But what should we do when our own lives do not fully measure up to the standards God has set for us? Does “avoiding hypocrisy” mean that if we know the Truth, but fail to practice it perfectly, we should not proclaim the full Truth? Should we “water down” the plain teachings of Scripture simply because of

**What does it mean that they will speak their lies “in hypocrisy”? It means they will say one thing, while doing or knowing something else. Those who profess to follow Christ must not deceive others about their thoughts and actions.**

clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and say to the poor man, ‘You stand there,’ or, ‘Sit here at my footstool,’ have you not shown *partiality* among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?” (James 2:1–4).

Our Creator can discern our motives, and He judges by His righteous standards. “But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’” (1 Samuel 16:7).

As we seek to make God’s righteousness—not self-interest—our guide in life, we should remember Christ’s admonition, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

### **Pillar 7: Be Without Hypocrisy**

The Apostle Paul noted, under God’s inspiration, the danger of hypocrisy. He wrote: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in *hypocrisy*, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:1–2). Paul warned that in our day (“latter times”) some will teach doctrines of demons. These teachers will even lie knowingly, yet their seared consciences will not be affected. What does it mean that they will speak their lies “in hypocrisy”? It means they will say one thing, while doing or knowing

some area in our lives where we do not “measure up” to God’s word?

Of course not! How many of us, as parents, have had to instruct our children to behave according to a standard we have not ourselves achieved? Because it is God’s standard—not ours—we cannot compromise, but our honest and humble self-assessment should help us deal mercifully with those around us whom we also see failing to live up to the standard (Matthew 7:2).

When we truly practice the Way that Christ taught, people will see that, despite our imperfections, we are bearing much good fruit—striving to live purely, being peacemakers, gently yielding to those around us, showing mercy but not showing partiality, and conducting ourselves without hypocrisy.

If we do this, then no matter what trials, persecutions and obstacles we may encounter, we can take comfort in Christ’s words, “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:12).

### **Build on the Rock**

To build a house, we must first select a site, even before we can pick up a shovel or hammer to start building. Similarly, before we build our spiritual house of wisdom, we must find a place to put it. Jesus Christ, the Master Builder, tells us how to select that place: “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and

*continues on page 27*

# Audit 2007: Counting the Cost, Doing the Work

By J. Davy Crockett, III

It is a good idea for an individual—or a family, or the Church—to pause and reflect from time to time. Where have we been? Where are we going? What have we accomplished? What do we want to accomplish?

Each year, the Living Church of God voluntarily undergoes an independent audit by an outside auditing firm, which helps us take a careful, objective look at our business practices and methods, and our accounting procedures. We find this a valuable exercise for the Church, for a variety of reasons. This year, we once again asked the firm of Cherry, Bekaert & Holland of Charlotte to perform our audit. For 2007, the auditors paid particular attention to our policies and procedures, to ensure that we are compliant with Sarbanes-Oxley legislation affecting non-profit organizations. A copy of the audit is reproduced on the following pages, along with three charts to help illustrate key facts and figures.

On the whole, 2007 was a very good year for the Living Church of God, and this was reflected in our finances. We budgeted for a 5.5 percent increase in income, and planned our expenditures accordingly—yet the actual increase came to 6.9 percent!

Operating within a budget requires strong self-discipline, since

there are always new opportunities for expenses. Television stations and networks continually become available for the *Tomorrow's World* telecast, and we are always eager to increase our coverage, but we need to select stations based on available finances.

Another major factor in our expenses has been the increased cost of mailing, due to changes in U.S. Postal Service rates and regulations, and to the rising expense of international mailing. We are constantly looking for ways to reduce our costs for mailing domestically and internationally. The Internet provides an invaluable means for distributing material all

around the world without postage costs, and we are finding more and more opportunities to use this powerful tool. For example, the *Tomorrow's World Bible Study Course* online is now going to more than 4,500 people in 93 countries as this is being written—with more being added every week.

Even so, postal mailings are still proving fruitful. A series of specially

targeted mailings to *Tomorrow's World* subscribers has been very successful. Four special mailings have been done to date, and more than

65,000 booklets have been distributed to subscribers responding to the letters. More mailings are being planned as

hot topics emerge on the world scene.

Living University was launched in 2007, offering biblical education to hundreds of students around the world, who are taking advantage of the opportunity to “attend” classes online. As we expand the university's course offerings, we look forward to serving more students, which should magnify the positive impact of this cyber-university. Although the university serves students of all ages, we hope that it will increasingly meet the needs of the Church's college-age members.

As many of you may know, the United States government has mandated a move to all-digital television, effective as of February 2009. For the Church's audiovisual efforts, this means a major effort to adjust to the new requirements. We are in the process of replacing most of our television production equipment to prepare for digital production. Part of this cost will be paid out of current revenues, and part of it will be financed.

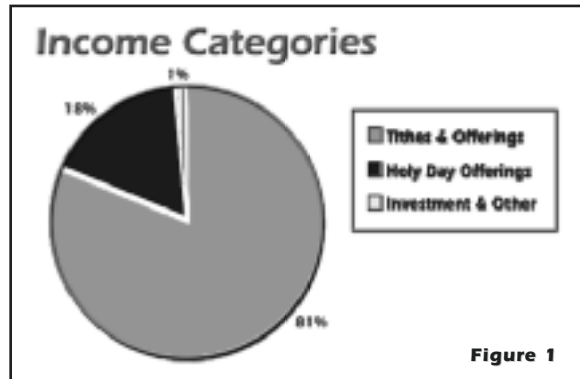


Figure 1

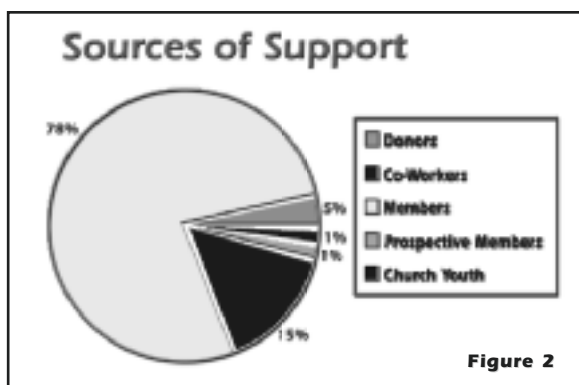


Figure 2

One important part of the adjustment is our acquisition of a new building, two doors down the street from our Headquarters building. The building has 5,000 square feet of space, and will house our television production facilities. The way this building became available to us is a sign of God’s inspiration, opening a door to facilitate His work. It became available at just the time we needed to upgrade our studio space, and it is wonderfully suited for our needs. Its 16-foot ceilings offer excellent facility for a television studio in a 40x60-foot room that is heated and cooled. The rest of the building is laid out with offices that will be occupied by various staff working in the audiovisual area. Some remodeling will be required, but overall it is basically “ready to go” once our new equipment is acquired and the new television studio set is installed.

Moving our television production to this new facility will free a number of offices in the Headquarters building, and will make available approximately 2,000

square feet of space occupied by the current studio. With this space, we can expand our Headquarters meeting room, allowing us to seat about 100 more people for Sabbath services and other Church functions.

Because the Church finished 2007 with a surplus of \$163,903, funds were available to allow the Church to afford a down payment on the new building. Truly, God made possible this wonderful new development for His Work!

Where did that surplus come from? In one sense, it came about because of careful stewardship. Ultimately, of course, it came from the tithes and offerings of our members, and a growing cadre of co-workers and donors. While the Church occasionally receives large donations—which are greatly appreciated—the main-

stay of the Church’s income to do the Work is the “widow’s mite” received in the form of many small donations. As you will see in Figure 1, 81 percent of the Church’s income in 2007 came from tithes and offerings. Another 17.5 percent came from Holy Day offerings. Investment and other sources accounted for 1.4 percent of 2007 income.

As you will see in Figure 2, more than 78 percent of the Church’s income in 2007 came from members. Another 5 percent came from prospective members, and 0.7 percent from Church youth. About 16 percent of the Church’s income in 2007 came from donors and co-workers.

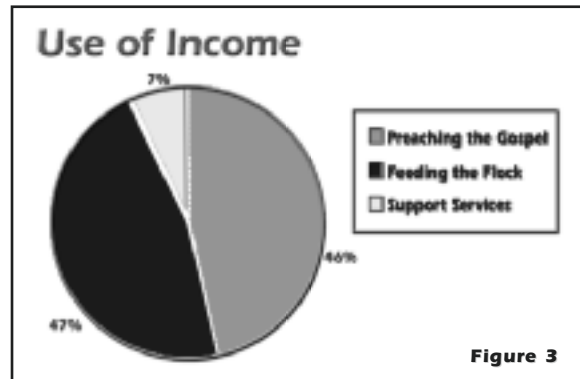


Figure 3

*continues on page 26*

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD  
(INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
AND AFFILIATES**

Consolidated Financial Statements  
Years Ended December 31, 2007 and 2006

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD  
(INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
AND AFFILIATES**

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Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.....



### Report of Independent Auditors

Board of Directors  
Living Church of God (International), Inc. and Affiliates  
Charlotte, North Carolina

We have audited the accompanying consolidated statements of financial position of the Living Church of God (International), Inc. and Affiliates (the "Church") as of December 31, 2007 and 2006, and the related consolidated statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended. These consolidated financial statements are the responsibility of the Church's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Living Church of God (International), Inc. and Affiliates as of December 31, 2007 and 2006, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended, in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

*Cherry, Bekaert & Holland, L.L.P.*

Charlotte, North Carolina  
April 29, 2008

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
AND AFFILIATES**

Consolidated Statements of Financial Position

Assets

	December 31,	
	2007	2006
<b>Current assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,013,631	\$ 1,251,137
Investments	492,079	243,191
Receivables, net	449,697	472,722
Inventory	293,452	265,417
Prepaid expenses	297,692	304,673
Deposits	2,975	4,153
<b>Total current assets</b>	<u>2,549,526</u>	<u>2,541,293</u>
<b>Property and equipment, net</b>	2,795,418	2,799,374
<b>Other assets, net</b>	<u>8,778</u>	<u>2,012</u>
<b>Total assets</b>	<u>\$ 5,353,722</u>	<u>\$ 5,342,679</u>

Liabilities and Net Assets

<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable	\$ 307,792	\$ 350,450
Accrued wages and other liabilities	193,282	189,021
Mortgage payable, current portion	42,925	30,142
Capital lease obligations, current portion	92,281	100,974
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<u>636,280</u>	<u>670,587</u>
<b>Long-term liabilities</b>		
Mortgage payable	1,595,876	1,637,168
Capital lease obligations	74,301	151,562
<b>Total long-term liabilities</b>	<u>1,670,177</u>	<u>1,788,730</u>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<u>2,306,457</u>	<u>2,459,317</u>
<b>Net assets</b>		
Unrestricted net assets	2,970,391	2,805,006
Temporarily restricted net assets	76,874	78,356
<b>Total net assets</b>	<u>3,047,265</u>	<u>2,883,362</u>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<u>\$ 5,353,722</u>	<u>\$ 5,342,679</u>

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
AND AFFILIATES**

Consolidated Statements of Activities

	Year Ended December 31,					
	2007		2006			
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Totals	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Totals
<b>Revenue and support</b>						
Tithes and contributions	\$ 9,633,829	\$ -	\$ 9,633,829	\$ 8,892,492	\$ -	\$ 8,892,492
Holy Day offerings	2,081,516	-	2,081,516	2,038,668	-	2,038,668
Investment income and other revenue	125,136	-	125,136	178,897	-	178,897
Special project donations	550	13,619	14,169	0	12,175	12,175
Tuition and fees	32,370	-	32,370	-	-	-
	<u>11,841,031</u>	<u>13,619</u>	<u>11,854,650</u>	<u>11,110,057</u>	<u>12,175</u>	<u>11,122,232</u>
Net assets released from restrictions due to satisfaction of restricted purpose	15,101	(15,101)	-	6,841	(6,841)	-
<b>Total revenue and support</b>	<u>11,888,502</u>	<u>(1,482)</u>	<u>11,887,020</u>	<u>11,116,898</u>	<u>5,334</u>	<u>11,122,232</u>
<b>Expenses</b>						
Feeding the Flood:						
Support of local congregations	4,454,289	-	4,454,289	4,532,080	-	4,532,080
Assistance to the needy	886,975	-	886,975	869,051	-	869,051
Living University	111,674	-	111,674	-	-	-
Franchising the Gospel:						
Television and radio	3,174,978	-	3,174,978	2,661,003	-	2,661,003
Publishing and editorial	887,585	-	887,585	983,976	-	983,976
Mail processing and distribution	1,383,706	-	1,383,706	1,182,213	-	1,182,213
General and administrative:						
Support services and other	823,910	-	823,910	819,674	-	819,674
<b>Total expenses</b>	<u>11,723,117</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>11,723,117</u>	<u>11,047,997</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>11,047,997</u>
<b>Change in net assets</b>	165,385	(1,482)	163,903	68,901	5,334	74,235
<b>Net assets</b>						
Beginning of year	2,805,006	78,356	2,883,362	2,736,105	73,022	2,809,127
<b>End of year</b>	<u>\$ 2,970,391</u>	<u>\$ 76,874</u>	<u>\$ 3,047,265</u>	<u>\$ 2,805,006</u>	<u>\$ 78,356</u>	<u>\$ 2,883,362</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these consolidated financial statements.

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
AND AFFILIATES**

Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows

	<b>Year Ended December 31,</b>	
	<b>2007</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Change in net assets	\$ 163,903	\$ 74,235
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by operating activities		
Depreciation and amortization	295,325	267,996
Net unrealized/realized gains on investments	(440)	(60,873)
Loss on disposal of property and equipment	270	-
Provision for uncollectible receivables	7,524	3,000
Change in operating assets and liabilities:		
Receivables	15,501	(34,496)
Prepaid expenses	6,981	15,866
Inventory	(28,035)	(79,919)
Deposits and other assets	(6,914)	(253)
Accounts payable	(42,658)	169,980
Accrued expenses	4,261	(119,617)
<b>Net cash provided by operating activities</b>	<u>415,718</u>	<u>235,919</u>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Purchases of property and equipment	(268,730)	(395,511)
Proceeds from sale of investments	147,291	172,447
Purchase of investments	(395,739)	(87,275)
<b>Net cash used by investing activities</b>	<u>(517,178)</u>	<u>(310,339)</u>
<b>Cash flow from financing activities</b>		
Principal payments on mortgage	(28,509)	(17,875)
Proceeds from mortgage	-	105,967
Proceeds from principal payments on capital lease obligations	(107,537)	76,545
<b>Net cash provided by (used in) financing activities</b>	<u>(136,046)</u>	<u>164,637</u>
<b>Increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents</b>	(237,506)	90,217
<b>Cash and cash equivalents</b>		
Beginning of year	<u>1,251,137</u>	<u>1,160,920</u>
End of year	<u>\$ 1,013,631</u>	<u>\$ 1,251,137</u>
<b>Supplemental disclosure of cash flow information</b>		
Cash paid during the year for interest expense	<u>\$ 126,082</u>	<u>\$ 118,942</u>
Equipment acquired through issuance of capital lease	<u>\$ 21,583</u>	<u>\$ 139,809</u>

LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
AND AFFILIATES

Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements  
December 31, 2007 and 2006

Note 1 – Organization and summary of significant accounting policies

**Organization and nature of activities** – The Living Church of God (International), Inc. and Affiliates (the “Church”), a North Carolina nonprofit religious corporation, is involved in preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and providing for the spiritual and material needs of its members. The Church is primarily funded by unrestricted tithes and offerings. Its ministries in worldwide headquarters is Charlotte, North Carolina.

**Consolidation of reporting entity** – The Church is a comprised of various legal entities in the United States. Entities controlled by the Church have been included in the accompanying financial statements. These entities include Living Church of God, Inc., Tomorrow’s World, Inc., Tomorrow’s World, U.F., and the Living University. The operations of foreign affiliates are not included in the accompanying financial statements as they are independent entities in which the Church does not hold a controlling interest.

**Living University** – The 2007 consolidated financial statements include the accounts of the Church, including affiliates, and its wholly-owned subsidiary, Living University (the “University”). The University was established in 2007 to initially offer online course work for the development of the whole person by educating men and women in the skills, concepts, and values that lead to success in life, while helping them prepare for leadership and worthwhile service to God and humanity. The University began offering online study in the fall semester of 2007.

All significant intercompany balances and transactions have been eliminated in consolidation.

**Acute of presentation** – The accompanying financial statements are prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. Net assets and revenues, expenses, gains, and losses are classified based on the existence or absence of donor-imposed restrictions. Accordingly, net assets and changes therein are classified and reported as follows:

**Unrestricted net assets** – Net assets that are both undesignated and designated in nature. Unrestricted net assets are those currently available for use in the day-to-day operations of the Church and those resources invested in property and equipment. The Church uses designate certain accounts to be utilized in order to meet specific objectives of the Church.

**Temporarily restricted net assets** – Net assets subject to donor-imposed restrictions that may or will be met by specific actions of the Church and/or passage of time. When a restriction expires, temporarily restricted net assets are reclassified to unrestricted net assets and reported in the statement of activities as an assets released from restriction.

**Permanently restricted net assets** – Net assets that are subject to donor-imposed stipulations that they be maintained permanently by the Church. Usually, the donors of these assets commit the Church to use all or part of the income earned on any related investments for general or specific purposes. As of December 31, 2007, the Church had no permanently restricted net assets.

LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
AND AFFILIATES

Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements  
December 31, 2007 and 2006

Note 1 – Organization and summary of significant accounting policies (continued)

**Contributions revenue** – Tithes and offerings are recorded as revenue in the year the contribution is pledged. Members of the Church practice tithing, the donation of ten percent of one’s income for the Church’s unrestricted use. These tithes (given as first tithes), plus unrestricted offerings given as each of seven annual Holy Days, comprise the majority of Church support and revenue.

In addition to first tithes and offerings, members give a second tithes for personal use to be able to attend the annual Holy Days. Those who are able give ten percent of their personal second tithes and/or second tithes to the Church. The Church uses these funds to help pay for expenses incurred by the Church to conduct the Holy Days and assist the needy members to be able to attend the Church Holy Days. These contributions are known as second tithes.

Members, who are financially able, also contribute a third tithes in the third and sixth years of every seven year cycle. These contributions are used first to assist widows, orphans and the poor; and secondly, for missions and missionary support.

**Restricted donations** are received for the purchase of media time, the operation of the Church’s summer youth camps, buildings and facilities maintenance, financial aid and assistance to foreign affiliates in need.

**Cash and cash equivalents** – The Church considers all highly liquid debt instruments purchased with an original maturity of three months or less to be cash equivalents. For the purpose of the Statement of Cash Flows, cash and cash equivalents included in investments are not considered cash and cash equivalents.

**Accounts receivable** – Invoices consist of various bills and publications and are stated at the lower of cost or fair value, less a cash discount or loss to be cash equivalent. For the purpose of the Statement of Cash Flows, cash and cash equivalents included in investments are not considered cash and cash equivalents.

**Investments** – Investments consist of certificates of deposit, equities, preferred stock and mutual funds stated at fair market value. Unrestricted gains and losses are included in the Statement of Activities.

**Other receivables** – Other receivables at December 31, 2007 and 2006 are included in receivables on the Statement of Financial Position and consist of amounts due from foreign affiliates, employees, the state of North Carolina for interest paid and vendor receivables. Management’s determination of the allowance for doubtful accounts is based on an evaluation of the receivable, past experience, current economic conditions, and other factors. Accounts receivable are written off when, in the opinion of management, such receivables are deemed to be uncollectible. At December 31, 2007 and 2006, management determined that allowance for doubtful accounts of \$13,000 was reasonable.

LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
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Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements  
December 31, 2007 and 2006

Note 1 – Organization and summary of significant accounting policies (continued)

**Contributions receivable** – Contributions receivable are included in receivables on the Statement of Financial Position and consist of current year tithes and offerings received in January of the subsequent year. Management’s determination of the allowance for doubtful accounts is based on an evaluation of the receivable, past experience, current economic conditions, and other data inherent in the accounts. Contributions receivable are written off when, in the opinion of management, such receivables are deemed to be uncollectible. At December 31, 2007 and 2006, management determined that no allowance for doubtful accounts was necessary.

**Prepaid expenses and deposits** – Prepaid expenses consist of television time, publications, vehicle leases, Church meeting hall rentals, insurance and other recurring postage paid in advance. Deposits include funds to secure hall rentals, youth camp and festival sites.

**Programming costs of television time** are paid in advance of the scheduled air date. The expense is recognized in the month that the program is aired.

**Prepaid church meeting hall rentals** are expensed in the month the meeting is held. Virtually all of the church hall rentals are on a month-to-month basis.

**Prepaid vehicle lease costs** are paid at the inception of the lease and amortized over the term of the original lease, usually 12 to 48 months.

**Property and equipment** – Property and equipment is stated at cost. Depreciation of property is computed on the straight-line method over the estimated useful lives of 30 years for buildings and improvements and 3 to 5 years for office furniture and equipment. The costs of major improvements are capitalized, while the costs of maintenance and repairs, which do not improve or extend the life of the respective properties, are expensed when incurred. The cost and accumulated depreciation of property are eliminated from the accounts upon disposal and any resulting gain or loss is included in the Statement of Activities.

**Other assets** – Other assets include purchase of “The World Ahead” trademarks and “Global Church of God” copyrights, trade names, trade names and all other intellectual property rights. The intellectual property rights are amortized over 1 year. Amortization expense for the years ended December 31, 2007 and 2006 amounted to \$1,326 and \$1,412, respectively. Accumulated amortization of these assets was \$20,199 and \$28,873 at December 31, 2007 and 2006, respectively.

**Accrued wages and other liabilities** – Accrued liabilities primarily pertain to amounts accrued for contracted services, insurance and wages.

**Income taxes** – The Church and the University are exempt from income taxes under the provisions of Section 501(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Church’s controlled entities are non-profit organizations with no taxable activity.

LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
AND AFFILIATES

Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements  
December 31, 2007 and 2006

Note 1 – Organization and summary of significant accounting policies (continued)

**Factor used fee** – The University charges tuition and fees for online study. Revenue is recognized growth over time that the online course is offered. Revenue received for the first year is reported as deferred revenue (other liabilities) in the accompanying Statement of Financial Position.

**Programs and support services** – The Church sponsors a number of programs and support services. These programs and services consist of the following:

**Support of local congregations** – Represents the cost incurred and paid by the Church at the local congregation level to provide for the spiritual needs of its members. Included are pastoral expenses such as salaries, health care, vehicles and other travel related costs as well as weekly meeting hall rentals, mailing of DVD sermons, expenses to conduct the annual Holy Days, youth programs, the direct support of foreign affiliates and other support.

**Assistance to the needy** – Provides for the material needs of Church members primarily as evidenced by widows, orphans and the poor, including assistance to enable some members to attend the annual Holy Days. Assistance to foreign affiliates in need is also included.

**Telephone and video** – Primarily represents the cost of purchasing air time for the Church’s weekly television program, Tomorrow’s World. Also included are the production costs associated with meeting the program and costs for video tape and answering services.

**Printing and editorial** – Includes editorial and publishing costs of the Church’s bi-monthly magazine, Tomorrow’s World, and an army of booklets, primarily intended for non-members. Also included are costs of printing all other Church materials.

**Web processing and distribution** – Represents the costs of fulfilling literature, multiple and compact disc requests generated by growing the Gospel of the Kingdom of God through television, radio and publishing. Computer support of mailing lists is also included.

**Support services and other** – Includes administrative expenses not directly attributable to specific programs. This includes the full cost of all financial, accounting, purchasing, human resources and legal support. It also includes general insurance and other related business expenses.

**Functional expense** – The costs of providing programs and other activities have been summarized on a functional basis in the statement of activities. Accordingly, certain costs have been allocated among the programs and supporting services benefited.

**Donated services** – No amounts have been reflected in the financial statements for donated services. The Church pays for most services requiring specific expertise. However, many individuals volunteer their time and professional ability of tasks that include assisting the Church with specific programs and services on various continents. Such donated services have not been quantified and do not meet the criteria for recognition in financial statements.



**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
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Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements  
December 31, 2007 and 2006

**Note 1 – Organization and summary of significant accounting policies (continued)**

Advertising expense – Advertising costs are expensed as incurred. Total advertising expense for the years ended December 31, 2007 and 2006, was \$104,340 and \$83,925, respectively.

Use of estimates – The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities at the close of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expense during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from these estimates.

**Note 2 – Investments**

The fair market value of investments at December 31, 2007 and 2006 is summarized below:

	2007	2006
Certificates of deposit	\$ 300,000	\$ -
Equities	146,191	175,791
Mutual funds	1,667	6,790
Gold shares	41,230	67,210
Total	\$ 491,079	\$ 249,791

Investment return is included in investment income and other revenue on the accompanying statement of activities and consists of the following at December 31, 2007 and 2006:

	2007	2006
Interest and dividends	\$ 17,221	\$ 20,640
Losses sold and realized gains	440	80,832
Total	\$ 17,661	\$ 101,472

**Note 3 – Receivables**

Receivables at December 31, 2007 and 2006 are as follows:

	2007	2006
Contributions receivable	\$ 256,527	\$ 280,150
Other receivables	206,170	202,252
	462,697	482,402
Less allowance for uncollectible receivables	11,890	13,600
Total receivables	\$ 450,807	\$ 468,802

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
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Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements  
December 31, 2007 and 2006

**Note 4 – Mortgages payable**

The Church has two mortgages outstanding which are summarized below:

	December 31,	
	2007	2006
Mortgage payable – bank, variable interest rate based on 1% below the bank's prime rate (6.0% and 6.95% at December 31, 2007 and 2006). Principal and interest is payable in monthly installments of \$9,879 through October 2012 with the final payment of the balance plus accrued interest, if any due November 2012. The mortgage is collateralized by the Church's headquarters located in Charlotte, North Carolina.	\$1,577,166	\$1,501,141

Mortgage payable – bank, fixed interest rate of 7.625%. Principal and interest is payable in monthly installments of \$1,011 through January 2011 with the final payment of the balance plus accrued interest, if any due January 2011. The mortgage is collateralized by a corporate condominium located in Matthews, North Carolina.	101,635	165,967
	1,678,801	1,667,108
Less current portion	42,025	38,142
	\$ 1,636,776	\$ 1,628,966

Future maturities of the notes payable are as follows:

2008	32,290
2009	35,343
2010	37,132
2011	121,182
2012	34,811
Thereafter	1,389,431
	\$ 1,670,489

Total interest expense for the years ended December 31, 2007 and 2006, was \$126,082 and \$121,297, respectively.

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
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Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements  
December 31, 2007 and 2006

**Note 4 – Prepaid expenses**

Prepaid expenses at December 31, 2007 and 2006, consist of the following:

	2007	2006
Prepaid insurance	\$ 15,675	\$ 21,423
Prepaid vehicle lease	4,222	11,145
Prepaid building rent	12,500	16,500
Prepaid church hall rental	32,717	31,497
Prepaid television	203,185	200,675
Prepaid postage	16,859	16,345
Prepaid other	12,734	13,093
Total prepaid expenses	\$ 237,692	\$ 304,678

**Note 5 – Property and equipment**

The following is a summary of property and equipment at December 31, 2007 and 2006:

	2007	2006
Land	\$ 415,000	\$ 415,000
Land improvements	10,670	10,670
Building and improvements	2,201,437	2,188,370
Furniture, fixtures and software	1,043,949	784,815
Automobiles	324,822	502,259
Construction in progress	2,124	4,080
	3,998,002	3,706,094
Less accumulated depreciation	1,199,634	906,730
Property and equipment, net	\$ 2,798,368	\$ 2,799,364

Depreciation expense, including amortization on equipment and vehicles under capital lease, was \$191,994 and \$267,585 for the years ended December 31, 2007 and 2006, respectively.

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
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Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements  
December 31, 2007 and 2006

**Note 7 – Capital lease obligations**

The Church leases certain equipment and vehicles under agreements that are classified as capital leases. These obligations require monthly payments ranging from \$482 to \$2,046 and extend through April 2010. The cost of equipment and vehicles under capital leases is included in property and equipment and is summarized at December 31, 2007 and 2006, as follows:

	2007	2006
Equipment	\$ 98,902	\$ 88,000
Vehicles	228,822	232,219
	427,724	420,219
Less accumulated amortization	251,762	313,219
	\$ 175,962	\$ 107,000

Required minimum lease payments as of December 31, 2007 are as follows:

2008	\$ 62,280
2009	37,514
2010	25,317
2011	2,510
	127,621
Less amount representing interest	9,846
Less current maturity	92,281
	\$ 25,594

**Note 8 – Temporarily restricted net assets**

Temporarily restricted net assets are restricted by the following purposes at December 31, 2007 and 2006:

	2007	2006
Disaster relief	\$ 72,735	\$ 78,317
International Outreach Centers	4,600	-
Other projects	126	129
	\$ 77,461	\$ 78,446

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
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Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements  
December 31, 2007 and 2006

**Note 9 – Commitments**

The Church leases fleet vehicles and equipment under various non-cancelable operating leases. These leases require monthly payments ranging from \$1,010 to \$1,248 and extend through December 2010. Lease expense for vehicles under various operating leases amounted to \$166,344 and \$181,285 at December 31, 2007 and 2006, respectively.

Received minimum lease payments on fleet under operating leases as of December 31, 2007 and 2006 are as follows:

2008		\$ 104,172
2009		40,191
2010		11,087
2011		1,081
		\$ 166,531

**Note 10 – Benefit plan**

The Church has a 403(b) Tax Deferred Annuity Plan for all eligible employees. Eligible employees may elect to contribute up to the maximum contribution permitted by the Internal Revenue Code. The Church does not contribute to this plan.

The Church has a Simplified Employee Pension Plan (SEP) covering all eligible employees. The Church's contributions are based on 2.5% of eligible participants' compensation. The contributions made by the Church for the years ended December 31, 2007 and 2006 amounted to \$61,262 and \$55,704, respectively.

**Note 11 – Contingencies**

The Church provides discretionary post-employment retirement payments and health care benefits to select ministers' widows and retired employees that meet certain objective and subjective criteria. Although one of the criteria includes an employee's years of service (with the Church and its predecessors), an accrual for these future benefits has not been recorded due to the Church's ability to deny payments at its sole discretion. For the years ended December 31, 2007 and 2006, the Church expensed payments for this purpose totaling approximately \$270,000.

**LIVING CHURCH OF GOD (INTERNATIONAL), INC.  
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Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements  
December 31, 2007 and 2006

**Note 12 – Line of credit**

The Church has a \$100,000 line of credit arrangement from a bank which matured June 30, 2008, and it payable in full at demand. The line of credit term interest is prime. There were no borrowings on the line of credit as of December 31, 2007 and 2006.

**Note 13 – Concentration of credit risk**

Financial instruments which potentially subject the Church to concentrations of credit risk consist principally of cash and cash equivalents, contributions receivable and investments. The Church places its cash and cash equivalents on deposit with a North Carolina financial institution. These balances are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation up to \$100,000. From time to time, deposits in these accounts may exceed federally insured limits.

**Note 14 – Related party**

The Church has affiliated entities throughout the world that are related by some common board members. For the years ended December 31, 2007 and 2006, the Church expended \$101,554 and \$246,600, respectively, related to these affiliates. In addition, the Church had revenues receivables of \$432,801 and \$90,431 due from affiliated entities at December 31, 2007 and 2006 (included in other receivables as described in Note 2).

During 2006, the Church granted a note to one affiliate to finance the purchase of their building. Advances to the affiliate were made over a series of payments in 2006 totaling \$31,162. The note is to be repaid over a seven year term with payments scheduled to begin November 1, 2008. Interest on the note accrues annually at 5%. The total amount of the loan year outstanding at December 31, 2007 and is included in other receivables as described in Note 2.

**Audit 2007**  
*(continues from page 19)*

Those donations allow us to preach the Gospel and to feed the flock. The field ministry works very hard to feed the brethren God has called. In 2008 and 2009, we plan to transfer some ministers, as well as to hire some ministers, to better serve the brethren and balance the workload of the field ministry.

As you will see from Figure 3, in 2007 the Church spent just under 47 percent of its income to “feed the flock,” and just over 46 percent to preach the Gospel. Just over 7 percent went to administrative support services.


In these troubled economic times, it is vital that we prepare for the inevitable “rainy day.” For this reason, the Church maintains a strategic reserve, most of which is “liquid” (cash), but with about 30 percent invested conservatively in precious metals and natural

resources, so the Work can balance its risk in the face of economic turmoil in the nation and around the world.

Other areas where we are planning ahead include the Festival Office, where plans are underway for 2009 and 2010. With our scattered membership, it is difficult to please everyone, but we strive to find Feast sites in locations that are both lovely and convenient. This of course affects brethren's individual budgets and also the budget of the Work. We do not like to ask brethren to travel longer distances and to spend more on travel, but we need to balance many factors to reach the best outcome for the largest number of brethren. Careful site selection and Festival Office budgeting also let us serve the maximum number of brethren in need as possible; in 2007 we were able to provide assistance to more than 200 people—thanks in large part to members who sent in their “tithe of the tithe” and excess Festival tithe. In 2007, the Church

spent \$886,975 from its Third Tithe Fund to help those in need, particularly widows, orphans and “strangers” or newcomers.

The Church in the United States continues to support the International offices around the world to the extent we can. New laws in the United States require funds to be distributed under a grant process imposed by the Patriot Act, which slows down the process considerably and increases the paper work—but as good citizens we are complying with these regulations.

Brethren, thank you for your loyal, generous support of the Work of God. The Church could not carry out its mission—to preach the Gospel of the soon-coming Kingdom of God and to “feed the flock” God has called—without the combined, dedicated efforts of all its members, including your tithes, offerings and prayers. May God continue to bless all who are involved in accomplishing His will and His Work! 

## **Seven Pillars of Wisdom**

*(continues from page 17)*

does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall” (Matthew 7:26–27). Our house must be built on a strong foundation. Those who know the truth, but do not love and live it, will find their spiritual structure washed away when the torrential trials of life come along. By contrast, those who live by Christ’s words will be building on a solid foundation. “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock” (Matthew 7:24–25).

In Jesus’ parable, the house that did not fall was built on “the rock.” So, too, must our spiritual house of wisdom be built. “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:1–4).

To build a “house” of wisdom that will stand forever, we must build our house on the solid foundation provided by Jesus Christ, and it must be built on the spiritual site where His true Church can be found today. God describes His Church itself as a “pillar.” The Apostle Paul gave the young evangelist Timothy a telling description of the true Church: “I write so that you may

know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the *pillar* and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

Many “sites” claim Christ as their foundation. But which should we choose? Note Jesus’ words: “And I also say to you that you are Peter [*petros*, a piece of rock, like a pebble], and on this rock [*petra*, a massive rock] I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:18–19).

Jesus Christ said He would build His Church on the rock-solid foundation of Himself, not on the pebble of a human being! He also promised that when God’s Church makes a decision—of course, He meant a decision made within God’s law and His will—that decision would be bound in heaven. He said His Church would never die out, which means it must exist somewhere on earth today.

Do you know the location of that Church? Most of you reading this article surely do. God has granted you the wisdom to discern His Truth, and where that Truth is being preached with unique power. And to those who lack such discernment, God through the Apostle James has given this promise: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

## **God’s Building**

Even as we are striving to build wisdom in our lives, God is working to build us, to prepare us for our glorious future as Spirit-born members of His family. “For we are God’s fel-

low workers; you are God’s field, *you are God’s building*. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (1 Corinthians 3:9–15).

Our spiritual house must be supported by the foundation of the Rock—Jesus Christ. On that foundation, we must build the seven pillars of wisdom, as we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Our house of wisdom is supported by a central pillar—the pillar and ground of the truth—the Church of God.

Yet there is another work of construction in progress. As we grow, building on the foundation of Jesus Christ, supported by the pillar of His Church, we ourselves can become pillars. God is hewing and shaping Christians with a Philadelphian attitude to be mighty pillars in the Kingdom of God. “He who overcomes, I will make him a *pillar* in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 3:12–13). LCN

**“No, Thank You...”***(continues from page 10)*

do? What are your motives or reasons? Just how much space do pride and selfishness occupy in your mind? These are the undesirable calories—the spiritual “junk food”—that you need to watch in your spiritual diet. They are “empty calories”—utterly useless and entirely harmful. You must eliminate them by the exercise of humility. “The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility” (Proverbs 15:33).

**Other Great Calorie-Burners**

The Bible speaks of other valuable calorie-burners: the “fruits of the Spirit”—joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith and temperance (Galatians 5:22–23).

The first and foremost, however—the first fruit of the Spirit of God—is love: love toward God, and love toward your neighbor.

All that you do, say and think should be founded on—and guided by—love. Can you say that you are

living by this standard in your own life? Love never seeks to hurt anyone. It is not envious. It does not lust. Love is not puffed up with pride. Rather, it is full of humility and regards others more highly than itself. Love is patient; it knows how to wait without being irritated. It does not suspect wrong motives. Love forgives faults and forgets them—it never seeks vengeance (1 Corinthians 13).

Again, ask yourself: “Does this describe me?”

In essence, this is our spiritual diet. It does work if we follow it faithfully. When someone offers us a course contrary to that diet, we must learn to refuse to accept it. We should say, “No, thank you, it isn’t good for me. It’s not on my diet.” If we do this, we will not criticize people. We will not pass judgment on others. We will not speak evil of our neighbors. We will avoid these practices, because they increase our spiritual obesity. Our spiritual dieting Manual—God’s word—prohibits us from indulging in these, because they are against love.

If you are not already on this spiritual diet, you should try it for a

while, and see for yourself that it is effective. If you can muster the willpower to go on a physical diet, how much more important is it to dedicate your will to shedding unwanted spiritual poundage? After all, what good is the loss of a few physical pounds, if you are spiritually “tubby”? As Christ said: “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36–37).

From a spiritual point of view, every one of us at present is much too “fat.” With the help of Christ and the Holy Spirit, however, we can continue to cut down our spiritual obesity daily, getting rid of whatever is contrary to the teachings of our spiritual weight-loss Handbook, the Bible. As the Apostle Paul admonished: “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

What prevents you from trying this spiritual diet? It costs you absolutely nothing, and prepares you for your place in the Kingdom of God! ☞

**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

BET: Monday, 3:00 AM ET

<b>Air Date</b>	<b>Broadcast Title</b>
July 6	Five Keys to Understanding Prophecy
July 13	The Antichrist Is Coming Soon!
July 20	God Created Sex!
July 27	Will the Dead Live Again?

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

**Tools and Principles***(continues from page 8)*

that one of the qualities necessary in Church leaders was that they be “able to teach” Scripture in an interesting and meaningful manner (1 Timothy 3:2). This is why Paul emphasized the importance of *diligently studying* the Bible, laying a firm foundation and avoiding foolish arguments, deceptive doctrines and irrelevant issues (2 Timothy

2:14–19). In God’s Church, good shepherds must know His word, set a proper example and be able to handle difficult issues with wisdom and conviction (Titus 1:7–9). This requires careful study and thorough preparation.

As we see the end of this age approaching, we need to “wake up” and make sure that we are “redeeming the time” that we have at our disposal (Ephesians 5:14–16). God’s Church is doing an Elijah-like work

as it continues to “prepare the way” for Christ’s return by restoring knowledge of the truth of God (Malachi 3:1; Matthew 17:11). As a result of that work, “those of the people who understand shall instruct many” (Daniel 11:33). If you devote time and energy to studying the Bible, and you learn how to apply Scripture in your own life, God can use you as part of His effort to accomplish this vital end-time mission! ☐

**Are You a “Half-Hearted” Christian?***(continues from page 2)*

Obviously, we all realize that there are many wholehearted Catholics, Buddhists, Shintoists and even Communists! So we have *always* used Luke 4:4 and Galatians 2:20 as guidelines. For we must be wholeheartedly for the **Truth**. Jesus said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but *by every word of God*’” (Luke 4:4). And the Apostle Paul stated, “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).

We must not be zealous about *just anything*. Rather, we must be truly surrendered to seek and obey the *God of the Bible* and to do what *He* commands! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, warns us that we must be willing to “give up” our worldly desires and ambitions in order to do this. He tells us: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He will reward each according to his works” (Matthew 16:24–27).

Notice Jesus’ statement that God will reward us according to our “works.” For we are not only to obey God “spiritually” by the *principles* given in His word. It is obvious by Christ’s teaching and example that we must also zealously serve Christ, and be *deeply involved* in His **Work**, in order to fully please Him!

Jesus Himself said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to *finish His work*. Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest’?

Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together” (John 4:34–36). So our very “reason for being” must involve being *wholeheartedly committed* to participating in the Work that Christ—our living Head—is doing today to prepare the way for His coming Kingdom. And He promises those who reap will “receive wages” and “gather fruit for eternal life!”

Dear brethren, as we approach the end of this age, each of us must constantly compare ourselves—honestly and objectively—with Jesus Christ Himself and His example. And we must do all we can to commit our lives, our time, our talents and our resources to serving Him, to serving His people and to **doing** His Work. This is not just something God ordained to help the present Work today, as I hope you will understand—it is something that has **always** been there in the Bible, in the mind of God. It is the **standard** our Creator uses to “evaluate” us and see where our whole heart is. May each of us go “all out” in giving our lives to God in every phase and facet of our being.

May we fervently make sure that we are **not** “half-hearted” Christians—who often end up not being “Christian” at all. May we seek and serve our heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with all our heart, with all our mind and with all our soul. Then—and only then—will we know, and **know** that we know, that we will truly be in Christ’s Kingdom and have a magnificent reward throughout all eternity. For we will have “wholeheartedly” carried out God’s will, and done His Work!



# Local Church News

## Ordinations

*Mr. Laurus Alfred* was ordained an elder on Sabbath, December 15, 2007, by Caribbean Regional Pastor Mr. Paul Shumway and Mr. Fitzroy Greeman. He serves the brethren in Guyana.

*Mrs. Eva Diekmeier* was ordained as a deaconess on April 26 by Area Pastor Mr. Darrell Lovelady. She serves in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin congregation.

*Mr. Reiner Luken* was ordained as a deacon on April 26 by Area Pastor Mr. Darrell Lovelady. He serves in the Chicago, Illinois congregation.

*Mr. Simon Muthama* was ordained as an elder on Sabbath, February 9, 2008, by Director of Church Administration Dr. Douglas Winnail, Regional Pastor Mr. Rod King, and Area Pastor Mr. Pieter van der Byl. This was at special

Sabbath services in Johannesburg, South Africa, during a Regional Ministerial Conference there. Mr. Muthama serves the congregations in Kenya and is the LCG office manager in Nairobi.

*Mr. Edward Sheret* was ordained as a deacon on March 29, 2008, by Area Pastor Mr. Harold Way. He serves the brethren in the Garden Grove, California congregation.

## Regional Pastor Honored for 40 Years of Service



During Sabbath services on Dec. 29, 2007, the Kansas City congregation presented Mr. and Mrs. Rand Millich with an engraved shofar to commemorate their 40 years of dedicated service in the ministry.

Mr. James Wells, an elder in Kansas City, said the gift was a token of

appreciation for their service, steadfastness and faithfulness to God and His people. With humor, he also beckoned Mr. Millich to play the horn.

"It says to set the ram's horn to the mouth, so we would like to see you try it," Mr. Wells said.

After two good-natured but unsuccessful attempts to blow the horn, Mr. Millich promised to practice before the Feast of Trumpets in 2008.

—Rachel Keesee

## Births

Ali and Marie Bertan, of the Melbourne, Australia congregation are very excited to announce the birth of their firstborn son, *Elijah Bertan*. He was born on March 25, weighing 2.9 kilograms; he was 50 centimeters long. Elijah's grandparents, Memhet and Fatima Bertan and Lito and Arlene Cachero, are delighted with the safe arrival of their grandson.

Rolando and Linda Fabbian, of the Adelaide, Australia congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their third child, *Julian Alexander Fabbian*. Julian was born on February 12, weighing 7 pounds, 9 ounces. He joins his older brother and sister, Jack and Leah.

*Evan David Sheret* was born on April 9, weighing 10 pounds, 13 ounces; he was 22 inches long. Evan is the first child of his elated parents, Edward and Susan Sheret, of the Garden Grove, California congregation.

Michael and Kristin Wellborn of the Chattanooga, Tennessee congregation welcomed the birth of their firstborn son, *Joshua Michael Wellborn*, on February 24. Joshua was born weighing 6 pounds, 13 ounces; he was 19½ inches long.

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](mailto:lcn@lcn.org)).



## New Booklet!

*The World Ahead: What Will It Be Like?* is the newest booklet published by the Living Church of God. Written by Dr. Roderick C. Meredith as a free gift for those who respond to his most recent "semi-annual" letter to *Tomorrow's World* subscribers, it will be mailed, free of charge, to all Living Church of God member households. Member households do not need to request the booklet; if your member household is on the *Living Church News* mailing list (in other words, if you received this July-August 2008 issue of the *Living Church News*), you will also receive the booklet automatically.

## Jury Service Exemption Forms

Living Church of God adherents who are summoned for jury service may wish to make use of the Jury Service Exemption Request form and documentation provided by the Office of Legal Affairs & Risk Management. Your local minister should be able to give you copies of the form, which includes legal precedents as well as a ministerial affirmation that you adhere to the doctrines of the Living Church of God, and have a sincerely-held religious objection to jury service. If your request for excusal is denied, please send a copy of your original jury summons, the signed first page of the executed Jury Service Exemption Request form, and the denial, to the Office of Legal Affairs & Risk Management by fax at (704) 844-1976, or by e-mail at [legal@lcg.org](mailto:legal@lcg.org). For more information, please see our document, *Steps in Seeking Jury Service Exemption*, available through your local minister.

## In Loving Memory

**Godofredo Cadungog**, of Cebu City, Philippines, died on April 14; he was 77 years old. He is survived by his wife Ramona, two sons and three grandchildren. Mr. Benito Parbo conducted his funeral service on April 17.

**Ray Joffrion, Sr.**, of the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, congregation, died on April 9. He was 86 years old. A member of God's Church for 33 years, he was preceded in death by his wife, Carolyn, to whom he was married for 57 years. He is survived by five children: Kay (Wayne) Scarborough; Carol (Herman) Thibodeaux; Ray (Katherine) Joffrion, Jr.; Kim

(Joe) Howell and Cary Joffrion. Ray, Katherine, Carol and Kim are also members of the Baton Rouge congregation; four of his grandchildren and their spouses are also members, along with five of his great-grandchildren. Mr. Rod Reynolds conducted his funeral.

**Judith T. Lively**, of the Asheville, North Carolina congregation, died on January 31. She is survived by four children, including Ronny Lively of the Asheville congregation, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. They, along with other family members and friends, remember her for her out-

standing commitment and dedication to God's Truth and way of life, and for faith that never wavered, even during her long final illness. Mr. Gary Maney performed her funeral.

**Valeriano Martin**, an elder serving the brethren in Luzon, in the Philippines, died on Sunday, March 9. He was 75 years old, and is survived by his wife, Lolita, and children Danilo, Clodualdo, Ernali, and Ariel. He will be missed by Church members in the Philippines, as well as by his family and friends. Mr. Basilio Osillos conducted the funeral on March 17.

# Commentary

## Good Dogs Gone Bad

By Rod McNair

My cell phone rang with an urgent call from my wife: “Daisy’s out! I need your help!” I finished my business, hopped in the car and hurried home through the rain, thankful I was just a few minutes away.

Two of our neighbors’ dogs had decided to chase Daisy, our Black Angus heifer. They slipped through the gate into her pasture and took off after her, barking and nipping at her legs. Out of fright, Daisy leaped over her fence, leaving just a wisp of black hair on the top wire. (Until that day, I was unaware of cows’ hidden agility). By the time I arrived home, Daisy was standing by our back door—still nervous, but beginning to calm down. With the help of a feed-bag and not a little urging, we coaxed her back into the pasture.

Thankfully, when we explained the problem to our dog-owning neighbors, they were very helpful and willing to work to prevent future problems. I appreciated their understanding and cooperation, but what also struck me was each owner’s assessment of the situation. Each owner said that his dog was well-behaved and obedient when alone, and that it only got into trouble when it was with the other dog!

My Dad used to recount a saying his father had taught him about peer pressure: “One boy’s a boy, two boys are half a boy, and three boys are no boy at all!” It is an apt saying—notice that he often told it to his own three boys—but it rings true about

human beings in general. When we are in a group, we can get into all sorts of trouble that we never would alone. Mob rule or peer pressure—normal inhibitions break down, and trouble just sort of “happens” to people who might otherwise think of themselves as well-behaved.

Teenagers, facing peer pressure to be like their friends, can be lured into dangerous or even criminal behaviors. To gain favor with a group, they may do things they would individually have the character and wisdom to avoid. Adults, too, are driven by peer pressure, though perhaps more subtly. We can fall into unhealthy behavior—pride, envy, gossip, anger or backbiting—because we want to please those around us. The temptation to follow the group is a powerful force that can have disastrous consequences.

What kind of people do you associate with? Do they help you be a better person, or do they drag you down? Scripture warns us: “My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, ‘Come with us, let us lie in wait to shed blood; let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause’... do not walk in the way with them, keep your foot from their path” (Proverbs 1:10–11, 15). The Apostle Paul wrote: “Do not be deceived: ‘evil company corrupts good habits’” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

We need to choose wisely the people with whom we spend our time—because we will probably become like them (Proverbs 22:24–25)!

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The above is adapted from one of the many commentaries, discussing vital topics facing our world, available at the [www.lcg.org](http://www.lcg.org) and [www.tomorrowworld.org](http://www.tomorrowworld.org) Web sites.