

THE

# LIVING

# CHURCH NEWS

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## We Are Different!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

I just got off the phone a few hours ago with a dedicated Church of God lady who had some questions. She and her husband have been meeting with another Church of God fellowship—and she really *wanted to know* how the Living Church of God is in any way “different.” I answered her questions and tried to help her focus on the most important issues. She seemed satisfied and promised to continue *checking us out* as I encouraged her to do.

Having just had this stimulating conversation, I am encouraged to share with all of you the **three** most important issues that we discussed. For many of you brethren are relatively “new” with the Living Church of God, and even a number of older brethren do sometimes become disoriented or forget the **vital** issues that make the Living Church of God truly **different** from other groups.

Remember, we all know that many “Church of God” groups, here and there, have *part* of the Truth and do *part* of the Work. They are **not** “evil”—nor are they to be sneered at or humiliated *in any way*. Yet the Eternal God indicates in Scripture—His inspired word—that He Himself does “make a difference” between people who are only *partly* correct or *somewhat* dedicated, and those of His true people who are *totally dedicated* and **fully surrendered** to do His will *at all cost*!

Remember the inspired account of our first parents, Adam and Eve. They did **not** partake of a tree of “total evil”—rather, they partook of the tree containing a **mixture** of *good* and *evil* (Genesis 2:17). As Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong explained to us many times, a cup of tea is normally a healthful beverage for most people. But if just “a little”

cyanide is *mixed in*, this mixture will normally result in **death**! Most Church of God groups are filled with members who are basically sincere and “nice” people. But *if* they water down the teachings and practices of God’s Word, or if they refuse to go “all out” in doing the real **Work** of God—or in *any manner* do away with the biblical teaching and practice of the **Government** of God—then they had better become **very concerned**!

For those *three issues* are, in fact, the **big three**. Let us briefly discuss each one of these fundamental issues, for they are absolutely **vital** in helping determine where God’s *true* Church is today—the Church that Jesus Christ will *primarily use* to complete His Work, and whose people by virtue of their conduct are *much more likely* to be taken to the “Place of Safety.” Yes, both our *eternal lives* and our *physical lives* are involved in all of this!

First, it should be obvious that the *true* Church of God must overwhelmingly preach the **full Truth** of the Bible! I am sure that the vast majority of you brethren in the Living Church of God know that we really *do this*. Without this, no group can expect to have God’s full blessing! For our living Head and Savior stated: “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God’” (Luke 4:4).

The inspired Apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders, “Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:26–27). The clear implication of this statement is that Paul might well have been accountable *if* he had failed to preach *anything less* than the “whole counsel of God.” Yet we all know of various

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professing Church of God fellowships that try to “solve” problems by avoiding the issue entirely—like those that choose not to face the issue of the Laodicean era, and their relation to it, by claiming that “Church eras” *do not even exist!*

Many brethren, and even a number of ministers, in some of these groups have *all kinds* of ideas about the Trinity, the nature of God, the modern identity of the “Ten Lost Tribes” of Israel, the doctrine of divine healing and the importance of teaching and practicing the *biblical form* of Church government. Leaders in several groups seem eager to “dance” around these fundamental issues—to avoid clear answers, or even to **deny** the answers long taught by God’s Church and His word. The **result** of such spiritual neglect, and of their clever avoidance of these issues, is that their groups and the members become **unsure** about the nature of God, and about many other key issues that certainly **are** of importance to Almighty God!

Also, some of these groups cleverly “water down” the importance of preaching the full Gospel to “all the nations” and of giving a truly powerful “Ezekiel warning” to the modern descendants of ancient Israel before the Great Tribulation strikes!

Understandably, any Church of God group dominated by so many confused and lukewarm individuals will have far fewer truly committed members dedicating their whole hearts to doing the Work, and they will certainly tend to have *far fewer* divine healings.

Many scattered groups out there are primarily “inwardly focused.” They often seem satisfied to hold their quiet Sabbath meetings and *befriend each other*—all the while **neglecting** the more than **six billion human beings** on the earth, most of whom have **never** heard the true Gospel of Christ or understood the real **meaning** of life.

This brings us to the **second** big issue—our willingness to *sacrifice ourselves* and preach Christ’s powerful message

to *all the world*. Perhaps without realizing it, people in “inwardly focused” groups are often very selfish! For they are unwilling to put themselves out to proclaim Christ’s message to **every** nation, every race and every part of the human family God has put here on this earth. Remember, Jesus Christ directly instructed His followers, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to *every creature*” (Mark 16:15). He also commanded, “Go therefore and make disciples of **all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19–20).

Notice that *just after Jesus gave this command*, He said, “I am with you always, even to the **end of the age**.” He did *not* say, “Keep doing the Work until the Apostle Paul dies,” or “until Herbert Armstrong dies”—or any other such limitation! Jesus instructed His *true* followers to proclaim His message to **all** nations, and to teach them “all things” that

He had commanded them. And He promised to be with us in *doing this very thing* to the **end** of the age! Dear friends and brethren, the **end** of this age is just ahead. And we are told to teach our peoples “all things” that Christ commanded. *Why* do so many Church of God groups water down these very clear instructions?

### Why?

I think most of you brethren know that we in the Living Church of God spend just about 45 percent of our income—or more, depending on how you calculate it—on preaching the Gospel to “all the nations”! Most of us are willing to *sacrifice* in order to do this. We may not have quite as much money to rent the most comfortable halls, or to provide the biggest social events, summer camps

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# EDITORIAL

## Do You Hate Evil?

By Roderick C. Meredith

In living our lives as Christians, nothing is more important than Christian love—loving God, and having God’s very love for our neighbor. This is not some “mushy” idea. True love is at the very center of our Christian commitment (1 John 2:1–6).

Nevertheless, a vital counterpoint to this wonderful and all encompassing truth is that we must fully learn to hate evil—not to hate the people who perpetrate evil, but rather to hate those evil actions themselves. For evil thoughts, words and deeds are literally destroying the deep joy, peace and prosperity that should be abundantly shared by all of humanity! So, although we should not dwell on it unduly or become overly morbid, it is important that our hearts and minds be sensitive to what evil is. It is vital that we do not become “desensitized” and begin to conform to the attitudes, words or actions of this modern world, which is becoming more and more abominable in the sight of Almighty God.

He tells us in His inspired word, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:15–16). And note what the Apostle James was inspired to write: “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” (James 4:4).

I am not writing these words to our broad *Tomorrow’s World* readership, but rather to our members and other subscribers of the *Living Church News*, who have, by and large, a greater familiarity with the word of God. If we do indeed have God’s Holy Spirit guiding

our minds, we need to begin to put up an even stronger “defense system” against the assaults of Satan the Devil—the “prince” of this world (John 14:30, KJV). Why? Because through his broadcast of rebellious and twisted ideas and attitudes, and through the entertainment media that he so mightily influences, more and more rotten and perverted concepts are being “broadcast” to this mixed-up world. Truly, Satan is “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2).

Through Satan’s relentless and unceasing propaganda efforts, more and more of even the professing Christian world is beginning to accept and embrace the idea of murdering unborn children. Some authorities have estimated that more than 50 million unborn babies have been intentionally aborted in the United States alone since the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision came down in 1973! Since then, other horrors like “partial-birth” abortion—in which the murder occurs when the baby is partially outside its mother’s womb—have become almost routine in many people’s eyes. And now there are “abortion pills” such as the infamous RU-486 that allow a woman to abort her baby without having to visit a clinic. The mother can just murder the unborn child quietly, privately and with the total acquiescence of our professing Christian nations!

Speaking about the practice of homosexuality, the Apostle Paul wrote of the great philosophers, and “opinion makers” of his day: “Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever

praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion” (Romans 1:24–27, NIV).

In the final verse of this passage that so strongly condemns these sexual perversions, Paul writes about educated men and women who, “knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them” (v. 32). And, yes, there are millions who “approve of” practices that not long ago were almost universally recognized as vile! Just look at our modern educational systems. As policy analyst Roger Kimball has observed, much of modern “liberal arts” education is of “increasing irrelevance and fatuousness.... typically two parts Derrida, Foucault, and deconstruction, five parts queer studies, and eight parts feminism, post-colonial studies, and general purpose political posturing.... in short, utterly inimical to the humanities as traditionally conceived” (“The Life of the Mind,” *Ignatius Insight*, August 2005).

Can you imagine? “Queer studies” is now an increasingly accepted “academic” study! Parents even send their children to the top Ivy League universities and pay tens of thousands of dollars to have their sons and daughters indoctrinated in these perversions!

Dear brethren, God holds us accountable if we endorse, sponsor or in any way approve of lawless behavior

even though we ourselves may not be practicing it! Obviously, we must not hate or physically attack abortionists or sexual deviants. We must obey the laws of the land—including tax laws, though our governments sometimes finance wars and other ungodly practices—as long as they do not force us, personally, to disobey God’s laws. But the Bible does tell us to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (Ephesians 5:11). The Greek word translated “expose” is often rendered “reprove.” And God commands His faithful ministers, “Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isaiah 58:1).

Only a few years ago, no one would have thought it controversial to say, “Marriage is a life-long bond between a man and a woman.” But now, “respectable mainstream” voices are pushing “homosexual marriage” as normal. Forty years ago, homosexuality was recognized even by the secular American Psychological Association as a disorder. Today, if you dare to proclaim the biblical truth about God’s commandments, which absolutely forbid homosexual conduct, you risk being labeled “homophobic” by our sin-sick society!

Even when the people of America try to stand up for what is right, the “establishment” increasingly opposes them. Notice the recent action in California, where one controversial judge has overturned the expressed will of millions of voters, and declared “unconstitutional” a proposition that upheld the long-established truth that marriage is between one man and one woman.

Just how different are we from the ancient culture of Sodom and Gomorrah? The answer is clear—no different enough!

In fact, such perverse attitudes and behavior are prophesied to become worse and worse as the American and British-descended peoples plunge ever further into degradation. Speaking of the “last days” in general, the

Apostle Paul writes, “But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13).

Do the governments of this world sometimes do some good? Yes, they do. However, under the sway of the invisible Satan—who is definitely the “god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4)—many government leaders are constantly “mixing in” much evil with a little bit of good. And the result would be cosmocide—the destruction of all life from this planet—if it continues, just as Jesus Christ stated. For Jesus warned, “For then there will be great tribulation,

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such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21-22). So “no flesh” will be saved alive except for God’s intervention by sending Jesus Christ back as King of kings.

Truly, my friends, this world does not know how to govern itself. As for us, brethren, as we see the evils around us increasing—in intensity and in frequency—we must learn to react as Jesus Christ would have us react. First, we are not to grow bitter. We can and must properly hate the sin and yet love the sinner. Second, we must not allow ourselves to become too discouraged by the vile words, deeds and “happenings” around us. Remember what Jesus told His disciples about the wars, “fearful sights” and other catastrophes to occur

just before His Second Coming. He said, “Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28).

As the saying goes, “it is always darkest just before the dawn.” And it will be a magnificent dawn of a glorious new age when Christ returns in full power as King of kings! So let us constantly pray for and anticipate the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on this earth!

Meanwhile, we who are now called by God to be in the first resurrection must truly “come out” of this world. We must not “love the world or the things in the world.” We must not allow our consciences to be seared, our spiritual sensitivities to be calloused, or our deep awareness of what is right and what is wrong to be watered down by the incessant bombardment of Satan’s many propaganda efforts. For God warns us, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20).

In the New Testament, God tells us, “Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good” (Romans 12:9). As a Church and as Christians individually, we do need to genuinely abhor the rotten, perverted, vile words and practices all around us. As the Bible points out, righteous men and women will “sigh and cry over all the abominations” done in our midst (Ezekiel 9:4). We must not “water down” the fact that so many things done in our modern world are truly evil and vile.

Again, we who are called of God must band together to cry out and tell our people their transgressions—loud and clear. We must then warn them of the Great Tribulation soon to occur unless this world repents. And we must give them the inspiring message of the coming Kingdom of God and point out to them their opportunity to be part of it—if they will repent and turn to the true Jesus Christ of the Bible with all their hearts. ■

# My Will or God's Will?

By Scott D. Winnail

Satan's society today sends powerful messages uniquely designed to appeal to our human nature. Satan's societal messages cry out: "Obey your thirst" and "Pamper yourself." They encourage people to worry only about the self because, "after all, you are worth it!" Trends and personal spending patterns illustrate that Satan's "self-focused" messages are hitting their mark, as more and more people face the consequences of debt incurred to satisfy their lustful desires. Works of the flesh abound and social norms reflect increasing self-centeredness, hedonism, lusts of the flesh and virtually everything that is anti-God.

Also ever-present throughout society is the powerful lie that the Bible and Christianity are obsolete. The theory of evolution is broadcast far-and-wide by the media, the education establishment, and scientists alike. Why? Because, if we are truly "a bunch of lonely molecules" that accidentally combined to form life billions of years ago, there must *not* be a creator or a purpose for life. And, if there is no creator, no life-giver, no law-giver, and no purpose for life, then there is no over-arching moral code to guide that life and we can all do whatever we please—guilt free!

Satan is as rebellious and deceitful as he is crafty and brilliant. He orchestrated a society that increasingly rejects the concept of a purpose for life. It increasingly rejects the possibility of a supreme Sovereign who created perfect and immutable laws to govern the universe and human beings alike. And even so-called Christianity basically rejects the scriptural admonition to overcome and deny one's self, in favor of the popular yet unbiblical mantra, "Come to Christ just as you are."

But what is God's perspective on all of this? Does He really call us to His truth "just as we are," without any expectation for us to change? What is your attitude regarding the will of God in your life? Whose will usually takes precedence in your life, yours or God's? When you make important decisions, do you even consider the overly used but extremely important question: "What would Jesus do in this situation?"

God's will in our lives is at the heart and core of what it means to be a true Christian! In this self-absorbed society, it is all too easy to make decisions according to "our own will." Even some in God's Church today rarely consider whether their will, desires and perspectives fail

to reflect God's will. Because of the subtle nature of the Satan-influenced society around us, even God's people may sometimes be deceived into thinking that their carnal will, desires and perspectives—unchallenged by people around them—may fully reflect God's will. They may even be disappointed at the idea that God's will would direct them to go against society's expectations.

## HOW IMPORTANT IS GOD'S WILL?

How important is it that we live our lives according to God's will? Does it really matter? After all, we see in the parable of the two sons that even the son with an imperfect attitude was rewarded with his inheritance for obedience to his father (Matthew 21:28–32). Even the Apostle Paul struggled in his mind and heart. He sincerely wanted to fulfill God's will, but perpetually wrestled against his own will. Because Paul's self-will won out all too often, he lamented, "O wretched man that I am..." (Romans 7:17–24). Later, in the same letter to brethren in Rome, Paul admonished them to "prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1–2). Paul personally prayed that the brethren at Colosse would be "filled with the knowledge of [God's] will" (Colossians 1:9). And, he taught that God works in us "to will and to do" (Philippians 2:13). The Apostle John concluded that *if we do God's will, we will abide forever* (1 John 2:17)! Finally, we are reminded that the world and its society are deceived by Satan (Revelation 12:9). If we do not fight to bury our carnal human self-will, and if we do not strive to live by God's will instead, we *will* be deceived.

## JESUS CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

Many today talk about "loving the Lord," yet virtually ignore what He taught and the example He set. Whose will ruled Christ's life on the earth? It is amazing to consider that Christ, the One who spoke and earth existed (Colossians 1:16; John 1:3), taught powerfully and clearly that we must all work to make God's will our own. Christ's life demonstrated that His will was insignificant when compared with that of the Father. Recall how Christ taught His disciples (and all of us) to pray: "Our Father in heaven... *Your* kingdom come. *Your will* be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9–



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10). Many today recite what they call “The Lord’s Prayer.” However, how many truly desire God’s will instead of their own? When we deeply examine Christ’s life and example, we see that He clearly adheres to the Father’s will!

Christ came to the earth in order to fulfill *the Father’s will* (John 6:38)! He clearly taught that His doctrine was **not** His own, but “His who sent Me” (John 7:16–18). Christ also taught that merely calling on His name is insufficient to enter God’s Kingdom! Entering God’s kingdom requires one to “do the will of the Father” (Matthew 7:21)! Calling on Christ’s name without *obeying the Father’s will* is nothing more than paying “lip service” to Him. Perhaps Christ’s most powerful example in this regard was His garden prayer the night before He was crucified. Knowing the gruesome and painful end that soon awaited Him, Christ prayed three times to the Father in emotional agony. In prayer, Christ showed that His fleshly desire was for the Father to *find another way* to fulfill His plan to save mankind. However, Christ’s more earnest desire to fulfill His Father’s plan moved Him to pray an emotion-filled prayer: “not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). This powerful principle of allowing God’s will to *rule* our lives was taught and *lived* by the Son of God Himself.

Living in Satan’s world, it can be difficult to conduct our lives according to God’s will. To do so takes focus, self-examination, determination and perseverance. There are two powerful actions we must take in order to help ensure that God’s will, not our own, rules our lives.

### IDENTIFY AND BURY SELF-WILL

The first action we must take is to *identify* and then *bury* our self-will. There are two ways of life—God’s way and Satan’s way. Because we are all products of this world, society and Satan have greatly influenced who we have become. Because of this, Christ said to the Pharisees, “You are of your father the devil” (John 8:44). The Pharisees lived their lives according to Satan’s will! Ultimately, our will *either* mirrors God’s will or Satan’s will. Because of the pulls of the world we live in, our will naturally follows the course of this world and Satan, *unless* we work to break free. **Only through our conscious choice, strengthened by God’s Holy Spirit, can we succeed in conforming our will to God’s will instead of Satan’s.** If we cannot recognize our self-will as distinct from God’s will, we can expect that the will we follow—our own will—will ultimately lead us to live according to Satan’s will.

Choosing self-will is really rebellion against God! It occurs because we deceive ourselves into thinking that *our will* really is God’s will. Jeremiah showed how, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). Solomon, a man clearly familiar with the results of self-will warned, “There is a way that *seems right* to a man,

but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12). We must understand that our carnal intentions and motivations are naturally contrary to God’s will. Because of this, Paul warned the Church *not* to be self-willed (Titus 1:7)! Peter also later warned about *self-willed* false teachers who would infiltrate God’s true Church and deceive His people (2 Peter 2:10).

As we examine ourselves, trying to uncover our often-hidden self-will, we must ask, “Do I *hate* every false way?” Truly hating false ways, including our self-will, can motivate us to overcome as King David did (Psalm 119:104). Ask yourself, “Do I truly hate going against God’s will? Do I recognize how often I do my own selfish will?”

I once had a conversation with a Church member who was in the midst of self-examination. Referring to himself, and admitting his own spiritual weakness, he observed, “If we would be willing to put *our carnal human will* aside as we study the Bible, God could teach us so much more....” What an incredible insight into human nature! Have you ever known people who do their Bible study with the intention of supporting their own will and own ideas? Have you ever done this? How many people do deep topical Bible studies with the goal of *proving their own point*, or even deceiving themselves by proclaiming, “Look what God has revealed *to me alone*”? We must always remember that Satan also knows Scripture well (Matthew 4; Luke 4)! As the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2), Satan will even attempt to direct our Bible study if we are not humble, careful, and continually asking God to reveal *His will* as we study!

One of Satan’s fiery darts (Ephesians 6:16) is to convince people to believe that, as a result of their personal Bible study, “I understand this subject better than anyone else, including God’s Church and His ministry.” If our Bible study on a topic leads us to develop feelings and attitudes that reflect the “works of the flesh” (read Galatians 5:19–21), we need to reassess our conclusions immediately. As a rule of thumb, we should adopt the principle, “If my study leads me toward a doctrine or practice that God’s ministers disagree with, I should take extra care to remain humble, even to assume that I am wrong and need to study further.” Of course, God commands us to grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18), but at the same time, we must have the humility and teachability of little children (Matthew 18:3). We must also temper our growth by “holding fast to the traditions” taught through Scripture and God’s true Church (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Of course, if our study has led us to an accurate and truthful insight, we should humbly share it with God’s ministry, and then remain confident that God will bring about any necessary change in His own time and *through His leadership*. This is how God corrected His Church, for example, when Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong came to understand his earlier mistake regarding how to count Pentecost. Some others had the “idea” first, but pridefully

left the Church when their idea was not accepted “quickly enough”—and in leaving they cut themselves off from the Work of the true Church.

In a similar manner, we must examine ourselves to see whether we are self-willed. Ask yourself, “How important to me are *my* will, *my* goals and *my* ideas?” If we meet with God’s ministers, and ask God to guide the advice they give us—but we then choose to go against the advice we prayed that God would inspire—what should this tell us about our own will? What does it tell God about us? Are we willing to follow God’s will *only when we agree with it*? Or, will we follow it wherever it takes us? No, we should not follow a minister’s will just because he gives us some counsel. If a minister’s counsel goes against God’s word, we must remain true to God’s will. But we must not deceive ourselves into thinking that God’s ministers are right only when they agree with us, and wrong when they disagree with us. We must trust God’s word, and live by it.

Ask yourself, “Am I willing to go in a completely different direction with my life if God shows me I need to?” “Am I willing to *see* and *look for* God’s will even if I feel He might want me to do something different than what I desire?” For those who are baptized, we must remember that our old, self-willed person was to be crucified at baptism (Romans 6:6). A big part of what we were to leave behind at baptism was *our own will*, as we “surrendered” it to God! For those who are yet to be baptized, coming to true repentance involves being willing to “give up” your own self-will and instead make God’s will your own.

### PRAY TO SEE AND WANT GOD’S WILL

Secondly, how do we distinguish God’s will from our self-will? In the midst of hard decisions, how can we be sure that we really *see* God’s will? God gave us a tremendous key through His servant Jeremiah. “And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). You see, God’s will does not always stand out if we do not seek it. Half-hearted attempts to seek or follow God’s will often result in misunderstanding it, or deceiving ourselves into thinking that *our will* really is God’s will.

As noted earlier, Jesus Christ taught us to pray for God’s will (Matthew 6:10). King David, a man after God’s very own heart (Acts 13:22), gave us a powerful example of prayer for God’s will: “Teach me *your* way, O LORD...” (Psalm 27:11). Later David recorded, “Make me walk in the path of your

commandments, for I delight in it” (Psalm 119:35). How often do we pray to God in this manner? Can we honestly say that we *delight* in walking in God’s path? Certainly, even if we do not yet delight in walking in God’s path, we *still* must do so—because we **know** it is right. But our goal, as we grow, should be not just to endure walking in God’s path, but to learn to love His path and His ways.

Some will object, saying, “Christ commanded us to ask for *our* desires, didn’t He?” This is partially correct, but we need to understand the context. Christ several times repeated the command, “Ask [in prayer] and you will receive” (Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24; John 16:24). However, to understand the full will of God, we need to study this concept further.

The Apostle John taught that we receive whatever we ask of God *because* we keep His commandments and do what is pleasing in His sight (1 John 3:22). The Apostle James clarified this point further, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:3). Finally, John clearly taught that God hears our prayers *when* “we ask anything according to His will” (1 John 5:14). And Christ gave us the ultimate example of how to pray in this manner, “Father, if it is your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Christ shared His desires with the Father, but prayed that the Father’s will be done.

Do we truly and deeply realize that God’s will is far better than anything we can want or imagine? As we pray, do we recall that our hearts have been “deceitful and desperately wicked”—even at times influenced by Satan—and that we must work to conform our will, *instead*, to that of the Father? God wants us to learn to pray *for* His will, and really want it!

The Apostle Paul encouraged Church members to become “instruments of righteousness” rather than instruments of sin (Romans 6:12–13). Do we deeply desire to serve God as His instruments? Are we able to pray regularly, “God, use me in whatever way *you* want!” If God asked you, would you be willing to do as Abram did, for example, and leave your family behind to go to Canaan—or wherever God would want you to go? If it were God’s will, would you be willing to move, or to sell your home or property, or to quit or change your job? Can you honestly say that you want God’s will to be done in your life, *instead of* your own will? Do your primary life goals reflect a self-focus, or have you developed them in conjunction with the will of God? If God’s timing



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# Are You a Critic?

By Dibar Apartian

**D**o you have a judgmental or critical attitude? Do you constantly see faults in others? Do you find yourself continually criticizing your boss, your parents, your ministers—and even your God?

Certainly, righteous judgment is our Christian responsibility. We are to live by God's righteous judgments—to honor them and apply them in our lives (Psalm 119:106).

But how often do we go too far, presuming to judge what is not our responsibility to judge? How can we discern the difference between judging righteous judgment, and maintaining a carnal mindset of criticism?

Human nature is filled with vanity, pride, the tendency to judge others and the arrogance of thinking we are “always” right. Yet the Apostle James wrote, “Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge” (James 4:11).

Sometimes, we forget that God is the Judge of all (Hebrews 12:23). If there is injustice somewhere, God will eventually deal with it. One of the principal characteristics of true conversion is to overcome a critical spirit (a satanic attitude), and to submit to God's Holy Spirit—a Spirit of love, harmony and peace. Life is a challenge of making choices. Overcoming a judgmental attitude is a matter of choice.

We all have responsibilities in life. In a family, the father, the mother and the children all have different duties. At work, the employer and the employees have different tasks. But sometimes our perspectives clash. We tend to think that *our* way of doing things is better than others'. Remember one obvious truth: No human being is perfect. No human being is righteous (Romans 3:10–18). We all have human nature. We all make mistakes and fall short. Mindful of this,

we must take great care in exercising our judgment of one another (cf. Romans 2:1–3; Matthew 7:1–5).

Parents have a duty to correct their children. Supervisors have a responsibility to correct their employees. Christians are commended for searching the Scriptures to ensure that they are receiving correct teaching (Acts 17:10–11). But when we go beyond our God-given responsibilities, we are no longer faithful stewards; we are carnal critics. We must guard against this tendency in our lives!

## Gossip

Often, a judgmental or critical attitude is accompanied by gossip. God detests gossip and the spreading of rumors. He commanded: “You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:16–18).

Generally speaking, those who are not engaged in productive work—those whose minds are not occupied—are more likely to gossip and spread rumors. When you are busy accomplishing, you do not have time to tear others down. But if you are not working hard, you may find it easier to criticize someone else's work than to improve your own. The Apostle Paul plainly warned against this attitude (1 Timothy 5:11–13). His warning applies to all those who are idle and who tend to spread rumors about others.

## Where It Began

Critical attitudes are widespread in our world. Satan the devil influences a spirit of criticism in human beings (Ephesians 2:2). Lucifer, who became

Satan the devil, was jealous—envious—of God's authority. He wanted to overthrow and replace God. He was critical of God and murmured against Him, infecting one-third of the angels with a bad attitude (Isaiah 14:12–15; Ezekiel 28:11–16; Revelation 12:3–4). Today, he continues to infect susceptible humans with this same spiritual disease.

Through the ages, God's Church has suffered attacks from those who have pretended to be more righteous than others, holding *their own opinions* above others'. But God has called us to His Church to humble ourselves before Him and to learn to respect one another, to love and to esteem each other better than ourselves. “Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 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. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:1–5).

## God Is the Judge

We may lament those, in the world, who have turned away from God—but we should take comfort in knowing that in His time, God will intervene and bring about the necessary change (1 Corinthians 4:5; 5:13; Revelation 11:1–2). It may not be your place to solve their problems **now**. The principle is the following: Change what is in your domain to change—and, provided that it is not against God's commandments, trust God to intervene in those matters you cannot change.

Sometimes we do not understand God's ways, and do not understand why He allows certain events to occur.



I remember an accident in France some years ago in which 50 people—including children—lost their lives. People asked themselves, “Where was God? Why did He allow this?” In a way, people were judging God. They did not understand that God is **always** good and fair, and that He loves everyone (Matthew 5:45). Certainly, accidents sometimes occur when we are imprudent, negligent and irresponsible. I would even go so far as to say that we must wait for the fulfillment of end-time events—wait for the fulfillment of God’s plan on this earth—before we will be able to understand the full picture and the reason behind many things we see today. Our present situation is like starting to watch a movie after it is halfway over. Much of the storyline will be very hard to understand.

Consider Job’s example. He was a blameless and upright man (Job 1:1). God had blessed him, but when adversities befell him, Job had all sorts of questions. He was bewildered and wondered: why, why, why? He did not understand the reasons behind his trial. God did. But Job was ignorant, and his three friends could not answer his questions either. Job did not see the purpose for his sufferings. God did not answer Job’s questions directly. God only showed him His infinite power and wisdom. At that point, Job finally understood. “Then Job answered the LORD and said: ‘I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, “Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?” Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, “I will question you, and you shall answer Me.” I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes’” (Job 42:1–6). Unless you and I arrive at this same conclusion, we are not really converted.

God’s plan and His will are perfect. The Apostle Paul described God’s plan as the work of a Master Potter: “What shall

we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.’ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom



He wills He hardens. You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?’ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?’ (Romans 9:14–21).

As Christians, we should search God’s will and guidance in the right way, even if it means that sometimes we will need to be corrected to learn lessons. In the correction that God gives us, He shows us His love and goodness. King David preferred God’s chastisement over chastisement by humans. “And David said to Gad, ‘I am in great distress. Please let us fall into

the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man’” (2 Samuel 24:14).

## RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

The Apostle Peter wrote: “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).

One day, under Christ’s guidance, we will judge the world. But to qualify for this future responsibility, we must fulfill our present responsibilities—not other people’s. If we see a fault in someone else, is it our responsibility to help that person improve? If so, we should extend our helping hand. But where it is not our responsibility to help, we need to cease from criticizing others and from spreading rumors. We must learn to discern the difference between a carnal, critical attitude of judgment, and an approach of righteous judgment. Especially if we are not directly involved, we may not know all the facts of the matter—and even if we are involved, we must use wisdom and caution in our approach. The judges of Israel were instructed to: “let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes” (2 Chronicles 19:7). God sets us the perfect example of righteous judgment, “For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing” (Deuteronomy 10:17–18). God is training righteous judges, not carnal critics. If we follow His teachings and persevere until the end, we will receive a reward according to our works (Luke 19:12–26; Revelation 19:2, 7–9). ■

# Conquer Anger..

## Before It Conquers You!

At one time or another, many of us have given in to a fit of anger that deeply hurt our family or friends. For some of us, uncontrolled anger is an occasional problem that we must guard against in times of extreme pressure and stress. For others, anger may have become a crutch on which we rely instead of dealing honestly (and perhaps painfully) with problems around us—and in our lives.

Left unattended, uncontrolled anger can turn into rage, which in turn can lead to all manner of sin—and to hatred, which is a spirit of murder (Matthew 5:21–24). This is a serious matter, and we should understand what Scripture teaches about anger so we can recognize its proper expression and the dangers we must avoid.

There is a place for anger in the scope of human emotions, but God expects us to direct, control and even suppress our anger, depending on the circumstances. We read: “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:26–27). Uncontrolled anger is an aspect of Satan’s character that should not be found in anyone who professes to be a follower of Jesus Christ. “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (Proverbs 16:32).

The vanity, jealousy, lust, stupidity and greed of the world often intrude into our lives, and the human nature we all struggle against wants to strike back. We can all agree that there are plenty of circumstances that can rouse us to anger. But we need to be angry against sin—not against sinners, who are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27; 9:6).

Uncontrolled anger is the first step leading to a desire for revenge—but, as Christians, we understand that this is a prerogative God reserves for Himself. “For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,’ says the Lord. And again, ‘The LORD will judge His people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:30–31). When anger drives us to take revenge on another human being, we are in rebellion, usurping a prerogative of our Creator.

We need to have the faith to accept that God will deal—in His own way, and in a just and appropriate manner—with those who have unjustly persecuted us. “Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; their foot shall slip in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things to come hasten upon them” (Deuteronomy 32:35).

### DEALING WITH ANGRY PEOPLE

Angry people often seem to delight in making enemies! Though you may be seeking peace, angry people are almost always ready to take offense at whatever you say to them—and to use your words and actions (as they perceive them) as an excuse to become combative. How should we as Christians handle people who act hatefully toward us, and may even be actively seeking to do us harm? Jesus of Nazareth said: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the



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good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:43–48).

What a huge challenge! But it is a requirement of our Savior; it is not optional. We must not allow others’ angry attitudes to draw us down to their level. “You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear [take on] sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:17–18). When someone sins against us, this does not grant us a license to sin in return. We cannot feel “justified” returning anger for anger.

If our brethren in the Church feel anger toward us, we have a Christian obligation to try to make peace with them. God has given us a procedure for resolving interpersonal problems. We must begin by assuming that the situation is an innocent misunderstanding, unless the God-ordained dispute resolution procedure—given in Matthew 18—determines otherwise. “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector” (Matthew 18:15–17).

### LET GO

After following this procedure, we can let go of the problem—and of any anger that was lingering with it. Ideally, we have reconciled with the one who had offended us. On the other hand, if we cannot find reconciliation, the judgment then rests with the elders of the Church. Rather than stew in anger, we can take comfort in knowing that Jesus Christ will guide the judgment for our good and the good of those being judged. Can we have confidence that



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this process works? Jesus Christ Himself assured us that it does. Speaking to the men who would become the Apostles leading His Church, He promised: “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:18–20).

How long have we tried to make peace, and how many times have we accepted the anger directed toward us? Notice that the Matthew 18 procedure leaves no place for our lingering anger. Before embarking on the Matthew 18:15 route, we must be sure our attitudes are free from anger and resentment. As Christ taught: “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away” (Matthew 5:38–42). This is a hard saying, but it **can** be put into practice with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Some people resist using Matthew 18:15 because they are uncomfortable with confrontation. If you feel this way, examine yourself and ask, “Am I willing to forgive and forget?”



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If you can honestly answer “yes,” then the matter is solved. But if, by avoiding a confrontation, you will just remain “stewing” in anger, you need to trust God and step out in faith, and follow the Matthew 18 guidelines.

### ANOTHER OPTION

Throughout all of this, there remains another powerful tool we can use to heal an angry situation.

Notice what Paul wrote: “Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if

he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:17–21).

Instead of hiding from a confrontation with your enemy, return good for evil. When you are hurt, respond with kindness. When your enemies are suffering, reach out to them with love. This is exactly what Jesus Christ did when He died for each one of us, before we even knew Him! Yes, a key aspect of dealing with angry people is 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” (Ephesians 4:1–3).

The fruits of God’s Spirit are not just something we display toward those who are friendly toward us. Even when we encounter people whose lives do not radiate the presence of Jesus Christ within them, we must respond as Christians: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another” (Galatians 5:22–26).

No one likes to interact with a wrathful person—ask any retail clerk, bank teller, teacher or civil servant! When people are frustrated, they can become angry, and their anger can spur them to strike out at others. Family life can become unbearable when one member of a household is continually given over to fits of wrath. The home is a place to which we should be able to retreat for sanity, comfort, support and peace. After a hectic day of work, school or errands, it is delightful to come home to enjoy congenial family companionship. “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted calf with hatred. A wrathful man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger allays contention” (Proverbs 15:17–18). Also: “He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind...” (Proverbs 11:29).

Despite our best efforts, if someone around us persists in anger and vitriol, we may eventually come to the conclusion that our only remaining option is to cut our ties with such a person, lest we be dragged down as well. “Scoffers set a city aflame, but wise men turn away wrath. If a wise man contends with a foolish man, whether the fool rages or laughs, there is no peace” (Proverbs 29:8–9). We need not

continually excuse the wrong actions of hateful people. If we love such people, we must want them to learn the lessons that will help them change for the better. Notice the proverb: “A man of great wrath will suffer punishment; for if you rescue him, you will have to do it again” (Proverbs 19:19).

In deciding when “enough is enough,” be sure to seek wise counsel from the ministry, and from people who know you well and are willing to give you frank advice, even when it may hurt. And be sure to go to God in prayer, so that your actions are in harmony with His will. “Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days” (v. 20).



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## OVERCOMING OUR OWN ANGER

It can be challenging to deal with angry people around us. But anger is not always somebody else’s problem. If we have been told time and again that we need to deal with our anger, yet we do not repent and take steps to seek help, there will come a day of reckoning!

“He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1). Of course, it is better still to stop the problem before it starts. So, what guidelines does God’s word offer us for dealing with our own moments of anger?

Of course, some people will pridefully say, “I never get angry!”—when, in fact, all they do is “bottle up” their anger inside, where it eats at them privately, or becomes expressed through “passive-aggressive” interactions with their targets of hate.

First and foremost, we as Christians are to imitate Jesus Christ in our lives. When we face anger directed against us, or when we are frustrated by situations we face, He is the example on which we are to pattern our response.

So, whether you are tempted to yell or to brood in anger, it is important to remember the proverb: “Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls” (Proverbs 25:28). When uncontrollable anger seizes us, we become spiritually defenseless, just as a city without walls! If we are again and again in a rage, we separate ourselves from our relatives, our friends—and our God! Who wants a raging companion as a “friend”? Scripture warns: “Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul” (Proverbs 22:24–25).

Yielding to uncontrolled rage will only result in penalties accruing against us! A flash of anger toward an employer may spur us to quit rashly, or cause us to be fired from a job. Rage in the home can lead to children running away, or to divorce, or to domestic violence that lands someone in jail. An outburst directed at a police officer who has stopped our car for a minor violation can turn a simple traffic warning into an expensive citation. All around us, as a quick viewing of the local news can confirm each day, acts of rash anger again and again lead to life-changing events that no converted Christian wants to deal with. “An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression” (Proverbs 29:22).



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### SELF-DEFENSE OR SELF-DEFEATING?

When we feel embarrassed or insulted, our bruised pride may tempt us to lash out in what we think is self-defense. Yet the result of our “defense” is often a loss of respect from those whose respect we most value. How, then, can we maintain our honor when we are under attack? Notice: “A man’s pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor” (v. 23). The antidote to pride is humility. Again, notice: “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).

Often, anger directed against other people is the result of frustration with our lot in life. Instead of acknowledging and dealing with our own failures and inadequacies, we may be tempted to blame our problems on those around us—which can lead to feelings of envy, jealousy, hatred and accusation. A growing desire for vengeance can lead us to want to “get even” with—even to harm—those we believe



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are causing our misery and holding us back from getting what we want. “A worthless person, a wicked man, walks with a perverse mouth; he winks with his eyes, he shuffles his feet, he points with his fingers [an accuser]; perversity is in his heart, he devises evil continually, he sows discord.

Therefore his calamity shall come suddenly; suddenly he shall be broken without remedy. These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:12–19). All these are evils that will become ingrained in those who are perpetually angry. Always thinking they are right,

they justify themselves in correcting and putting down those with whom they disagree, especially those whom they perceive as obstacles to their success.

We must always remember that when we succumb to rage, we lose the ability to seek God calmly and to entreat Him earnestly for help. Instead, our anger opens us up to the influence of evil. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 5:8–11). As begotten children of God, we must learn to control our anger, as God will not allow a spirit of uncontrolled rage in those who will be born into the God Family.

Our model must be Jesus Christ. He knew how to control Himself, expressing a righteous and selfless anger that powerfully indicted those who were defying God and abusing their offices of leadership, responsibility and service (Matthew 23:1–36). This was a Man who did not hesitate to show powerfully—and physically—his displeasure toward the moneychangers whose business was desecrating the temple of God (Matthew 21:12). But how did this perfect Man react when Roman soldiers were subjecting Him to torture, and to an unjust and agonizing death? His last words were not a raging diatribe against His persecutors. Rather, as His life was ebbing away, He called out, in love: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34).

—LCG Editorial Staff

# A Tale of Two Mountains

By Dexter B. Wakefield

Have you ever seen the Andes Mountains? If you ever go to the Feast of Tabernacles in Chile, you will see them towering thousands of feet over the long Chilean coast. I highly recommend it! A few years ago, we had the privilege of attending the Feast there. As we were flying down the coast of Chile to Santiago, we marveled at the spectacular beauty of this great spine of mountains running down the west side of South America. A scripture came to mind.

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted [lifted up] and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isaiah 40:3–5).

Will the spectacular Andes Mountains be “brought low”? What about the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains, the Rockies or the Alps? Why would God do such a thing?

The subject of mountains is very important in the Bible. That is why mountains are mentioned so often—more than 650 times. It can be very interesting to look at this subject in the context of the government of God that will soon be established. In an important respect, the Bible is “A Tale of Two Mountains.”

## MOUNTAINS IN THE BIBLE

Mountains are frequently symbols in the Bible and are used as references to governments. Here is an example that applies to God’s government in the Kingdom of God.

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house [*the government of His family, His Kingdom*] shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob [The mountain and the house are the same]; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion [the Holy Mountain of God] shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2–3).

This scripture describes a “mountain” that has laws, territory, rulers and subjects. This is the Holy Mountain—the Kingdom and Family—of God. Scripture also describes other mountains, symbols for human governments, not referring to spiritual Israel. For example:

- “Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion, to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the LORD’S” (Obadiah 21).
- “Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time” (Revelation 17:9–10).

Satan has his own “mountain” that currently fills this world. Jesus called him the ruler of this current world. “I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me” (John 14:30). *This present world and age is filled with the mountain—the government—of our adversary, Satan!*

So we can see that a Bible reference to a mountain is often the symbol of a government. It can be God’s government, man’s government or Satan’s government. Remembering this can be important in understanding what a scripture means.

## A BIBLICAL ABSURDITY?

A “biblical absurdity” is what critics may call a statement in the Bible that, to them, appears to be impossible. For instance, some cite the temptation of Christ—when Satan took Him to a very special mountain.

“Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve”” (Luke 4:5–8).

“Where is there a mountain,” a critic may ask, “from which one can see all the kingdoms of the world? The gospel writer must have thought the world was flat, and assumed there was a mountain somewhere high enough to allow Jesus and Satan to gaze out upon all the kingdoms of the world in a moment.” The critic will then insist that this proves the Bible is merely human literature, because it reflects the incorrect worldview of the writer’s day. After all, it is true that even from Mt. Everest—the highest mountain in the world—one cannot see over the horizon of our spherical planet. Critics ridicule as absurd the idea of a moun-

tain from which all the kingdoms in the world can be seen.

How would you answer an objection like this?

Remember that a mountain is roughly conical in shape—small at the top and large at the bottom, like a government. In what direction does the Bible tell us Satan and Jesus were looking when Satan made his offer? Consider this: If you are standing at the top of a conical mountain, what can you see all of “in a moment” of looking? Why, the mountain itself, of course! We know that Satan is the “god” and ruler of this world. For now, Satan’s mountain—his corrupt government—fills the whole earth. It was, very likely, Satan’s mountain—his government and kingdoms—that Satan showed Jesus. This is a spiritual mountain, and it is very real—and its glitter has seduced many people.

Jesus, however, remembered what He had prophesied centuries before. “You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image *became a great mountain and filled the whole earth*” (Daniel 2:34–35).

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong used to call this the greatest battle in the history of the world. Everything was on the table, and both sides were “all in.” If Jesus took the offer of earthly rule—and Satan had the power to give it—all would have been lost for us. But Jesus had faith in His Father, and in His mission here on earth—and we must, too! “And Jesus answered and said to him, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve”” (Luke 4:8). Jesus, God in the flesh, knew that Satan should be *worship-*

*ing Him*, not the other way around. In dismissing Satan, Jesus blew him away with the breath of His lips. Satan lost—and now, Jesus Christ has been resurrected to glory. We are awaiting *a sure outcome*.

Jesus Christ is not coming to *reform* Satan’s mountain; He is coming to *replace* it. And He will replace it with His own Holy Mountain—the Kingdom of God. The present mountain is Satan’s corrupt government that has dominated the last 6,000 years of human history. The one to

**Like a government, a mountain is small at the top and large at the bottom. In a kingdom or another form of government, there is one person, a king or an executive, who is at the top. Then there are successively larger layers of people in the lower organizational structure.**

come is Christ’s Holy Mountain, which will rule in His millennial Sabbath and continue to grow forever. “*Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this*” (Isaiah 9:7).

Jesus rejected Satan’s mountain, but do we? How many people have sold their eternal inheritance for a small notch low on that mountain? (“If I work only one Sabbath a month, I could make supervisor!”) Christ said, “For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s shall save it. *For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?*” (Mark 8:35–36, ASV). We are told to be in this world but not of it. “For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father

but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:16–17). Satan’s mountain is doomed, but God’s family is eternal, and His government increases forever (Isaiah 9:7).

## **God’s Government Works!**

Like a government, a mountain is small at the top and large at the bottom. In a kingdom or another form of government, there is one person, a king or an executive, who is at the top. Then there are successively larger layers of people in the lower organizational structure. Even corporations are structured this way. God reveals that His government has a top-down structure, but with a very important difference from Satan’s worldly governments.

Moses clearly established a hierarchal structure for Israel, and did so with God’s inspiration and blessing. Moses said, “So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them heads over you, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and officers for your tribes. Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, ‘Hear the cases between your brethren, and *judge righteously* between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him. You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man’s presence, for the judgment is God’s. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it” (Deuteronomy 1:15–17). The leaders were to provide *righteous judgment*. God used a hierarchal government in ancient Israel.

Christ explained the difference between worldly hierarchy and God’s hierarchy. In God’s government, leadership is based on love and outgoing concern, and authority is used only for the benefit of those being served by the leadership. To the extent that authority is

used to serve the leader, it is misused. God is seeking to develop such leaders for His Kingdom—servant leaders. And there is a crucial difference between the world's way and God's way. It is the difference between “give” and “get”—the difference between serving and being served. Satan's way is “get” and destruction. God's way is “give” and creation. In God's government, authority is used to give to those who are governed—not simply to get from them.

Jesus' disciples had an argument. “Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called “benefactors.” But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet *I am among you as the One who serves*. But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:24–30). Jesus promised the twelve disciples that they would have *offices of service* in His Kingdom.

### OFFICES OF SERVICE

To understand God's government, it is important to understand the idea of *offices*. For instance, when a construction company needs the services of a construction coordinator on site, they create the office of superintendent with the authority to provide the needed services. Without that office and those services, the job will not come in on time and on budget and may not be completed at all. *One office is filled by one person, not several people.*

God sets up offices of service, puts one individual—not a committee—in

each, and then works through that individual. And, when He wants to, God can do a big work through one person. Moses, for example, sought wise counsel, as he did from Jethro, but he also said, “...I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do” (Deuteronomy 1:18). Moses used his authority to *serve* Israel.

Christ established offices in the Church of God: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:11–16). *Those who reject those offices also reject the services that Christ performs through them.* When we find the true offices and ministers of God, we are obliged to follow them.

### TODAY IS PREPARATION DAY!

God's Church is being prepared to be His *Holy Mountain*. This mountain is a holy government, and it is important that we understand God's principles of government. Jesus said, “In My Father's house are many mansions [offices]; if it were not so, I would have told you. *I go to prepare a place for you.* And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2–3).

God is doing this for those “on whom the ends of the earth are come.” But can we govern the way Christ does? We need to be learning God's government *now*. Now is our season of preparation. The Bride is making herself ready.

God governs by His law, and He administers it from on high. “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12). Obedience to God's law is a blessing, and He gives it to us for our benefit. But people simply do not want to be subject to government. Since colonial times, Americans are fond of saying, “That government is best which governs least.” But God's government is a blessing and greatly to be desired. If you do not like God's government *now*, you certainly will not like it for the rest of eternity. So we are to respect government of our nation, of the Church and of our families. We need to learn about and practice God's government in this age, so we can administer it in God's Kingdom. Do you like government? We are to learn love and respect for *righteous* government, both to govern and to be governed. It is important that we qualify for the Holy Mountain of God.

### WHICH IS YOUR MOUNTAIN?

So, will the world's physical mountains be leveled? Christ reveals that, in the age to come, He will put down all other governments, and His Holy Mountain will grow to fill the whole earth. God frequently uses physical things to picture spiritual ones, so we can understand that great changes will happen to the earth.

The Bible is indeed “A Tale of Two Mountains”—and we must choose one of them. God's people look for a city and a government to come, and our citizenship is there. “Thus says the LORD: ‘I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the LORD of hosts, the Holy Mountain’” (Zechariah 8:3). ■



# Women Writing for the Church?

By Roderick C. Meredith

Earlier this year, I was shown an encouraging personal testimony written by one of our faithful lady Church members. She wrote about what it was like coming into the Church before God had called her husband. I found her words very moving.

It was in **no** way a sermon, and while she was not “instructing” or exhorting in any way, I thought her experience could be very helpful to some others in the Church. So, I asked that her short article be published as a commentary on our Church Web sites.

Because of this item, some brethren have written in to ask questions or make comments about “women writing for the Church.” Should women write? If so, in what circumstances?

Here is the answer. Though God intended the woman’s role to be primarily as a “help meet” to her husband, the Bible clearly indicates that He has used many women to give advice—sometimes even *inspired warnings*—to leaders, ministers and society in general. Deborah the “prophetess” even temporarily led ancient Israel—and not only advised, but even had to sort of “mother” their military commander, Barak, and *lead him into battle* (Judges 4:1–10)!

After decades of turning away from God and His ways, the “Book of the Law” was discovered. The young king Josiah turned Judah back to God again, and ordered that the temple be repaired and cleansed. King Josiah was so moved by the warnings in this book that he sent Hilkiah the priest to seek the advice of “Huldah the **prophetess**, the wife of Shallum” (2 Chronicles 34:22). Then, God used this *female* prophetess to give the king a powerful warning of impending calamity that would come because of Judah’s egregious sins (vv. 23–28).

Was Huldah out of line?

*No!* For God used her then—as He may use a number of our sons *and daughters* to **prophesy** even in these “last days.” God’s inspired word was recited by the Apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost, “But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; *your sons and your daughters shall prophesy*, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy’” (Acts 2:16–18).

Yes, the Apostle Paul stated, “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence” (1 Timothy 2:12). But that same Apostle Paul was inspired to write, that “the older women” should be “teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed” (Titus 2:3–5).

I want to remind all you brethren that, beginning even in the early years of the Work, when Mr. Armstrong was *very much in charge*, we had quite a number of young women who wrote articles for the *Good News* magazine and other publications. Isabell Kunkel—later Mrs. Herman Hoeh—wrote a number of articles in the *Good News* magazine on cooking and homemaking. Later, Mrs. Sydney Hegvold did the same. Also, younger women like Elva Russell—now Mrs. Richard Sedliacik—wrote encouraging and even instructive articles for women on women’s responsibilities and related issues. The same for a number of others, including Charlene Glover (later Mrs. Norman Smith), Jo Ann Felt (later Mrs. Charles Dorothy) and Elise Bernard (later Mrs. Kenneth Herrman).

So, you can see that—under the direction of Herbert W. Armstrong—women were **not excluded** from writing articles, if those articles were especially along the lines of women’s responsibilities, cooking, homemaking, etc. But we even see the biblical example that in an exceptional situation God may use a woman to “prophesy”—which is always used in this instance of giving a *special revelation* or divine warning directly from God.

Obviously, we do not want **any** misguided women—or **men**—to get up and start “prophesying” out of their own imagination, trying to show off, disrupting Church services, etc. But Mr. Armstrong set the pattern we are trying to follow. Women were **not** encouraged to write strong doctrinal or prophetic articles—which would tend to be like “preaching.” But articles along other lines were certainly acceptable and were *very helpful* and well received by the vast majority of the brethren.

So I want to take this opportunity to encourage **all** of you brethren—especially you “male macho” men out there—to realize that it is *absolutely biblical* for us to use the contributions of our wonderful female members in God’s Church to contribute articles from *their point of view* to our publications, along the lines described above. A woman’s perspective is often extremely helpful, and can give a sense of balance to our thinking and our practice in God’s Church. This is as it ought to be. And it ought to be that *all of us men* try to reach out and **use** the contributions of our wives, our daughters and our sisters in Christ as we make decisions in our businesses, our homes and our lives.

Every single one of us—whether male or female—is made “in the image of God.” We must **never** forget that! And we men must cherish the wonderful balance, wisdom and help that our female companions on this earth provide. So, let us go forward in this attitude and love one another, appreciate one another and use the contributions of each member of God’s Church in the way His word indicates. We will certainly be **blessed** if we do this—and do it in a genuinely loving and supportive attitude. ■

# Living Youth Camp 2010



It was great to be back at camp again! For LYC 2010, God directed us to Pennsylvania's Raccoon Creek State Park, which served the needs of 78 campers, 37 staff, and eight mini-campers. After a one year layoff, everyone was thrilled to be back together again in a "set-camp" environment.

The activities were a real hit! Jason Forrestier taught the Archery class, and Jerry Ruddlesden taught Ultimate Frisbee. Deric Forrestier taught Life Roles for the boys and Christy McNair taught Life Roles for the girls. Sheldon Monson, assisted by Steve Olson, taught the Adventure class. After taking the preparation class, each dorm went on a hike and camp-out along the miles of trails in the state park. The hike was a great opportunity for the teens to experience the outdoors and develop confidence in unfamiliar surroundings. Naas DeJager taught Aquatics, which included a water safety component in addition to three canoeing classes. We had an excellent talent show, with singing, piano playing, and even a comedy routine. The Final Banquet was superb, and teens and staff alike danced with enthusiasm to a fresh mix of music provided by Robert Jones and Sherri Wimberly, who led our dance program. This mix included some songs submitted in our online challenge on the youth Web site—inviting young people to recommend songs based on appropriate guidelines.

## AREAS OF SERVICE

Phay Lloyd served as our nurse this year, and was a great help to the camp. Josh and Jenny Penman assisted in the office, as well as picking up many miscellaneous assignments. Yvonne Doyle supervised the laundry, always a big job! Christy McNair oversaw the food services area, which included providing the regular meals for the campers, orchestrating the "Table Topics and Dance" dinners, providing food for the hikers, and overseeing the final banquet. She was ably assisted by Madelaine DeJager, who handled the food and supplies purchasing, and

by Lori Forrestier, who was our lead person in the kitchen. France Colon served as the Mini-Camper supervisor, helping our staff with small children at camp.

## EDUCATION AND SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the recreational activities, we had a wide variety of educational and social opportunities for the teens. Each day began with the Christian Living class, focusing on the "Seven Laws of Success." As our basic resource, we used Mr. Richard Ames' article, "Seven Keys to Godly Success." On the Sabbath, we viewed a telecast by Mr. Meredith reviewing the laws.

Robert Jones and Sherri Wimberly taught the dance class. This prepared the teens for the "Table-Topics and Dance" evenings. This year, Christy McNair, assisted by Marj Marcinelli, coordinated the girls as they went all-out preparing. They created the theme and decorations, and prepared the whole meal, putting the "Hospitality" theme from their "Life Roles" class into action. On their part, the boys were given extra coaching in presenting Table Topics, assisted by Wallace Smith, and did an excellent job in leading the evening's discussion.

Mr. Smith served as the master of ceremonies at the "Table Topics and Dance" evening, and at the talent show. He also taught the Speech class for both boys and girls, and did a wonderful job. He, Sheldon Monson and Jonathan McNair taught the Christian Living Classes, alternating between different audiences, including the staff, the campers and the adventure hikers.

The LYC program is a great way for teens to spend time with friends, learn new skills and learn how to live God's way of life. The memories that we all built this year at summer camp were framed by warm hellos, and sad goodbyes. See you again next year!

—Jonathan McNair

## My Will or God's Will?

Continued from page 7

differs from yours, are you willing to abandon your desires and follow His lead instead?

Paul plainly admonished Church members to let their minds become the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). As we work to apply this command in our lives, we must pray to God to remove our self-will and our inherent desire to avoid His will. We must pray for God to help us desire His will *above all else*. We must also pray for God to help us recognize the source of our desire to do our own will. Finally, we must pray for the faith to follow God's will—even when, intuitively, it may seem strange.

Have you ever had the thought, “I understand that it is God's will, but I just cannot see how it will work out for the best if I do it that way”? This is where faith fills the gap. We must “become as little children,” and have absolute trust that our Father in

heaven is never wrong and will never lead us astray. When we choose *our* will over His, we show our arrogance—our belief that *we* understand a better way than God does. Choosing God's will over our own demonstrates that we trust God and know His way is best!

## CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

We live in a time when Satan, through society, pressures us to “*do our own thing!*” Satan worships himself, and esteems his will above all else. And he broadcasts these thoughts and motivates us to do the same with *our* will. Society teaches that if we do not “think of our own interests” we are weak-minded “followers.”

Christ, by contrast, gave us a powerful example of putting God's will ahead of our own—a practice essential for **all** true Christians. When we put *our* will before God's will, we can expect difficulties and heartache, because we are following the reasoning of a faulty, fallible

human being—and ultimately Satan. But even though putting God's will before our own may not always *look* or *feel* right initially, it will lead to life and blessings.

We must recognize how very important it is to live our lives according to God's will. As we identify and rid ourselves of self-will and as we pray for God's will to permeate our lives, our decisions will be full of wisdom and our lives will be greatly enriched. This action will also greatly increase unity within God's Church. As we make decisions according to God's will individually, we will automatically become of the same mind collectively! We will become one as Christ and the Father are one (John 17:21).

To be in God's kingdom, we must truly strive to make His will our own. We must work hard, continue to bury our self-will, and follow God's lead into His Kingdom. As we do this, we will arrive there one day soon, **together!** Above all things, we must **do God's will, always!** ■

## We Are Different!

Continued from page 2

and other activities. But our hearts are joined together in “reaching out” in love and helping this entire world become aware of the **real** God and of His purpose.

Because of this shared commitment, supported by the fervent prayers of thousands of loyal and dedicated members, we are grateful that God is blessing this Work with **thousands** of responses to our television programs every single week! In fact, the responses over the last year or so have averaged *over 4,000* a week—and are occasionally exceeding 6,000 responses each week here in North America. Our Sabbath attendance over the last 12 to 18 months has been **growing** at the rate of about *ten percent!* So, we are *very grateful* for what Christ is doing, and for the growing **impact** we are having on the world as a whole. This is a **vital** “sign” that we are *true* “Philadelphians” and are teaching the *true message* of Jesus Christ to the whole world with all of our hearts.

The **third** key issue that clearly signals where God's true Church exists is the matter of **Church government**. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong—who taught nearly all of us the **Truth** in the first place—said again and again, “Understanding and practicing correct Church government

is the **whole thing!**” Many of you older brethren will remember him making statements similar to this quite a number of times.

*Why did he say this so often?*

He emphasized this point because true Christians are *now in training* to become those *kings* and *priests* who will assist Jesus Christ in the coming Government of God on this earth. Remember how the Apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthian brethren, instructing them: “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? 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 6:1–3).

*Think!*

How can we possibly expect to become “kings” and “priests” in Christ's coming Government if we **fail utterly** to teach and to practice the very kind of hierarchal government that God will expect us to administer within a very few years from now in Christ's Kingdom?

Remember, brethren, that the book of Revelation describes how Christ has “redeemed” us through His blood from every nation, and has “made us **kings** and **priests** to our

God; and we shall **reign** on the earth” (Revelation 5:9–10). At the very beginning of the book, John writes that Christ “has made us **kings** and **priests** to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever” (Revelation 1:6).

So, we can understand why Paul, in the above-cited passage from 1 Corinthians, was urging the brethren to **learn** proper judgment and rulership by *practicing it* in the Church of God! For, as Paul said, we may even be called upon to “judge angels.”

Frankly, I feel very sorry for the pitiful state of so many of our “separated brethren” who somehow hope to be kings and priests in a few years, yet **refuse now** to practice the *very form of government* that the true saints will be called upon to **teach and to practice** in Christ’s Kingdom! A number of such individuals, as leaders in their various groups, have insisted that “Christ led us” to form some type of “democratic” government, following the secular pattern—including voting, politicking, posturing and positioning for support from each other and the brethren. What will Christ tell these men when the Judgment comes? I would certainly not want to be in their shoes!

No! Christ **never** leads us to do something that is *totally contrary* to His entire teaching from one end of the Bible to the other! Nowhere does He endorse “democratic” Church government! Sadly, when people veer off-track on such a basic issue as this, it is often because they **lack faith** that Christ really is alive and is in **active charge** of His Church!

Yes, after Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, the whole corporate structure of the Worldwide Church of God was turned away from true Christianity, by the mistakes and the plans of the leadership at that time. But, as the saying goes, “You don’t throw the baby out with the bath water!” When a group of misguided men goes against God’s instructions, you do not “solve” the problem by going against His instructions yourself! Yes, Jesus Christ Himself allowed some terrible decisions to be made in His Church *for a few years*, to test people at that time. But that was never an excuse to try to go directly contrary to God’s instructions and examples of proper Church government!

Remember the example of God’s prophet Samuel? God describes how, “when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel” (1 Samuel 8:1). Yet his sons turned aside, took bribes, perverted justice and took advantage of the people. God **allowed** this to happen—even in His

human kingdom of Israel with a **faithful** man in charge over all.

How should the problem have been “solved”? Should the people have tried to get rid of God’s inspired form of government where *He* showed by the “fruits” that Samuel was His servant and put in that office? Should they have tried to turn aside and introduce a “different” form of government?

No! They should have *prayed to God*, as Samuel did—and **He** would have straightened things out *in His time!* But the people **lost faith** in God’s guidance, and desired to set up an entirely different form of government. God **allowed** this, but *He did not bless it* in that situation, “And the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; *for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them*’” (v. 7).

From that time on, dear brethren, we see that the Israelites did **not** have the full blessing of God—which they could have had if they had **trusted Him**. Instead, they *trusted in themselves* and turned aside to a *human* form of government. This was *not pleasing* to God then. And it is

**not pleasing** to God now!

So, may God help all of us to understand the vital importance of recognizing the “Church of God” group that really is teaching the “whole counsel” of God; that is actually **doing** the Work of God in a right and loving manner and that is practicing the **biblical form** of Church government—the very form that all of us will soon be called upon to teach and practice in the Kingdom of God!

Some people will try to tell you that, in the malaise of various Church of God fellowships, we are “all the same.” Be sure to respond to them: “**Absolutely not!**” For, as discussed above, there are at least **three** vital differences between the Living Church of God and other groups. These differences are *important* to **Almighty God**. And they will certainly make a difference in the kind of **reward** you and I will be given for *all eternity* in Christ’s soon-coming *World Government*—the glorious Kingdom of God.

With Christian love,



**May God help all of us to understand the vital importance of recognizing the “Church of God” group that really is teaching the “whole counsel” of God; that is actually doing the Work of God in a right and loving manner and that is practicing the biblical form of Church government—the very form that all of us will soon be called upon to teach and practice in the Kingdom of God!**

# LOCAL

## CHURCH NEWS

### Anniversaries

*Mr. and Mrs. Glenn (Willadene) Blackman*, deacon and deaconess serving in the Des Moines, Iowa, congregation, celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on August 14. They were married August 14, 1955. They also celebrated 45 years as members in God's Church, and are inaugural members of the Des Moines congregation.

*Mr. and Mrs. Roger (Linda) Allgeyer* of the Long Island and Metro New York congregations celebrated their 50th anniversary on the weekend of June 26–27. After services on June 26, their daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Jon (Christy) McNair; and son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Darren (Michelle) Allgeyer had a surprise party at the Allgeyer home. Sixty-one brethren and family members provided refreshments, and after sundown there was music for dancing. The celebration continued on Sunday as the family went swimming and surfing in the Atlantic Ocean at a state park. The day was capped off with an evening dinner at a restaurant that dates back to the time of George Washington.

### In Loving Memory

*Arnease Inez Herring* of the Raleigh, North Carolina, congregation, died May 2, at her home at the age of 97 years. She had been in failing health for the past few years. Mrs. Herring was baptized in September 1968. She was preceded in death by her husband; they had no children. Pastor Carl Derstine conducted her funeral service.

*Mr. George Henry Little*, 76, died at his home on May 25, after a short illness. Besides his wife, Ollie, he is survived by a daughter, three sons, five grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Mr. Little was baptized in 1966 and was a deacon serving in the Raleigh, North Carolina, congregation. He owned his own business and was a skilled mason. Pastor Carl Derstine delivered the eulogy at his funeral in Raleigh, N.C.

*Mr. Ron Dyke* of the Ft. Lauderdale, Florida congregation died suddenly July 10. He was a longtime member of God's Church and was always enthusiastic and encouraging to others. He was an inspiration to everyone and will be greatly missed. He is survived by his wife, Sally, daughter, Michelle, and other relatives. Pastor Dexter Wakefield conducted his funeral on July 18.

### Conscientious Objector Status for Young Adults

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

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

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

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

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

## Milwaukee Area Family Weekend: Rocket Science!



Eighty-five brethren gathered from Milwaukee, Chicago, Wisconsin Dells and as far away as Kansas City, Missouri for the 3rd annual Milwaukee Area Family Weekend at beautiful Bong State Park in Kansasville, Wisconsin, July 24–25. Sabbath services were held in

Kenosha, Wisconsin with a powerful message on “Seeing the Big Picture” followed by an inspiring Bible Study on “Dynamic Prayer.” On Sunday, July 25, brethren enjoyed a wonderful picnic atmosphere that included a baking contest. The younger children were able to enjoy a rented inflatable “Moon Walk” that provided plenty of fun and excitement. After the noon meal it was then off to the launch site which was an old Air Force runway. More than 35 rockets of all shapes and sizes were launched with the highest going up to 1,500 feet in the clear blue sky. It was a memorable weekend for everyone involved. The wonderful fellowship and Christian camaraderie were enjoyed by all. We all thank God for the beautiful weather and the unity that He provided in making this a wonderful success. Afterwards it was safe to say that everyone had a “blast.”

## Ordinations

*Mr. Adam West* was ordained an elder on Pentecost by Regional Pastor Rand Millich and Elder James Wells. Mr. West has been serving in the Kansas City, Missouri, congregation.

On the Sabbath of July 10, Evangelist Richard Ames and Elder Fitzroy Greeman ordained *Mr. Damian Weekes* as an elder and *Messrs. David Grant and Keith Sookdeo* as deacons. Messrs. Weekes, Grant and Sookdeo serve God’s people in Trinidad, West Indies, where Mr. Greeman serves as Area Pastor.



**ELDER RAUL COLÓN VISITED PERU, JUNE 25–28, WHERE HE CONDUCTED SEVERAL BAPTISMS, AND OBSERVED THE SABBATH WITH ABOUT 60 BRETHREN. ON SATURDAY EVENING, JUNE 26, MR. COLÓN PERFORMED THE MARRIAGE OF MR. JOSMEL PALMA AND MISS ESTHER BRAVO. ABOVE, MR. COLÓN (THIRD FROM RIGHT) POSES WITH (FROM LEFT) EDGARDO CUBAS, JOMEINE HURTADO, JENNY HURTADO, RAFAEL PAREJAS AND ROSA PANDIRO.**

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)).

## Rocky Mountain Saratoga Weekend a Big Success!



The twelfth annual Rocky Mountain Saratoga Family Weekend, held June 25–27, was a big success. Delightful weather with temperatures in the mid 70s to low 80s and light Wyoming breezes under partly cloudy skies greeted forty-five area brethren and guests. Mr. and Mrs. Rodger Bardo attended from Arizona, and Mrs. Marjean Gregory from Milwaukee and Ms. Carolyn Paul from Chicago joined brethren from Montana, Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado for a magnificent weekend of worshiping God and fellowshiping on the banks of the North Platte River in beautiful Saratoga, Wyoming.

Friday evening opened the weekend with a delicious supper at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Pete and Jen Maskell followed by a Bible Study led by Mr. Ben Whitfield. Following a tradition that Mr. Glen Gilchrist started a year ago, we broke up into small groups to find “Ten Secrets of Biblical Leadership” contained in the Scriptures. The very interesting discussions were summarized at the end by Mr. Whitfield.

Sabbath morning everyone was greeted with fresh brewed coffee and a delicious brunch. At services, Mr. Bardo gave the sermon on “Leadership,” explaining that the principles God gives us in the Bible are very applicable for us today as well as in tomorrow’s world. Because we’re in training today to be leaders for tomorrow, we need to be developing the leadership skills that God would have us learn. Saturday evening and Sunday morning Mr. Bardo followed this up with three workshops on Service, Education and Leadership. His dynamic and informative presentations gave everyone a “plateful” of excellent material on leadership skills to apply in all aspects of our lives and to meditate on for weeks and months to come. Sabbath dinner was a wonderful “Steak and Fish Fry” served on the deck of the Riviera Lodge, with Chef Api doing the honors. Fresh deep fried filet of wild trout was Chef Api’s specialty and he told us the “secret” was in the sauce!

Some felt it was the “best” Saratoga Family weekend yet. Family, friends, young and old alike had a wonderful time in Saratoga and we wish you all could have been there.

## Births

Mike and Kristina DeSimone of the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation are pleased to announce the birth of their fourth child, *Sarah Anne DeSimone*, on March 13. Sarah weighed 6 pounds, 9 ounces, and was 19¾ inches long. Sarah’s big sisters and brother are overjoyed by her arrival!

Reynaldo and Jennifer Colón, of the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation, are excited to announce the birth of their first daughter, *Genevieve Isabella Colón*. She was born on June 25, weighing 8 pounds, 10 ounces, and was 22 inches long.

Dylan and Toby King are happy to announce the birth of their first child, *Johanna Lynn King*. She was born on August 8 in Charlotte, NC after 36 hours of labor sparked by some very low pitched tuba playing. Mother and child are doing well, and grandmother Joanne Kornfeld of the Ocala, Florida congregation is already preparing music lessons for little Johanna.

**United States:** P.O. Box 3810, Charlotte, NC 28227-8010, [www.TomorrowsWorld.org](http://www.TomorrowsWorld.org), Phone: (704) 844-1970 • **Australasia:** PO Box 300, Clarendon, SA 5157, Australia, Phone: (61) 8-8383-6288, Fax: (61) 8-8127-9667 • **Canada:** P.O. Box 409, Mississauga, ON L5M 0P6, Phone: (905) 814-1094, Fax: (905) 814-7659 • **New Zealand:** P.O. Box 2767, Auckland, New Zealand, Phone/Fax: (09) 268 8985 • **Philippines:** PO Box 492, Araneta Center Post Office, 1135 Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines, Phone: (63) 2-871-4921, Fax: (63) 2-414-5349 • **South Africa:** Private Bag X7, Hatfield, Pretoria, 0028, Phone: (27) 58-622-1424, Fax: (27) 58-623-1303 • **United Kingdom:** BM Box 2345, London, WC1N 3XX, Phone/Fax: 44 (0) 844-800-9322.

# COMMENTARY

## At Churchill's Feet

A short while ago, I was blessed to have the opportunity to visit the grave of Winston Churchill. As I sat at the foot of his grave, my thoughts fell on just how close the Allies had come to defeat and to utter destruction. The world would not be the same if God had not directly intervened.

Thinking about how close Great Britain came to defeat, I was profoundly comforted to recognize that even against the gravest of adversities, God remains in control. In the depths of world war, He chose to deliver Britain and her allies, as it was not yet His time for them to fall. He ensured that the right people were in the right places, and used men like Winston Churchill to ensure that His will would be done!

The fact that God sets up and brings down world leaders is an important lesson that Nebuchadnezzar, ancient king of Babylon, needed to learn the hard way. The book of Daniel recounts how God removed King Nebuchadnezzar's sanity in order to teach him humility. Nebuchadnezzar lived for seven years with the beasts of the field, "eating grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagle's feathers and his nails like birds' claws" (Daniel 4:33).

This humiliation was to teach him that "the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men" (v. 17). Surely it was God's will that Winston Churchill was in office at the right time, so that God would use him as an essential component for the deliverance of Great Britain from the hand of Hitler!

In looking at Churchill's life leading up to the Battle of Britain, it becomes evident that God chose him for the job of leading England through World War II. More than just choosing him, God prepared him for the job.

Through history, God has even used people who are unfamiliar with His laws, and do not have His Holy Spirit, to do His purpose. This begs one important question. If God, on occasion, even prepares unconverted individuals for such extraordinary tasks, then how much more does He have in store for you as His begotten child? What is God's purpose for those who spend their lives striving to grow in His righteous character, who are willing to give up everything to follow Him?

Daniel gives us a hint at what God has in store for the righteous: "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:2-3).

—Michael Heykoop

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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.