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Our Worship and Service to God

Dear Brethren and Friends,

We have just completed an extremely warm and unifying Council of Elders Conference. The members of the Council—all dedicated to serving you brethren and to preaching the Gospel to the world—are truly among the finest men I have ever known. As have many of you brethren, they have been tried and tested—again and again—and have regularly stood up for the Truth and for Christ’s approach to doing the Work.

During three separate sessions, we discussed ways of doing the Work even better and reaching a broader range of people. We discussed the possibility of introducing a Card Holder Program, a program of getting the *Tomorrow’s World* magazine into various libraries and waiting rooms, better use of the Internet, more extensive use of radio and a number of other ideas to “grow” the Work.

A separate session was devoted to improved methods for feeding the flock and better ways to serve you brethren. And we concluded by discussing a few doctrinal issues and then examining how we *all* can draw closer to God.

One key theme was that *all* of us and all of you brethren need to be more heartfelt in our WORSHIP of God and in our *service* to God. Remember, brethren, that when our Savior was asked which was the “great” commandment in God’s law, He replied, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment” (Matthew 22:37–38).

Let’s *think* about that! Since God is our Father, our Creator and the Giver of “every good gift and every perfect gift,” we certainly should want to *honor* Him, *love* Him and *worship* Him as our God. But if we are to love God with ALL our heart, soul and mind, we obviously must make God the very CENTER of our lives. What GOD wants—NOT what we want—should be the underlying theme in EVERYTHING we think, say and do.

The Apostle Paul was inspired to instruct us that our spiritual warfare is: “Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing EVERY THOUGHT into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). So as true bond-slaves of Jesus Christ, even our thoughts should be constantly centered

around what our Father and our God really want us to do in every phase and facet of our lives.

How well I remember the early years of Ambassador College when Mr. Armstrong's thoughts and words seemed to constantly echo this theme. Mr. Armstrong was a wonderful conversationalist. But it seemed that even in discussing such diverse subjects as music, sports, foreign travel, big business executives and other topics, Mr. Armstrong would very often tie in these subjects with what GOD'S standards are—or the *lessons* we can learn from these various topics. Though Herbert W. Armstrong was very human, the thousands of hours I personally spent with him are a constant source of inspiration as I think back on how he related nearly every subject imaginable to the Kingdom of God and to God's *purpose* in making mankind in His image.

All of us need to meditate on this concept and to PRAY that God will help us and inspire us to bring *every thought* into "captivity" to Jesus Christ!

It is important, at this point, that we reflect on the fact that we are told not only to align our thoughts with Christ, but to have the "mind" of Christ (Philippians 2:5), to "serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:24), to have Christ LIVE His life in us (Galatians 2:20) and many other such references. So when we read and we meditate about loving "God", remember that *this command also includes loving Jesus Christ in the SAME way!* For in God's inspired Word, Jesus told us, "I and My Father are ONE" (John 10:30). And in John 5:21–23, Jesus Christ stated, "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, *that all should honor the Son JUST AS they honor the Father.* He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."

Remember, brethren, there will NEVER be a time when the Father is "jealous" of us loving and worshipping Jesus Christ, His Son. For they really *are* ONE in a way that we humans cannot fully comprehend. So when Jesus said, "I AM the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE," there was not one twinge of jealousy and resentment in the Father. For the Father had *sent* Jesus for *this very purpose*: to REVEAL the Father and His entire way of life (Matthew 11:27) and to make God more REAL and accessible to us by coming in the human flesh.

Therefore, we *should* constantly identify with Jesus Christ as our *personal* Savior, our Leader, our Example, our Hero and our GOD! For Jesus is very God—and worthy of the *worship* of the angels (Hebrews 1:6). Through God's Spirit within us, each of us must build a deep and profound and constant relationship with Jesus Christ. Although we must never imagine or picture specific features or make any kind of an idol, we *should* nevertheless meditate about and—in a *general way*—"picture" Christ sitting at the right hand of God on His glorious throne in heaven, surrounded by more than *one-hundred-million* angels! (Revelation 5:11).

Also, in a *general way*, we should mentally picture Christ walking by the Sea of Galilee, patiently teaching the people, heal-

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Trials and Persecutions

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

All of you brethren know, I'm sure, that I am a very positive person. I try to look on the bright side of any situation. I have always tried to project growth and progress in the Work in most of my preaching and writing.

That is as it should be.

For God's Word tells us, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17). And the Apostle Paul stated, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). And again, "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (v. 19).

Yet, it is important to realize that Paul was a PRISONER when he wrote these last two verses. For he had stated earlier in his letter to the Philippians, "I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my CHAINS and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace" (Philippians 1:7). In fact, Paul mentions his "chains" *three times* in this first chapter of Philippians!

None of us, to my knowledge, has had to shuffle around with manacles between our legs and a Roman soldier guarding us day and night. *Not yet*, at least.

But I hope and pray that all of you will be really *studying* the Bible regularly—"feeding on Christ"—so that you will not be shocked or dismayed when some of us have to go through these kinds of trials. For the Bible is literally FILLED with examples of the true servants of God being persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and even martyred. All the way from Joseph being sold into slavery and Daniel being thrown into "the lion's den" to Jesus Himself being beaten, ridiculed and finally crucified (Matthew 27:26–35), we find that God's servants were often vilified and persecuted. That was *not* unusual. That was, in fact, the "norm" in times past.

From time to time it is helpful to review Paul's "defense" against the false ministers of his day who were constantly accusing him: "Are they ministers of Christ?; I speak as a fool; I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleepless-

ness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness; besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:23–28).

So I want *all* of you brethren to prepare, mentally, for this kind of assault against God's ministers and also against some of you brethren. God and His Word must be "real" to us. A deep and continuous personal relationship with the Living Jesus Christ is vital. Then we can have the *faith* and the *courage* to see us through the trying times, which are undoubtedly coming.

When I was first ordained to the ministry over 47 years ago, I deeply felt that I might not even be able to get married. I felt that a number of us older students—and younger ministers—would almost continually have to travel here and there on baptizing and visiting tours, assisting Mr. Armstrong. Reading the book of Acts again and again, it appeared to me that the Church would go through similar trials and troubles to what the Apostles experienced in their day.

As time went on and we were able to raise up increasing numbers of local congregations, the need to be married and to give advice on married life, on child rearing and on "normal"

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Know Your Adversary!

Does Satan exist? What are his methods and his purposes? How do you combat his influence?

By Douglas S. Winnail

Does Satan *really* exist? If so, what is he like, and what is he up to? For many, Satan is a devil with horns, a pointed tail and a pitchfork who entices unsuspecting people down the road to an ever-burning hell. Others, in our sophisticated society today, are not so sure this is the case. Some feel that Satan is not a being who influences people from the outside, but merely a name given to an evil force that exists within every person. St. Augustine's 3rd century philosophical notion that evil is merely the absence of good is also held by some today—in other words, Satan does not really exist!

But what is the *truth* on this matter? What can you prove from your own Bible? What advice do the Scriptures give for dealing with this powerful spirit being? What do Christians need to know about Satan? Will theories and speculations of people fool you, or will you believe the Word of God on this vital subject?

What Scripture Reveals

The Bible does not treat the subject of Satan lightly. Scriptural passages dealing with Satan are not written in a philosophical or speculative tone. Instead, the relevant verses are delivered in deadly earnest. The Apostle Peter was inspired to write, “be sober, be vigilant; because *your adversary*, the devil walks about like a *roaring lion*, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8–9). Peter is warning his fellow Christians about a life or death matter! Peter cautions that we must be ready to *resist* Satan—indicating that it will not be easy. Numerous other scriptures make it abundantly clear why Peter wrote so strongly on this subject. But where did Peter get the idea that Satan is our *adversary*? And why is it important for us to understand this subject today?

The term *Satan* is actually a Hebrew word used throughout the Old Testament that means *opponent* or *adversary*. As a verb, the term *Satan* means *to attack*, or *to accuse* (see *Dictionary of the Bible*, Hastings, or *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*). In the New Testament the term *satanas* means the devil or *the accuser*. In the Scriptures, God names people and creatures for what they are. Satan is referred to variously in the Bible as the adversary, the accuser, an enemy, an opponent, the devil, the serpent, and a dragon whose sole focus is to deceive, divide and destroy God's people and defeat the purpose of God. The Bible refers to Satan as a very real and dangerous being—not a philosophical construction of the human mind or a product of superstitious mythology. But where did such a being come from? Did God create a devil?

Satan's Origin

The inspired account of Satan's origin is found in two chapters of the Bible. In Isaiah 14:1 we learn that Satan's original name was Lucifer which means “light-bringer” indicating that he was not evil in the beginning. Ezekiel 28:11–19 speaks of a king of Tyre, but the text describes a being that could not be human. Lucifer, who became Satan the adversary, was created by God “full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” with musical abilities and other talents (Ezekiel 28:12–13). He is described as “the anointed cherub that covers” who was “on the holy mountain of God” (verse 14). Satan was created to be one of two powerful spirit beings whose wings covered the throne of God. This is indicated by the models of two cherubs that covered the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle or temple in Ancient Israel (see Exodus 25:17–22). To get an idea of what Satan looks like, study the descriptions of cherubs in Ezekiel 1:5–11 and Ezekiel 10.

The Scriptures reveal that Lucifer was perfect “until iniquity was found” in him (Ezekiel 28:15). Apparently God has given even spirit beings free moral agency—the opportunity to make independent decisions. Lucifer became vain—apparently because of the abilities he was given when he was created (Ezekiel 28:17). He developed ideas of personal grandeur that led to disastrous consequences. He asserted, “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God... I will be like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:13). He actually attempted to take over God’s position by deceiving one third of the angels into a futile rebellion against God (Revelation 12:4). Lucifer became Satan the adversary—**by his own choice**—as a result of a *willful, rebellious sin*. That sin perverted his thinking, corrupted his mind and filled him with a violent nature (Ezekiel 28:16–17). But just what does all this have to do with human beings, and especially Christians, today? Why does the Apostle Paul warn in 2 Corinthians 2:11 that we should not be *ignorant* of Satan’s devices?

Satan’s Methods

Satan’s rebellious actions resulted in his expulsion from God’s presence. However, the Bible reveals he was allowed to remain—and still remains—the “god of this world” who *blinds* human beings to the truth of God and to the true nature of reality (2 Corinthians 4:4). When we understand how Satan operates, we can begin to understand why this world is in the condition it is. We can also begin to understand the nature of the temptations we all face and what we need to be able to resist.

Jesus stated that Satan was a liar and a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). He was referring, in part, to Satan’s use of lies to deceive Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1–13) and his role in cultivating Cain’s anger into murder (Genesis 4:1–8). Satan stirred Judas to betray Christ (Luke 22:1–6) and incited the Jews to kill the Messiah (John 8:38–41). Satan operates by deception. The Apostle Paul warned the church in Corinth: “I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so *your minds* may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3–4). Paul’s specific concern was false teachers preaching about “another Jesus... a different spirit... or a different gospel” (Ibid.). The long-haired Jesus, who supposedly taught that we no longer need to obey the laws of God or be concerned about prophecy, is *very different* from the Jesus Christ of Scripture (see 1 Corinthians 11:14; Matthew 5:17). The idea that all Christians go to heaven is *clearly contrary* to the true gospel that the saints will reign with Jesus Christ on this earth (see Mark 1:14–15; Revelation 5:10, 20:4–6; Daniel 7:26–27). However,

Satan has—true to the Scriptures—deceived the whole world into believing in a different Jesus Christ and a different gospel (Revelation 12:9). Have you ever been misled by these lies? Many have been—today, and down through the centuries.

The spirit that motivated Jesus promoted love for God and neighbor (John 14:15–18, 15:17), a teachable, peace-making attitude (Matthew 5:9), and provided an ability to understand the truth of God (John 14:17, 26). The spirit that emanates from Satan is entirely different. Satan is wrathful and violent, an accuser and persecutor of the brethren (Revelation 12:10–13). He is a destroyer (Revelation 9:11–12). As the “prince of the power of the air” Satan *broadcasts* attitudes that can be picked up by the unsuspecting human mind which can then produce wrathful and disobedient behavior (Ephesians 2:2–3). Paul provides a detailed list of behaviors that Satan promotes: “adultery, fornication... idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness” (Galatians 5:19–21). These behaviors permeate our society today and are widely promoted by the modern media. However, such behaviors, if not recognized and controlled, can lead individuals and nations *to destruction*—which is one of Satan’s ultimate goals. Satan’s influence brought an end to human society in the time of Noah (Genesis 6:11–13), and it is prophesied to happen again (Matthew 24:3, 36–39). This is why we must be vigilant and not be deceived by his methods. But why is this powerful spirit being out to deceive and destroy? Why is he our adversary?

Satan’s Purpose

As we have seen, Satan was once at the very throne of God. He understands the plan of God for mankind. He is out to thwart and disrupt that plan. The scriptures reveal that God made men and women in His own image (Genesis 1:26–27). If we grow and develop the mind and character of God (Philippians 2:5) we will eventually be made eternal spirit beings (1 Corinthians 15:50–54) and have the opportunity to rule on this earth under Christ (Revelation 5:10, 20:4–6). In that capacity we will *replace* the present god of this world—Satan. Human beings were created for the very purpose of becoming members of God’s divine ruling family (1 John 3:1–3) and “joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:16–17). Jesus came to this earth in the first century to show how to overcome Satan and his deceptive methods. Jesus had to endure temptations and overcome just as we must learn to do (Matthew 4:1–11; Hebrews 4:15, 5:8–9, 2:10–11; Romans 8:29). Satan understands God’s purpose for mankind. He knows

he is to be replaced. He knows his time is growing short. This is why he walks about as a prowling lion seeking to deceive and destroy anyone who might become a future member of the family of God. However, you do not have to be one of his victims.

Combating Satan's Devices

Satan may be clever and deceptive, but God has given us warnings, instructions, examples and a special weapon for combating Satan's devices. Jesus warned repeatedly about being deceived (Matthew 7:15–20, 24:4–5, 11, 24). Paul informs us that Satan will even use ministers *professing to be Christians* to deceive people (2 Corinthians 11:12–15). Both James and Peter stress the importance of being able to recognize and resist Satan's deceptive schemes (James 4:7–8; 1 Peter 5:8). When we sense our attitude becoming fearful, doubtful, accusative,

goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22–23). The challenge that every Christian faces is to replace the works of the flesh with the fruits of God's spirit. In this world, influenced by the unseen yet powerful influence of Satan, developing these godly fruits will be a constant challenge. However, the Bible clearly reveals that God will be with us if we do our part to seek Him, stay close to him and strive to obey him (Matthew 28:19–20).


The reason Peter writes *so knowingly* and *earnestly* that we must be alert and resist our adversary is because he was *blind-sided* on numerous occasions by Satan. He was plagued by doubts at critical moments (Matthew 14:26–31). He gave well meaning, but misguided advice to Christ (Matthew 16:21–23). He got caught up in a jealous rivalry with the other disciples (Luke 22:24–30). He denied Christ and lied to save his own life (Matthew 26:69–75). Yet Jesus told Peter, the sincere, although

impetuous Apostle, that "Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail" (Luke 22:32). Peter recorded his advice because he was *aware* of what Satan's attacks were like and he *understood* Satan's purpose. Peter also knew and experienced God's help and support.

The big questions that face each of us is, do we know our adversary and do we understand what we are up against in our quest for a reward in the kingdom of God?

Do we recognize when Satan is focusing in

on us, or does he repeatedly catch us off guard? Are we alert enough and close enough to God to sense when he is beginning to play with our thoughts and opinions and perspectives? Do we regularly ask God for the strength to resist Satan's attacks? Are we determined not to give in to temptations? This often means that we must do what we know we should but not what we feel like doing—which would be to take the easy way out. These are daily challenges we all face. We cannot afford to let our guard down and go to sleep at the switch.

The Bible clearly shows that Satan is real. He is a dangerous opponent of every Christian. His goal is deception, division and destruction. He is out to thwart God's plan of adding additional members to His divine family. However, we can prevail, if we *know our adversary*. But we must follow God's instructions, heed the biblical examples recorded for our admonition and develop the fruits of the Holy Spirit that God makes available to those who love and obey Him. With God's help we can successfully combat and overcome our adversary! 

Satan may be clever and deceptive, but God has given us warnings, instructions, examples and a special weapon for combating Satan's devices. Jesus warned repeatedly about being deceived (Matthew 7:15–20, 24:4–5, 11, 24).

angry, resentful, jealous, lustful we need to be alert to the source of those thoughts and begin directing our minds in a different direction. If we get carried away by some new doctrinal idea or prophetic speculation or our own theological idea we are ripe for Satan's deceptive activities (2 Timothy 4:1–5). If we nurture feelings of unjust treatment or if we become resentful of godly constituted authority—in the family, in the church or in society—we will be vulnerable to Satan's attacks (2 Peter 2:9–15). If we become overly focused on our feelings, and ourselves we could be on dangerous ground (2 Timothy 3:1–7). We must remain alert to the battle that goes on in our minds!

To help us in this challenging combat, God gives His Holy Spirit to those who are willing to repent [change] and obey Him (John 14:15–17; Acts 5:32). As we learn to nourish and exercise that Spirit, we will begin to show the fruits of God's spirit—strength, confidence, love and discernment (2 Timothy 1:6–7). Additional fruits include, "joy, peace, long-suffering [patience], kindness,

A Tale of Two Nazarites

By John H. Ogwyn

The twelfth century BC was a bleak one for ancient Israel. The nation had been on a veritable roller-coaster ride of ups and downs in relation to neighboring nations since Joshua's death. Now, in the aftermath of Gideon's death, the unity of the nation seemed to fracture.

One of Gideon's sons by a concubine had tried to kill all of his brothers and to install himself as king over the central part of the land. Ammonites from the east occupied the Trans-Jordan area of Israel and dominated there for the next 18 years. The greatest danger, however, came from the Philistines who gained dominance over the southern and western parts of the nation. For the next 40 years the Philistines controlled vast portions of Israel.

It was at this crisis time that God brought about two miraculous births in the land. Two baby boys, both dedicated to God from their mothers' wombs as Nazarites, were to have a great impact on the future of their nation. It is important to note that when events in the world around looked bleakest, God already had a plan in motion that was going to provide a solution.

In Numbers 6, Moses was inspired of God to lay out the requirements of a vow of special consecration to God, called a Nazarite Vow. Generally men took this vow for a specific period of time,

after which, there was a ceremony marking its conclusion. During the time of their vow, the men were not to cut their hair or shave, nor were they to taste any grape product, including wine, fresh grapes, or raisins, nor were they to touch anything that would make them ceremonially defiled.

There are three men mentioned in the Bible who were born under a Nazarite Vow. All three were conceived as a result of God's miraculous intervention in their parents' lives, as their parents had been unable to have children previously. These three men were Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist. Samson and Samuel, though it is not generally recognized, were contemporaries. They were both conceived at the beginning of Israel's oppression by the Philistines and were to play an important role in that phase of Israel's history.

Before proceeding further, we first need to understand how we know that Samson and Samuel were contemporaries. The key is putting the chronology of Judges together with that contained in Samuel and Kings. 1 Kings 6:1 tells us that the fourth year of King Solomon was 480 years after the exodus from Egypt. Since Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness before entering the land, it was therefore 440 years since the entrance into Canaan under Joshua. This was Solomon's fourth year and since King Saul and

King David had each reigned 40 years, kings had replaced judges in Israel 84 years earlier. Therefore, the time from Israel's entrance into the land until Samuel anointed Saul as king was 356 years. Judges 11:26 shows us that Jephthah began his judgeship 300 years after Israel's entrance into the land, 56 years before Saul was crowned king. Jephthah came to power at the end of 18 years of Ammonite oppression.

The Ammonites began their oppression at the same time as did the Philistines (Judges 10:7). The Philistines oppressed Israel 40 years (Judges 13:1). Samson was born at the beginning of this time and grew to maturity under Philistine rule. He judged Israel for 20, which coincided with the last 20 years of Philistine oppression (Judges 16:30–31). 1 Samuel 7:13 reveals Samuel's role in defeating the Philistines and ending their dominance over Israel. 20 years earlier, a disastrous battle had taken place that resulted in the capture of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines and the deaths of the sons of the High Priest, Phineas and Hophni, as well as that of the High Priest Eli himself. Based upon this chronology, Samuel would have been 74 when he anointed Saul as king (cf. 1 Samuel 8:5).

When we put the whole story together, it is clear that Samson and

Samuel were each born at the beginning of the 40 years of Philistine oppression of Israel. Twenty years into that period the Ark was captured. After a brief sojourn in the land of the Philistines it was returned to Israel where it remained at Kirjathjearim for the next 20 years. This second 20-year period coincided with Samson's judgeship. At the end of it he collapsed the temple of Dagon and destroyed the entire leadership of the Philistines, though he also died in the collapse. Immediately afterward Samuel assembled Israel at Mizpeh, led them to confess their sins and rededicate themselves to serving God. He then led them against the Philistine armies, which were completely subdued for the remainder of Samuel's active rule of the nation (1 Samuel 7:13).

In many ways, the lives of Samson and Samuel are a study in marked contrast. Two men, both called of God for a special purpose, responded very differently to their calling. Though God accomplished His purpose through each of these men, we find that one learned his lessons the easy way while the other had to learn everything the hard way. As we examine more closely the lives of these specially chosen contemporaries, we need to look for lessons that we can apply in our own lives. We have also been specially chosen and called of God to do a job. Will we respond willingly and readily as Samuel did, or will we have to go through great tribulation as Samson did before we finally get our perspective straight?

The Life of Samson

Judges 13 opens with the appearance of an angel to the wife of Manoah at the onset of the Philistine oppression of Israel. Clearly God had not forgotten about His people,

though He had allowed severe trials to come upon them. When we put the story in Judges together with that in 1 Samuel, it becomes clear that the priestly leadership of Israel was corrupt. Their example had obviously affected the entire nation and discouraged respect for God and His ways.

Yet the faithfulness of Manoah and his wife show that it is possible to serve God in spite of the conduct of other people. This faithful older couple, unable to previously have children, was overwhelmed at the appearance of an angel of God. They were given a promise by God and instructions for the future of the son that they were destined to have.

Though Samson was brought up with knowledge of his destiny, and of the special Nazarite vow to which he had been consecrated from his mother's womb, he grew up a very self-centered young man. This is evidenced in his determination to marry a Philistine woman, though his parents tried to dissuade him. Samson told his father in Judges 14:3 that "she is right in my eyes" (*Soncino Commentary*). This, of course, is the catch phrase of the entire book of Judges. God, knowing Samson's character and attitude, worked through the circumstances of several different Philistine women to stir him to battle against the Philistines. Serving his people by leading them to freedom was not a motive enough for Samson to fight the Philistines. He was stirred to action by a desire to revenge himself of some personal affront.

God gave Samson the miraculous gift of supernatural strength. Though he was the strongest of men, yet in another way, he proved himself the weakest! After marrying a Philistine woman, contrary to his parents' wishes, his marriage quickly fell apart. Samson became enraged when he found that his bride had

revealed a secret to the Philistines. He left her and stayed away for several months. When he returned, after having decided to reconcile, he found that she was now married to another man, the best man at his wedding. Again, Samson was enraged and took action to revenge this insult.

In Judges 16 we learn that Samson paid a visit to a Philistine harlot. After the Philistines used the occasion to try and capture him, Samson again wreaked havoc. He proved a veritable one-man army in challenging Philistine supremacy. However, we read nothing of Samson trying to rally Israel to a rededication to the true worship of God during the period of his judgeship. He was a self-centered, self-indulgent, self-willed leader. In spite of his motives, however, God used him to weaken Philistine power.

The final chapter of his life opens with Samson's encounter with yet another Philistine woman, Delilah. She was actually in the pay of the lords of the Philistines to help them subdue and capture Samson. In order to accomplish this, she whined and cajoled trying to get Samson to reveal the secret of his remarkable strength.

Three different times Samson made up a story and told her that it was the secret of his great strength. Each of those times she tried it out to see if that was, indeed, the way to deprive him of his super-human powers and make him like other men. After the third deception she began to cry and complain that Samson did not love her or else he would tell her the truth. Very foolishly, he finally acquiesced. Of course, she did again as she had done before, only this time it worked. His uncut hair and beard were the outward symbols of Samson's consecration to God. Once these were shorn, God removed the

miraculous power with which Samson had been entrusted. He was now easily subdued by Philistine soldiers, was taken captive and blinded.

The soldiers took Samson to a place of imprisonment where he was chained to a pole and made to walk around in a circle like an ox in order to turn a gristmill. Undoubtedly as he walked around and around over the coming weeks and months, aching with fatigue and unable to see, he had much time to reflect on the wasted life that lay behind him. As time passed and his hair and

pillars fell, thereby collapsing the temple of Dagon. In this final act, Samson destroyed more Philistines than in the rest of his lifetime combined. He sought to redeem a life filled with wasted opportunities in one last act of faith and courage.

The Life of Samuel

Samuel was born to Elkanah the Levite and his wife Hannah. For several years they had wanted children, but Hannah had been unable to conceive. One year, having gone to

his family returned to their home. In the years following, Samuel grew up as a dependable helper to the elderly priest Eli.

Eli's own sons, however, were quite a contrast to young Samuel. They were greedy and immoral. In fact, their conduct caused people to disrespect God's servants and to dread coming to the Tabernacle. Eli's sons, Phinehas and Hophni, even committed fornication with women who had come to the Tabernacle (1 Samuel 2:22). Though Eli knew of his sons' behavior, he never took action to remove them from office and to bring them to judgment. He fussed at them (vv. 23–25) from time to time, but did nothing further.

One night after young Samuel had gone to bed, a voice called out to him. Immediately he got up and went in to Eli to respond to the summons. Eli told him that he had not called and to go back to bed. This scenario was repeated three times. After the third time, Eli realized that it was God who was calling Samuel. He told him to respond if the voice called again by saying, "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears." When the voice again called and Samuel responded, he was given a message of judgment for the house of Eli from God. The next morning Eli asked him about the message and Samuel told him.

Over the years of Samuel's adolescence, people coming to Shiloh to worship took increasing notice of him. He was greatly respected for his sincere dedication to God (1 Samuel 3:19–21).

At about the same time as Samson began his judgeship, a battle took place between the Israelite and Philistine armies that had disastrous results for Israel. Having suffered an

In many ways, the lives of Samson and Samuel are a study in marked contrast. Two men, both called of God for a special purpose, responded very differently to their calling.

beard began to grow long once again, an idea came to Samson's mind.

He prayed to God, asking for one last time opportunity to fight against the Philistines. Hebrews 11 lists Samson as a man of faith. It appears that it was only after he was blind that Samson could *really* see! Opportunity came when the Philistine leadership was assembled for a celebration. They decided to bring Samson to their assembly so that they might ridicule this once-mighty Israelite leader. Asking to be positioned between two of the main support pillars of the temple, Samson made one last heartfelt prayer to God. He did not ask for personal deliverance, but rather for a final chance to fulfill his calling, even though it would mean his own death.

Feeling the supernatural strength flow into him once again, Samson gave a great push and the

Shiloh for the Feast, Hannah went to the Tabernacle to pray. Moved with grief, she prayed fervently to God. When Eli, the High Priest, first saw her, he thought she was intoxicated. After talking to her, however, he realized that she was merely emotionally distraught and was a deeply God-fearing woman. In her prayer, she had made a vow to God that if He would grant her a son, she would return that son to God and he would be consecrated as a Nazarite (1 Samuel 1:11). Eli told her that her prayer would be answered.

Prior to the next Feast, Hannah conceived and bore a son, whom she named Samuel. Waiting until Samuel was weaned, probably at about the age of six or seven, as is still customary in areas of the Middle East, she took him to Shiloh the next time the family went up to the Feast. Presented to the High Priest in fulfillment of his mother's vow, Samuel remained behind when

Truly “Knowing the Lord”

By Mark Mendiola

When I was in high school, a friend of mine invited me to a Sunday evening church service where people in the congregation were almost incessantly “praising the Lord” and repeating the name of Jesus. On another occasion, a group of young people invited me to a Bible study after school. All they seemed to talk about was “the Lord” this and “the Lord” that. At that time, it was common to hear people ask, “Do you know the Lord?”

I could tell that this constant use of the term “the Lord” cheapened God’s name and later learned that it contradicted what Christ said about using vain repetitions when praying. It got to the point it was taking God’s name in vain!

But I also learned that, indeed, we must come to “know the Lord” if we expect to be allowed entrance into the Kingdom of God, but not the way so many in other churches profess. We must get to know God very intimately. I noticed that these people always referring to “the Lord” never mentioned obedience or keeping God’s commandments.

Jesus Christ confirms that, although people are always talking about “the Lord,” does not mean they know Him or that He would even recognize them. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name and done many wonders in Your name?’” Christ states (Matthew 7:21–22).

Yes, many people preach or prophesy, attempt to cast out demons and attempt to do wonders in Jesus Christ’s name. Just flip on the television, and you can see it all the time. Does that mean they are true servants of Jesus Christ, whose name they invoke repeatedly? Notice what Jesus Christ says to such people. “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you.’” They claim to know the Lord, but He says He does not know them. Why? “Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (v. 23).

Out of one side of their mouth they will use Christ’s name, but out of the other side they say God’s law is done away, it is a curse or burden, and Christ nailed it to the cross. People reason it does not matter if they break God’s laws, but still claim to be accepted by God, coming in the name of Jesus Christ. The prophet Jeremiah condemned this attitude in no uncertain terms. People who embrace that kind of logic are trusting in lies!

“Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal and walk after other gods whom you do not know, and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered to do all these abominations?’” (Jeremiah 7:8–10).

They claim they “know the Lord,” but deny the need to keep God’s commandments. They may reason there’s no longer a need to keep those commandments under the New Covenant, yet God says breaking them is abominable! It is plain throughout the New Testament that we must keep God’s commandments if we are to be considered Christians, enter God’s Kingdom and truly come to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him” (1 John 2:3–5).

The Bible bluntly states that those who claim they “know the Lord” or know Jesus Christ, but refuse to keep God’s commandments are liars. They do not know God or Jesus Christ! They trust in lying words. Keeping God’s commandments and doing what Christ commands us should be foundational in our Christian lives.

Throughout the Gospels, Christ often rebukes those who call Him “Lord.” Vain, repetitious use of His name or title does not impress Him if it is not backed up with action, which speaks louder than words. “But why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I

say?” Christ asks (Luke 6:46). It amazes Christ that people recklessly use His name yet will not obey Him.

“Whoever comes to Me, and hears my sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great” (vv. 47–49).

Hearing Christ’s sayings and doing them is a means of basing our lives on Jesus Christ, the Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4). In the parable of the wise and foolish

Christ gives us a formula in Matthew 7 for getting to know Him better and being allowed to enter His Kingdom. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8).

When you take the first letters of “ask,” “seek” and “knock,” they spell “a-s-k.” We get to know God the Father and Christ by asking in prayer, seeking in Bible study and doing our part by knocking, taking the initiative to obey God and keep His commandments. Christ’s own disciples wondered how many would be allowed to enter the Kingdom. Notice Jesus Christ’s comment on the subject.

“And He went through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to

“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

virgins, Christ shows that merely espousing the words “Lord, Lord” is no ticket into His wedding. This parable in Matthew 25 shows the foolish virgins were unprepared and were left out in the dark as a result of letting the oil in their lamps become depleted.

“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward, the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you’” (vv. 10–12).

Those would have to be the most chilling words ever heard. Can you imagine how we would feel if Jesus Christ uttered those words to us as He was about to establish the Kingdom here on earth, and we realized we would be excluded from entering it? These foolish virgins thought they “knew the Lord,” but it is obvious the feeling was not mutual. The Lord did not know them. He said so!

So, what does running low on oil have to do with getting to know the Lord? Everything! The oil symbolically represents God’s Holy Spirit, by which Jesus Christ lives His life in us. To obtain that oil or spirit, we must pray to God and study His Word, the Holy Bible, every day. That’s how we get to know God intimately. Through daily prayer, we talk to God and through daily Bible study He talks to us. We get to know somebody through communication, and it is no different with God, who gives His Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32).

Him, ‘Lord, are there few who are saved?’ And He said to them, ‘Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you will seek to enter and will not be able’” (Luke 13:22–24).

Christ said it takes striving to enter the Kingdom through a narrow gate, but it leads to eternal life. Many go in by the wide, broad gate that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13–14). Christ also said if we are to enter into life, we must keep the commandments (Matthew 19:17).

“When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside, and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you where you are from.’ Then you begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets’” (Luke 13:25–26).

Yes, we are to keep God’s Feast days and Sabbaths, but if we are not applying what we are taught and should be learning when we attend, we do not establish a close relationship with God. We’re going through the motions and warming seats. We’re hearers, not doers. Again, we see that God does not recognize such individuals.

“But He will say, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity (lawlessness).’ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west,

from the north and the south, and sit down in the Kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last” (Luke 13:27–30).

If we do not establish a close relationship with God through prayer, Bible study and obedience, He will not know us and we will not “know the Lord.” Consequently, we will be thrust out of the Kingdom and not allowed to enter! In referring to the last two predominant eras, Christ contrasts Philadelphians and Laodiceans by referring to doors. “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens’” (Revelation 3:7). It is God who opens doors through which we enter. “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word and have not denied My name” (v. 8).

God will open the door for us, but it is up to us to strive to enter it. That applies not only to entering the Kingdom, but also preaching the Gospel of that Kingdom. We must take the steps to do so. Christ also refers to a door when referring to the lukewarm Laodiceans, but it is shut like it was for the foolish virgins.

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” (vv. 19–20)

We see here that the Laodiceans are shutting Jesus Christ out of their lives. They do not “know the Lord,” and the Lord does not know them. They evidently are low on oil like the foolish virgins because they are not letting Christ live in them, which He does by the Holy Spirit. They evidently, too, are lax in keeping God’s commandments. They may reason it is no big deal if they bend them a little.

Christ wants us to open to Him and allow Him to dwell in us. He does not want us shutting Him out of our lives. If we shut Him out of our lives, we are shutting ourselves out of the Kingdom of God and eternal life!

Christ said, “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out ...” (John 10:9). He also said, “Let your waists be girded and your lamps burning (ablaze with God’s Holy Spirit!); and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master (or Lord), when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat and will come and serve them” (Luke 12:35–37).

Yes, we get to know Jesus Christ by letting Him live His life of obedience to God’s law in us. He kept His Father’s commandments, and we are to do the same if we expect to “know the Lord.” The New Covenant does not mean we turn from God’s commandments. Rather it means that we keep them in the spirit and the letter. When Christ establishes the Kingdom here on earth, the Holy Spirit will write that law on everyone’s hearts and people will truly “know the Lord.”

“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD” (Jeremiah 31:31–32).

The Israelites and Jews broke the Old Covenant. The fault was with them (Hebrews 8:7–8). “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts, and I will be their God and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

Yes, God will write on human hearts His law, against which the carnal mind is hostile (Romans 8:7). We cannot come to “know the Lord” unless and until we keep God’s law and commandments and have them engraved in our minds and hearts.

“No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know me from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:34).

Rather than have Jesus Christ say to us, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” would we not much rather prefer to have our Lord and Master Jesus Christ say to us, I know you! You faithfully kept My commandments, regularly prayed and studied, getting to know Me very well. I recognize you. You stepped through the doors I opened for you and did not shut Me out of your life. “Come, you blessed of My Father, enter and inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” Matthew 25:34).

We can prattle constantly about “knowing the Lord,” but if we are not walking as Christ walked and allowing Christ to live His obedient life in us by keeping His laws and Sabbaths, we are living an empty existence and mouthing empty words. We are vainly repeating His name, giving Christ lip service without putting into effect what He expects of us. By keeping God’s laws in spirit and in the letter, we truly come to “know the Lord” in a very intimate relationship that will allow us to enter the Kingdom of God and eternal life! ☐

How Much Do We Really Love?

A lesson from the prodigal son

By Scott Winnail

When I was 14 years old, I witnessed something that *should* have left a profound impact on my young mind. I had been attending services in a church area with my parents and was impressed with the friendly and loving people in our congregation. To me, these brethren were wonderful examples of what true, caring Christians should be. One Sabbath however, this impression was challenged as a middle-aged man arrived at church for the first time. This man had apparently attended with our fellowship ten years earlier. I watched him enter the building, excitement and apprehension oozing from his smile and warm handshake. He was happy to be returning to the fold, but obviously uncertain about how he would be received.

Sadly, as I watched this man enter the building, a number of long-time members approached the minister and asked if he would be allowed to stay for the church service. They were obviously uneasy and perturbed by his presence. Apparently, the man had left the church years earlier on a sour note, having caused some type of problem. At this particular time, though, the man was returning to church, desirous of a fresh start.

I remember clearly, as a young teenager, wondering how

loving, long-time church members could want this sincere man to leave their fellowship once again, after being gone for so long. I felt like they were turning away someone who truly wanted to be there. Why were they not elated at his return and his apparent change of heart? It seemed to me at the time, hypocritical for these apparently spiritually mature adults to profess love and outgoing concern, while practicing something altogether different.

Fifteen years later, as I sat *proudly* in the newly formed Global Church of God, I found myself expressing a similar attitude toward people who found their way to this fellowship months after I had. I wondered how some of these individuals could dare attend church again with people whom they had so recently criticized, offended, and in some cases even betrayed. Although my opinions were not vocalized, I still viewed these individuals with distrust and contempt. And then... I remembered my experience as a young teenager and began to understand more deeply the lesson taught by Jesus Christ to His disciples in the parable of the prodigal son.

In Luke 15:11–32, Jesus Christ shares the story of a young man who asked his father

for an advance on his inheritance. After receiving the money, this young man left home in search of his destiny, squandering his inheritance on whatever his heart desired. Soon he was so poor and hungry that he was reduced to caring for pigs just to survive. At this very low point in his life, the son came to the realization that he would be better off working as a servant in his own father's house than working for a pig farmer. He began to display a repentant attitude, realizing that he had sinned not only against his flesh and blood father, but also against God. As the son returned home to beg his father's forgiveness, his father saw him coming from very far off. The father ran to his son, embraced him, and ordered his servants to prepare a feast in honor of his lost son's return.

Meanwhile, we learn that the father had another, faithful and obedient son, who was enraged by the royal treatment given to his long lost foolish brother. This righteous brother saw the rewards bestowed upon his foolish brother by an elated father and was jealous because *his* righteousness and honor of his father had not been equally rewarded. The righteous son could not understand why a brother, who had been given

his inheritance, and then squandering it, would be honored upon his return home. Ultimately, the father was forced to impart a piece of wisdom unseen by the righteous son. The father had rejoiced at the return of his son who was lost and now found (v. 32), because this son had thrown away his future, yet realized his mistake, repented,

who were excited to return to the fold, I was upset and bothered by past actions that I am certain God already forgave.

We have recently gone through another great trial in the Church of God. Many of us have made comments and done things that fall short of being *righteous* actions. God, on the other hand, promises to

the negative and selfish qualities of the self-righteous son?

I hope and pray that, next time I can display the type of spirit that is excited by the return of my temporarily lost brothers and sisters in Christ. I pray that God will grant me the character and the patience to welcome these people back with eager anticipation and true Christian love. As Passover rapidly approaches, I hope that we can all ask ourselves how we *should* and *will* act when faced with a future situation like the one mentioned above.

I am now in the same position that those long-time church members were in when I was 14 years old, and that gentleman walked through the church doors after being gone for many years. I pray that, should God allow me to be faced with a similar experience in the future, I will be able to set an example and react, not like the self-righteous son in the parable, but like the excited and loving father, glad to see the return of his long lost son.

Jesus Christ loves everyone so much that He was willing to die an unimaginable death for us all (John 3:16). In doing so, He granted all of us a second chance. Over the next few weeks and months perhaps we should ask ourselves what we will do *when* long lost brothers or sisters return to our fellowship, even if they might have set a poor example and caused offense. Ask yourself, “if *so and so* (you fill in the name) walked through the church door next Sabbath, how would I react?” Our Father in heaven has forgiven and forgotten our faults and has welcomed us to Him with open arms. Do we have the strength of character to do the same? Will we learn the lesson from the parable of the prodigal son?

What is *your* answer to the question, *how much do I really love?* ☐

Over the next few weeks and months perhaps we should ask ourselves what we will do *when* long lost brothers or sisters return to our fellowship, even if they might have set a poor example and caused offense.

and begged for forgiveness. What true father or parent could tell a child to hit the road after such a display of humility and lessons learned? What loving parent could tell a changed and repentant child that his or her past mistakes are *unforgivable*?

Have you ever felt like the self-righteous son in the parable? Have you ever asked yourself: “Why is this person coming back after all the trouble that he/she caused?” Have you ever found it difficult, if not impossible, to forget the past actions of someone? In retrospect, I can see that my own thoughts and actions resembled those of the self-righteous son. I conveniently forgot that I, too, can be lost or asleep, as *all* of the saints can be at one time or another, as noted in the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:5). When I should have taken the view of the loving father, excited to see the return of a long lost son (or in my case long lost brother and sister in Christ), I instead took the view of the unjust, unforgiving, and jealous son. Instead of being happy to see people

never leave or forsake us as long as we cling to Him (Joshua 1:5–6). He promises to forgive us as long as we approach Him with a repentant spirit (Matthew 6:14–15; Acts 2:38; Psalm 51). As we move through the winter months and begin to prepare for the Passover season of reflection and introspection once again, we should ask ourselves “how much do I really love?” Paul told the Corinthians that love rejoices in truth, it does not behave rudely, it is patient and kind, and ultimately it never fails (1 Corinthians 13:4–8). In John 15:12, 17, we are admonished to love each other as Jesus Christ loves each of us—verses that we read at the Passover service every year.

God has allowed yet another opportunity for our true Christian love to be tested through recent church trials. We will all likely have the opportunity to once again test the parable of the prodigal son, as God calls more people to return to our fellowship. The question is, will we demonstrate the love of the forgiving father, or will we exemplify

“I Made a Mistake!”

By Rod McNair

The Bible says, “Be you therefore perfect” (Matthew 5:48), and “go on to perfection” (Hebrews 6:1). We must be striving to become like God, having His character, overcoming faults and shortcomings, learning to be and think like Him. But, all too often, we read those verses and misunderstand them.

They should not make us afraid of making mistakes. Especially for young people, fear of making mistakes is what, all too often, holds people back from developing their whole potential and learning new skills. What about you? Have you ever held yourself back from trying something new, because you were afraid you would make a mistake, look silly, sound stupid?

Two Types of Mistakes

Do not get me wrong—there are some mistakes you should NEVER make. We just need to differentiate between the two: (1) SKILL MISTAKES, and (2) MORAL MISTAKES.

What is a skill mistake? It is simply the mistakes we make when we are learning how to do something. Ask anyone who plays a musical instrument if they have ever played a wrong note. Ask any athlete if they have ever struck out, or missed a layup. Even the Michael Jordans and Babe Ruths sometimes make mistakes—it is part of the game. And it is especially true when we are first learning the skill.

What new skills have you wanted to learn, but were too afraid to try? Was it because you were afraid of making a mistake? Whether it is a baby learning to walk, a student learning to speak a foreign language, or a Spokesman Club participant learning the art of public speaking, new skills take practice! And until the skill becomes second nature, we make mistakes. Mistakes are part of the learning process. When we make mistakes, we go back and try again, to correct that mistake.

Does this mean “moral” mistakes are good? Absolutely not! Moral mistakes—having to do with

breaking God’s Laws—should be avoided at ALL TIMES. With moral mistakes, there is sin involved. And with sin there are always consequences. It is not a sin to hit your thumb with a hammer when driving nails—but it IS a sin to curse when you hit your thumb with the hammer!

Some moral mistakes include lying, stealing, and hurting your body with drugs, lusting after someone, fornication, envying, having pride, and coveting.

Some moral mistakes are listed in Galatians 5:19–21. They are moral mistakes, because they are the breaking of God’s laws. They will keep us out of God’s Kingdom. The difference is important to understand.

Do Not Take Counsel of Your Fears

Whenever you are learning a new skill—be it a math problem, calligraphy, or playing a musical instrument, you are bound to make mistakes. Language teachers will tell you persons willing to try, even though they make mistakes, will learn more quickly. A person who does not risk making a mistake will never really learn the language.

One of the best pieces of advice I ever got, as a teenage musician, was “don’t be afraid of making a mistake!” In other words, go ahead and try your best. If you make a mistake, the worse that can happen is it is pointed out to you so you can correct it. I can remember other players who were so afraid to make a mistake that you could barely hear them playing their instrument! They were cowering behind their music stands, terrified that someone would hear them make a mistake! But those kinds of musicians never really progressed because the instructor could not hear them enough to help them.

Do not be afraid of making a mistake, looking foolish or saying the wrong thing! Fears of failure, fears that our peers will laugh at us, and fears that we will look silly keep us from developing our personality and potential. Proverbs 29:25 says: “The fear of man bringeth a snare.

But whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe" (KJV). It is easier to make a mistake now (whatever age you are) and learn how to do it, than to hide the fact and have to learn later. Imagine if it is embarrassing to learn to ride a bike at five, how much more embarrassing it will be to wait and learn when you are 35!

But notice, once again, the point is not having free rein to commit all the sins we want. Solomon contrasted having fear in man with trust (and obedience) in God. Exodus 18:21 says that future leaders should be people who "fear God." Philippians 2:12 says: "Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." God wants us to fear the consequences of sinning. He wants us to be

afraid of breaking His Laws, even when there is no one around to catch us.

There is a natural fear of falling off a cliff or running out into a busy intersection. That is healthy fear—it keeps us from making LIFE-THREATENING mistakes, like walking too close to the edge of the cliff, or running in traffic.

Moral mistakes must ALWAYS be avoided. They carry lifetime consequences. But skill mistakes are a part of life. Be bold! Do not be afraid! Now is the time to throw yourself into as many opportunities as you can. It will make your life more interesting, more exhilarating, and more fun.

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Samson and Samuel

(Continued From page 9)

initial defeat, the Israelites asked Phinehas and Hophni to bring the Ark of the Covenant from the Tabernacle out to the battlefield. Doing so over the objections of the elderly Eli, his corrupt sons brought the Ark. The battle ended with the utter defeat of Israel, the capture of the Ark by the Philistines, and the deaths of Phineas and Hophni. When Eli heard the news, he had a stroke, fell off a seat on a raised platform, and died.

God took care of getting the Ark back from the Philistines by sending plagues upon them. For the next 20 years the Ark was in the Israelite town of Kirjathjearim. At the conclusion of that time, Samuel called the people together and exhorted them to repentance and renewal of their covenant with God. The result was the utter defeat of the Philistine army, coming right on the heels of Samson's collapse of the temple of Dagon, which destroyed much of the Philistine leadership.

Over the 34 years following, Samuel judged Israel making a regu-

lar circuit throughout the course of a year. By the time he was in his mid-seventies he had made his sons judges, but they did not conduct themselves with the same integrity as did Samuel. The people used this as an excuse to demand a king so that they could be like all of the nations. God told Samuel, who was feeling hurt and rejected by the people, that he had faithfully served for virtually his entire life, that he was to anoint a king for the nation (1 Samuel 8:7). "They have not rejected you," God told him, "they have rejected Me."

Samuel continued faithfully to serve God and God's people. He anointed Saul as Israel's first king. He sought to advise Saul and to help him succeed. Saul, however, was not really committed to truly obeying God and disqualified himself from the kingship. When God finally rejected Saul from being king, He used Samuel to anoint David, a man after His own heart, to become Israel's next king. Throughout Samuel's long life of just over a hundred years, he remained faithful and loyal to God, regardless of the circumstances around.

Samuel and Samson made quite a contrast during the course of their

lifetimes. One was eagerly responsive to God, focused on doing the work that God had called him to do, while the other was self-indulgent and self-focused. They both started life with a special calling from God; one developed a deep, personal relationship with God early, while the other waited until his life came crashing down around him before he did so.

Today, all of God's people, at baptism, have made a vow of special consecration to God. Some are like Samuel in taking their vow seriously. Others are like Samson and take their vow lightly. You and I, in studying the contrasting story of two Nazarites, must answer the question of which example we will follow. Will we choose to learn our lessons of life the easy way by seeking God's will and eagerly responding to it, as did Samuel? Or, will we go through life allowing self-will to run rampant and wonder why God is not blessing us more?

Now and in the years ahead, our approach to doing God's Work and in how we conduct our own personal lives will demonstrate which Nazarite we have chosen as a role model. What about you? Have you picked Samuel or Samson? ☒

Trials and Persecutions

(Continued From page 3)

situations gradually dawned on me. And so I was able to be married, I was able to rent and later buy a home and have a somewhat “steady” existence—although I’ve had to change my place of residence *about 20 times* in the last 47 years!

But God has been very good to me, and to most of you, in that we have *very seldom* experienced beatings, imprisonments and harsh physical persecution. Most of us have been able to live in some of the wealthiest and most blessed nations of the world. Our father, Abraham, made it all possible by his *living FAITH* and by his *obedience* to God (Genesis 26:3–5).

How much longer will this time of relative peace and tranquility last?

Practically no one in the political or media world had any idea how FAST the Eastern European nations would brake away from the Soviet Union, how quickly the two Germanys would be re-united and how fast the Berlin Wall would come down! Neither did they dream—only a few years ago—of the speed with which the Soviet Union split apart.

Sometimes, world conditions CHANGE with astonishing swiftness!

So as we preach the Gospel of the soon-coming Kingdom of God with increasing power, the political and religious leaders of the world may attempt to CRUSH the Work of God. Just as the religious “authorities” began to harass the Apostolic Church after the death Stephen, so it may be with us within the next several years. Notice what happened back then: “Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a GREAT PERSECUTION arose against the church which was

at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:1–4).

If a number of the leaders of the Living Church of God are beaten or imprisoned, some of you now reading this may be called on to help carry on the Work! But you—and all of us—will have to be truly close to God. We will all have to exercise a degree of FAITH and COURAGE above and beyond what we have ever done before. We will need to know and to “know that we know” that our God is REAL. That Jesus Christ our active Head and High Priest is ALIVE at the Father’s right hand.

In the trials and persecutions to come, we will *all* have to BELIEVE the Apostle Paul’s inspired statement: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). And we will need to constantly be filled with hope as we realize that God really does cause even unpleasant things to turn out, in the end, for GOOD. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Brethren, I am NOT necessarily expecting unusual trials or persecutions to befall us within the next year or two. But NEITHER did I expect the former Soviet Union to crack up so quickly—though Herbert W. Armstrong had, indeed, predicted that this would eventually occur.

So we do need to “be prepared.” We do need to understand that trials and persecutions will not always be somewhere “over there.” We *must* realize that the United States and British-descended peoples will bear the brunt of the *GREATEST national punishment in human history* (Matthew 24:21–22).

We must also realize that just as ancient Israel had to “suffer through” the *first three* of the ten plagues on Egypt (Exodus 7 and 8), so today God’s people may indeed have to suffer to a degree during the early stages of the Great Tribulation. Even then, when the final attack and captivity on the “whole house of Israel” (Ezekiel 39:25–29) takes place, *only those who are truly “Philadelphian” in spirit will be taken to a place of safety!*

In the next several years, God will truly “refine” His people and “purge” His people to make them spiritually “white” (Daniel 11:35). The years ahead are NOT a time for complacency. They are NOT a time for continued dwelling in “comfortable” homes, with “comfortable” jobs and carrying on a “comfortable” lifestyle. Those years are probably coming to an END for most of God’s faithful and zealous people.

Therefore, beloved brethren, *study again* the book of Acts. *Understand* what God has allowed in the past, and *be prepared* for the future. And be determined NEVER to give up! For our Head and Savior promises: “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown” (Revelation 3:10–11). ☞

Worship and Service (Continued From page 2)

ing the sick, casting out demons—helping, encouraging, GIVING of Himself all day long. Truly, He was the “light” that God sent into the world to show us how to live. As we “feed” on Jesus Christ through careful, unhurried, earnest Bible study and meditation (John 6:57), Christ will become more and more REAL to us. As Abraham became the “friend” of God (James 2:23), so each of us can become a genuine “friend” of Jesus Christ. Because we will constantly be SEEKING Him, *servicing* Him and *walking* with Him. Then, as we build this constantly increasing back and forth relationship with Christ our active Savior—and with the Father—we will be building that sense of “oneness” with God, that LIVING faith which made Abraham truly God’s “friend.”

Dear brethren, if *all* of us dedicate ourselves to *passionately* seek an extremely close, loving relationship

with the One who gives us life and breath, then the POWER of God’s Spirit will be felt within the Church as never before. Then our PRAYERS will be answered more quickly and more powerfully than ever before. Then, as true *brethren* in the body of Christ, we will FORGIVE each other and we will LOVE each other as never before.

Jesus said, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:7–8). Again, if we “feed” on Christ, we *will* ask according to God’s will. Then God *will* answer our prayers and use us ever more powerfully as His ambassadors. Then, also, we will bear MUCH “fruit” and our lives will really count for something very special because we will collectively—*through Christ’s Spirit within us*—have an *enormous impact* on this world in preparing for the “fifth Kingdom,” the literal Government of God soon to be set up on this earth.



LYC 2000—APPLY NOW!

Are you interested in fun, friends, adventure, and learning about how God’s way works? If so, start planning now to be a part of Living Youth Camp 2000! Applications are now being accepted for this two-week trek to Northwoods Christian Camp near Pickford in Michigan’s beautiful Upper Peninsula. Many of our teens enjoyed this camp last year and still remember the deep blue skies, the scent of clean fresh air, Hercules the fawn, and the warm fellowship with teens of like mind.

Planned activities include flag football, dancing, Fitness for Life, obstacle course, canoeing, fellowship, cookouts and Christian Living classes. Also planned is the overnight camping trip to explore the deep blue waters of Lake Huron and the beautiful Les Cheneaux Islands.

Arrival day for camp will be July 25, with departure August 7. The cost for camp this year will be \$325 for the first camper in a family, \$300 for the second and only \$275 for the third. Applications are available by writing to: Living Youth Camp, 2200 Cherokee Strip, Blue Springs, MO 64015. You may also request an application by phoning 816-228-2035, or by e-mail at: lyc@pars.net.

High School workers must be 16 years of age and be willing to work hard. The cost for High School workers will be \$100. Counselors must be at least 18 years of age and be able to arrive for camp no later than noon on July 23. Young adults and other adults who wish to work as counselors, activity staff, or support staff, should request an application as soon as possible at the above address, phone number, or e-mail address.

News of the Work

Focusing on a Relationship with God

By Gary F. Ehman

“This has been a year of consolidation, and now we are ready to go. Hopefully this next year we will see real growth, more than ever,” Dr. Roderick C. Meredith told Headquarters staff in a final 1999 briefing of how the Work has progressed over the past year.

Reporting on income, growth in the local churches, the last Council of Elders meetings and new approaches for doing the Work, Dr. Meredith said after a year of operation the Work can now start comparing its growth, month after month, with itself rather than with the previous year with Global.

While the news of the Work is very encouraging, he said there is a need for ministers and members alike to focus on their relationship with God. “If we really do take seriously our calling and put other things aside in our lives, God can use us wonderfully in His Work.”

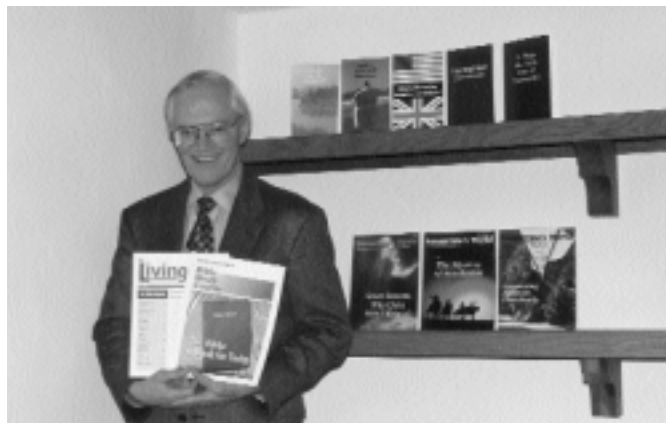
Using the example of Mary and Martha, he said we need to put aside

the things that clutter up our time and our lives.


“Martha thought that what she was doing was important, but Mary was sitting at Jesus’ feet listening to Him. Here was God in the flesh teaching the way of life and Martha was busy with much serving. This is not bad, but there are times in your life to sit down, block out TV, block out other things and devote more of your time just to listen to Christ,” he said.

He said Mary chose the needful thing. “And that is what we have to do. We, you and I in this room, are the bond slaves of Christ. We do not belong to ourselves; Christ bought and paid for us and we are His servants in His Work at the Headquarters

of His little Church, yet He can use us powerfully as a Gideon’s army to get this message around the world. We have to have that focus,” he said.



NOT A SMALL BEGINNING—Dr. Roderick C. Meredith stands with a display of Living Church of God literature generated over the past year. Represented in the display are three issues of *Tomorrow's World*, seven issues of the *Living Church News*, five booklets and one lesson of the *Bible Study Course*.

In concluding remarks, Dr. Meredith said, “We are entering a new millennium. We have awesome opportunities ahead of us if we do our part and are filled with, and are led by, God’s Spirit.” 

Dr. Meredith’s Australian Trip Postponed

Last month the Church announced the proposed visit this year by Dr. Meredith to Australia with a stopover in New Zealand for the Days of Unleavened Bread. Circumstances now make it

advisable for that trip to be postponed until a future date yet to be determined. Dr. Meredith is very desirous of visiting the brethren wherever they are around the world, and regrets this postponement.

Report from the Treasurer

By Fred Dattolo

Last year, with the help of God and with the tithes and offerings received by the Church, we were able to make tremendous progress. We revived the telecast on January 31, 1999 and in less than a year, reached about one million households in the United States with the Gospel! To the viewers that responded, we mailed 40,000 booklets, 16,000 audio-tapes and 61,000 copies of *Tomorrow's World* magazine.

This year, the budget—or financial plan—is based on a conservative income projection of \$6.39 million in the United States (about a 2.4 percent increase over 1999's income of \$6.24 million. Within that level of income, we have been able to allocate a significant increase of funds devoted to preaching the Gospel. We plan to publish six issues of *Tomorrow's World* magazine (last year we did three) and distribute it to a much larger mailing list. We have also doubled the booklet printing budget and plan to publish up to twelve lessons of the *Bible Study Course!* And, we have increased our postage budget by 50 percent to accommodate the larger mailings.

Furthermore, in March, the budget includes funds for a general conference of our ministers worldwide for the first time since 1996, which will be hosted in San Diego. Such meetings, as Mr. Armstrong recognized, are very uplifting, encouraging and unifying for the ministers and wives in the field who are working very large circuits.

Overall, this year's budget has approximately 40 percent allocated to preaching the Gospel. (A couple years ago, it was only about 34 percent). The portion of this year's budget allocated to feeding the flock has decreased slightly, down to 52 percent. Only 8 percent is allotted for administrative support—which is the lowest in recent memory. Administrative support includes all the costs associated with the functions of accounting, contract management, donation processing, finance, human resources and payroll, insurance administration, legal, procurement and risk assessment.

Feeding the flock is the largest “chunk of the pie” because of the variety of programs needed to sustain and nourish the local congregations and prospective members asking for visits. Funds are needed for field ministers, fleet cars, travel, hundreds of Sabbath meet-

ing halls, duplication and distribution of audio and video taped sermons, third tithe assistance, annual festivals, youth camp, conferences, and cash subsidy of needy international offices. Most of these functions, by their nature, require large allocations of funds.

Nevertheless, we have still been able to significantly increase funds for preaching the Gospel. Such costs include television time, telecast production costs, answering service, duplication and distribution of telecast video tapes (to television stations), audio-tapes (to listeners) and printing and mailing of magazines and booklets.

You may be wondering how we are able to increase print media and mailing budgets so much. Some costs, such as capital equipment purchases, will go down dramatically (last year was a “start up” year). Other costs such as legal fees and certain insurance policies should also go down. Also, as we become more efficient, “per unit” costs decrease. For example, a little more than a year ago, it cost 33 cents to mail a first class letter. Now, with official not-for-profit status, sorting techniques, and bar-coding, our Mail Processing department can mail first class letters for less than 12 cents per piece! Another example is magazine printing. As we increase the circulation, total cost goes up, of course, but not proportionately to the numbers printed. The larger a print run is, the smaller the cost per magazine becomes.

Even though we have balanced the budget with a very small increase in income, we have several reasons to anticipate that income will grow as new co-workers are added. We certainly expect it to be so. As the income grows, we plan to add more commercial television stations. And, we earnestly desire to give our employees a small cost-of-living adjustment. Most of our very hard-working and dedicated employees and ministers have only had one adjustment since 1996.

Brethren, I hope this picture of the financial plan for year 2000 encourages you. We are stretching our resources to do all we can to hasten the return of Jesus Christ. As He said, “the harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:37–38). So, we need to do just that—and *thank you* for doing your part to support God's Work! ☐

Regional Pastor Visits Papua New Guinea

By Kinnear Penman

On December 7, the Regional Pastor for South East Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Bruce Tyler and I concluded a very successful pastoral visit to Papua New Guinea. It has been almost three years since Mr. Tyler has been able to schedule such a trip.

Papua New Guinea is a large, mountainous, island nation north of Australia. Because of its difficult topography, roads are poor or lacking and land travel is arduous and dangerous. Since it became an independent nation twenty-five years ago, lawlessness has increased and there is much inter-clan fighting and robbery of travelers.

Many western churches are established in Papua New Guinea. Most are stridently competing for members. The whole nation testifies to the rampant confusion in which Satan excels. "Christianity," animism and spirit worship each play a part in the beliefs and practices of most citizens. Rival "Christian" congregations have been known to do physical battle with each other and recently a death resulted from such a skirmish.

It is from this environment that God has called people who are zealous to live His way of life. Members in PNG are very supportive of the work we are doing and desire to do all they can to assist the proclaiming of the gospel to their nation. By their lives they set fine examples to their village communities. The interest of neighbors is aroused in the gospel that God's Church brings.

Our first contact with Living Church of God members was in the town of Wewak. This is on the north coast and is just a few miles from Aitape, which was last year devastat-

ed by a tsunami resulting from an offshore earthquake. Thousands were killed in Aitape and the whole coast lies open to such a disaster.

In Wewak a video group meets headed by Peter Devis. Mr. Devis was the first [then] Global Church of God member in PNG. He responded to a newspaper advertisement offering the *World Ahead* magazine and immediately recognized that this was the same truth and body (Ephesians 4:4-6) into which God had called him years before. Through Mr. Devis many other members of God's Church were brought into contact with our fellowship and were able to free themselves from our apostate former church. Mr. Devis has faithfully served God and His people by organizing the Feast of Tabernacles. He has also looked after business affairs for the church in Papua New Guinea and has personally provided for needy members.

Mr. Tyler took a computer with him from Australia and was able to install it and arrange an e-mail service for Mr. Devis during this visit. This will greatly enhance communication and help Mr. Devis in serving the members. Later in the visit, in recognition of Peter Devis' on-going service to the church as well as his personal qualities, Mr. Tyler ordained him as the first Deacon in God's Church in Papua New Guinea.

Also in Wewak we were able to meet with Florian Asu who had traveled down from his village of Nuku. Florian is totally deaf, having lost his hearing to an infection at age eighteen. Florian can speak, but his hearing is through a combination of lip-reading, sign language and written messages. He is totally supportive of

the Work and is an outstanding example to others of God's Truth and way of life. We met several other prospective members while in Wewak.

From Wewak we traveled over three hours by road to Maprik. Maprik is a small community in the mountains, 80 miles (130 km) from Wewak. This stretch of road is occasionally subject to banditry, but we needed to make the trip because no flight was available. One man, expecting our visit, had fasted for three days imploring God to ensure us a safe trip. His prayers were answered and we arrived safely.

At local guesthouse in Maprik we had rats and frogs competing to share our room with us but we managed to barricade entry points. What we could not exclude was the din, on Friday night, of a local charismatic church. They broadcast their entire service of preaching and raucous "tongues" speaking through a loudspeaker system so that the whole valley could hear. The next morning another church organization similarly shouted its message far and wide through the town.

This objectionable behavior seems to be the norm for other churches throughout the country. Even in the capital, Port Moresby, there was newspaper criticism of churches broadcasting their "tongues" across several suburbs.

On the Sabbath we drove and walked further into the hills to the village of Saulik where there is a congregation of about thirty Living Church of God members and their families. Mr. Tyler preached to them as well a crowd of interested onlookers. He spoke on why God's Church was different from other churches in

its beliefs and practices, basing them on the Bible rather than the traditions of men.

The brethren here are very supportive of the work the church is doing and long to see the Truth proclaimed in their region. They had earlier presented us with a gift to be passed on to Dr. Meredith when we next see him.

Mr. Tyler returned to Saulik two days later for a special Bible study with the brethren. They have had limited contact with the ministry and they were eager to have many of their questions answered as well as receive instruction on how to better represent God's Church in their community.

From Maprik we traveled by four-wheel-drive vehicle to Bapmukum village where lives Benny Gitbakun. Benny had waited many years to meet with a minister of God. The journey to Bapmukum entailed fording a river, plowing through high tropical undergrowth, pushing through bogs and crossing a bridge of very doubtful integrity. Our vehicle carried spare planks to replace those that were missing from the bridge.

Mr. Tyler had been invited by several local churches to preach at their Sunday morning services, but felt it not wise to do so on this occasion. However, he was able to have a Bible study with another smaller group in Bapmukum and spent a couple of hours teaching of the Kingdom of God and answering their questions.

Later in the week, in the ocean at Wewak, Mr. Tyler baptized Benny Gitbakun into God's Church.

Our trip was disrupted at this point by an airline that had sold eleven too many tickets for a flight on an eighteen-seat plane! We could

not get on the flight and had to bypass planned visits to interested subscribers in Mount Hagen and Goroko.

We flew direct to the city of Lae where the Genora family lives. There are also several others who have



A NEW DEACON AND NEW MEMBER—Mr. Peter Devis, left, was recently ordained as a deacon in the Papua New Guinea Church. He is shown with Benny Gitbakun, one of two new members baptized by Mr. Bruce Tyler on a tour of the island nations in the South Pacific. Mr. Devis has provided leadership for PNG, coordinating the Feast and looking after Church business affairs.

recently left WCG. These will all be able to regularly meet on the Sabbath as a video group.

On Sabbath morning we met for a bible study. In the afternoon, following lunch, we met again for an extended question and answer session. Daniel Goglau, whom we had not been able to visit in Mount Hagen because of the flight disruption, joined us for the Sabbath. He had been desperate to meet us and had hastened down to Lae from the Central Highlands. It was evident that Daniel was ready for baptism and Mr. Tyler baptized him in the hotel swimming pool early that evening.

Daniel also told us of a group of more than 20 people who meet each Sabbath near the town of Kundiawa. We made arrangements to supply them with regular sermon and *Tomorrow's World* tapes and promised to visit them as soon as possible. Most of these people are attendees of our former association, aware of the

loss of truth of that body. They are very keen to again be taught the full truth and to have a part in God's Work.

Another gentleman we met and who kept the Sabbath with us is also part of a similar size group which is not happy with what they are being told. We will also try to help these people as well.

Unfortunately we were not able to meet up with all our members in PNG due to difficult and expensive travel. There are very few roads and most travel has to be done via plane, helicopter or walking.

The members of the Living Church of God in Papua New Guinea are an example to us all. They have very few of the material possessions we mistakenly consider to be necessities. But they remain zealous

for the truth, loyal to God and committed to doing all they can to support the preaching of the gospel to their countrymen.

We were overwhelmed by the dedication by our members there to the Truth. They fast often and long for Dr. Meredith and those at headquarters; for God's blessing and for the Work to be done—and this in spite of the sometimes intolerable heat and humidity.

Papua New Guinea is a witness to the crying need for Christ's kingdom to be established soon on earth. Our daily prayer, "Thy kingdom come," must never become a ritual utterance. Please remember always that for all humanity, save the very few God calls, the coming of the Kingdom of God is the only way people will be rescued from Satan's enslavement.

Please remember to include the PNG members in your prayers. They do always remember us in their prayers. ☐

In Loving Memory

Mr. Hilbert Miller, a member of the Living Church of God, died suddenly of a severe stroke on December 29, 1999. He was born on February 14, 1919 in Wellesley, Ontario, Canada. At 80 years of age, he was still very active in his business and visiting with family and friends. Mr. Miller was a peacemaker and always had a kind word and encouraging remark for everyone he met. He left behind a legacy of humility and faith, love and concern for his neighbors and family. His wife, Ilse, a son and daughter, two grandchildren and a brother survive him.

Mr. Tony M. Smith, a church member for 31 years and a local elder since 1982, died on December 11, 1999 after a nine-month battle with brain cancer. Due to his employment Mr. Smith served in several church areas including: Huntsville, AL; Jacksonville, NC; Murphy, NC/Chattanooga, TN and Houston, TX. In 1991 he moved to Pensacola, FL and most recently served as an elder in the Living Church of God until his death. His love and excitement for the truth and doing the work motivated him and was a positive example to many. He was buried in his hometown of Cowan, TN. Mr. Dan Hall conducted the funeral service on December 15 that was attended by friends, family and church members of varied congregations. His wife Chris of Pensacola, FL, and son Mark of Baton Rouge, LA survive. The Smith family

wishes to express their sincere gratitude for the many prayers, cards, e-mails and phone calls of support during this difficult trial.

Mrs. Beatrice Bryce died peacefully in her sleep early Tuesday morning, Jan. 4, 2000. She would have been 97 years old on Feb. 2. She and her husband, Emery, were first baptized in the Sardis church in 1923. Several years later they became members of the Radio Church of God, when they found Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's broadcast on the radio. They were rebaptized in the Worldwide Church of God in 1971 because according to them "some things were left out" in their first baptism. They were long time members of the Lufkin, Texas congregation. Mr. Bryce died in the faith in 1978. Mrs. Bryce came into the Global Church of God in 1995 because, as she put it, "Dr. Meredith is carrying on with the Work and Truth just like Mr. Armstrong did." Last November, she came with the Living Church of God right from the time it began and attended the Lufkin Church when she was able. Beatrice is survived by six of nine children, 28 grandchildren, 49 great grandchildren, and 11 great great grandchildren. She leaves a permanent legacy of unshakable faithfulness to God and His Truth, deep love and devotion to her extended family and a keen interest in the lives and well being of her many wonderful friends.

Birth Announcement

Jerry and Sue Ruddlesden, of San Diego, California, are happy to announce the birth of their son **Geoffrey Christian** on December 29, 1999 weighing in at seven pounds and 21 inches long. He has one sister, Ana, age five.

Bible Study Course **Reminder**

Living Church of God members will not automatically receive the *Bible Study Course* lessons. Those who want to receive the lessons **MUST ENROLL**. Lesson Two will be available in February. Members do not have to request copies of new booklets as they are published; they will be sent automatically. To enroll, use the stitch-in card in the January-February *Tomorrow's World* magazine, or send your request by e-mail to media@cogl.org. Be sure to include your address and Personal Identification Number (PIN) in your e-mail.

Announcements

Prayer Requests on the Web!

For brethren who have Web access, a Church member has created a personal Web site through which prayer requests and updates may be submitted and shared.

Navigate your browser to URL:
<http://www.lcog.net/prayerrequests/>

You will find a form for submitting prayer requests, and a comprehensive list of prayer requests and updates, suitable for viewing online or for printing out and sharing with brethren who do not have Web access.

New LCN schedule

This February 2000 issue of the *Living Church News* is the first in our revised mailing schedule. Members will continue to receive six issues per year, but on a schedule that is balanced better with the *Tomorrow's World* schedule.

Members will receive the March-April LCN in late March or early April, and will receive subsequent issues at two-month intervals. The March-April 2000 *Tomorrow's World* will be mailed in late February or early March on a similar two-month interval.

In the past, many members received both publications within a week or two of each other. With the new schedule, most members should receive them approximately a month apart, so that most will receive a new Church magazine or newsletter every month.

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