

# THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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## Kings and Mountains

*Dear Brethren,*

Carol and I recently traveled by car to New York for Passover and the beginning of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, looking forward to joining more than 200 brethren who shared a few days together as one large family. Long road trips are challenging, and to amuse ourselves we alternated between conversation, listening to the one family-oriented comedy station on satellite radio, and enjoying some music.

A station on the radio devoted to Elvis Presley played a mix of recordings and stories of the deceased “King of Rock and Roll.” There is a mystique about him in the minds of many. His music was part of my early years and I personally like his voice, but the virtual worship of the man and the desire of his most ardent fans to live in the past is a bit over the top. Enjoy his music if you care to, but *please*—the man was mortal. He is no god! He is dead!

On our return to Charlotte, we listened to another station that I also found curiously interesting. It featured a rerun from a 2015 program celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beatles concert at Shea Stadium in Queens, New York. It is understandable that Bruce Morrow, now known as Cousin Brucie, sees this as the pinnacle memory of his life. He was privileged, along with Ed Sullivan, to introduce the Beatles to an electrified, frenzied crowd of 55,600.

Callers contributed their memories, and it was evident that this was *the* highlight of many lives, even though the screams of teenage and “tween” girls drowned out the music. How interesting that, for some, the Beatles concert at Shea Stadium in 1965 was the greatest event of their lives—greater than the day of their marriages, the births of their children, and certainly, greater than any event involving their relationship with their Creator!

Most of us are a little thrilled to be close to someone of fame, even if we fail to admit it. I personally enjoyed seeing Vice President Mike Pence and nationally syndicated radio hosts Dennis Prager and Larry Elder up close at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Nashville this year, and even got a picture taken with Larry Elder. So, I’m not here to throw stones at individuals who find excitement in being at special events and seeing those few individuals who rise to the top of their field of endeavor.

But one must keep everything in perspective. We should never lose sight of the big picture. We are counseled not to put our trust in men (Psalm 146:3–4). This does not mean that we cannot trust people in a general sense—we do that every time we board an airplane. But no man can give us eternal life, as the context indicates. Man is mortal, and only God gives immortality!

Music is wonderful and it affects us in powerful ways. It may be positive or negative in its impact. In the case of the Beatles, they began the “British Invasion” in 1964, wanting to “hold your hand”—but it was not long before they put a marijuana joint in it. Their contribution to the drug culture is a matter of record, and that culture has done great harm to Western nations. The Beatles were not alone. Many, if not most, of the rock bands of the late ’60s and ’70s played an active part, as did the Vietnam War.

It is one thing to enjoy the music of talented individuals (although talent is a debatable matter when it comes to many rock bands), but it is important to keep everything and everyone in perspective. The overall contribution many of these bands make is not positive. The drug culture they promote in their music and by their personal examples costs us dearly.

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### *Inside This Issue...*

*Understanding the Holy Spirit... p. 3*  
*The Blessings of Being Single... p. 5*  
*Pentecost—Why Count 50 Days?... p. 8*  
*Living Education Begins... p. 12*  
*Prepare for a Great Feast!... p. 13*

*Husbands on Housetops... p. 18*  
*Local Church News... p. 20*  
*Advancing the Work at the NRB... p. 22*  
*Commentary... p. 24*

Tens of thousands fry their minds on drugs, and millions die prematurely. Families and marriages are torn asunder—and consider the monetary expense associated with waging the war on drugs and treating its casualties!

We hear a lot about the growing opioid epidemic, and its toll has been staggering. As of 2016, more Americans are now dying from the scourge of drug overdose each year than died in the entirety of the Vietnam War! Consider the irony in this. Many war protesters took the lead in the “free sex” and drug culture of the ’60s and ’70s, and today, we are reaping what was sowed. Yet, many of those who introduced such misery to our world are viewed with reverence!

Ezekiel reveals to us that Lucifer was a musician (Ezekiel 28:13). As such, he knows how to use music in his plan to de-

## Man does not know how to fill the emptiness that comes from a life without God and without a purpose greater than the here and now.

stroy mankind. He will fail in the end—but for now, he uses music to separate children from their parents and to promote destructive lifestyles. Some rappers promote violence against women and police. Some country music promotes alcohol abuse and adultery. Some rockers and pop stars promote drugs and a lewd lifestyle of disrespect for parental and other authority. Some musicians are anarchists at heart and have no comprehension of a purpose to life, other than cramming as much fun into it as possible, even if that fun kills you!

Satan shows no loyalty or compassion to those who promote his values. Consider this partial list of celebrities who paid the ultimate price, due to complications brought about by their satanically self-destructive lifestyles: Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, John Belushi, Kurt Cobain, Amy Winehouse, Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, and yes, even the “King of Rock and Roll.” This is only a partial list of

the more than 100 famous musician deaths due to drug or alcohol abuse since the 1970s, when drugs became a large part of the music industry.

Man does not know how to fill the emptiness that comes from a life without God and without a purpose greater than the here and now.

Looking back a decade after their 30-minute concert at Shea Stadium, John Lennon recalled, “I saw the top of the mountain when we were at Shea.” In other words, it was downhill from there. Four years after that concert, the Beatles broke up, never again to play together as a band.

How shallow celebrity worship is, compared to that which God offers us. I can only imagine the excitement and thrill it must have been that muggy night at Shea Stadium, but it was a temporary, emotional experience which could never last. No matter how hard we try to relive some “top of the mountain” experience, it cannot be duplicated. It will never fully satisfy (Isaiah 55:1–2; Ecclesiastes 1:8; 2:10–11).

God reminds us in His word and through life experiences that we are mortal. We are here in the flesh for a very short time, but it is enough time to let Him know we want His Way to be our way. He gives us hope for an eternal future. There is a crown laid up for those who love God and endure the temptations Satan throws at us (James 1:12). We have a living hope—a hope that the world does not know (1 Peter 1:3–5).

David proclaims in Psalm 16 that his hope is in God. He ends the Psalm, “You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (v. 11). We accepted God’s new covenant at baptism, just as Israel accepted God’s covenant on Pentecost at the foot of Mount Sinai. We proclaimed our trust and allegiance to Him. Our mountain is the Kingdom of God, and when we are born into His family, that will be the beginning of something far greater than a fleeting emotional experience from the past!



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## Understanding the Holy Spirit

**T**he Holy Spirit is a mystery to churchgoers everywhere, and occasionally for some members of the Church of God. Strong opinions on the subject abound, but for many there are more questions than answers. What is the Holy Spirit and what is its purpose?

On the night in which He was betrayed, Jesus promised His disciples that He would send to them the “Helper”—in Greek, *parakletos*. After telling them that if they loved Him they would keep His commandments, Jesus went on to say, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:16–18).

We sometimes see these verses with a certain uneasiness, feeling that we need to explain away the Trinity doctrine by inserting “it” instead of “He” when referring to the Helper Jesus would send. On the surface, taken by themselves, these verses, along with those in John 16:7–15, may seem to indicate to some that the Holy Spirit is a person, whom people identify as the third person in the Trinity, because of their past religious indoctrination. But is that really so?

### The Challenge of Translation

We often explain that many languages use gendered words, even if the object in question is not a living thing. Each noun in the language, such as the words for *chair* or *car*, will have a masculine or feminine character to their spelling, articles, and pronouns.

Spanish provides a helpful example. In English we say “John’s chair,” but in Spanish it is “la silla de Juan.” *La* is a feminine article matching *silla*, a feminine noun; but the English word *car*, on the other hand, is a masculine Spanish word: *el coche*. *El* is a masculine article that accompanies the masculine noun. In Spanish, words that end in the letter “a” are normally feminine, whereas words that end in the letters “o” or “e” are often masculine, though there are exceptions to both. There are also neuter nouns in some languages, which are neither grammatically masculine nor grammatically feminine. The reasons for this vary from language

to language, and in many cases there seems to be no rhyme or reason—it’s just the way it is! The English language really does not provide a good comparison.

Greek is similar to Spanish, with some nouns requiring masculine pronouns. Translators from Greek to English often translate masculine or feminine pronouns with the neuter word *it*, to avoid using *he* or *she* when speaking of chairs, tables and other objects.

All of this relates to the gender-pronoun problem with the *parakletos* passages in chapters 14 and 16 of the book of John, since, although the Holy Spirit is not a person, the word *parakletos* is masculine in Greek. However, simply changing the pronoun from *He* to *It* still leaves us with an awkward and, for some, uncomfortable reading of these scriptures, especially in John 16:13—“However, when He, the Spirit of truth [the Helper or *parakletos* of v. 7], has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” Even if we exchange *It* for *He*, the words in this verse can still come across as though Jesus is speaking of a person, primarily due to the way He speaks of the Helper—or, in the *King James Version*, the Comforter. The very words *Helper* or *Comforter* seem to communicate a sense of personhood! So how are we to understand this in the light of the rest of the Bible, which makes it clear that the Spirit is *not* a person? The answer is simpler than you might expect.

### When Is a “He” Not Really a “He”?

In both John 14:16–18 and 16:7–15, Jesus used a *literary technique* known as personification to describe the Holy Spirit. Another biblical example of personification is found in Proverbs 8: “Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice? She takes her stand on the top of the high hill, beside the way, where the paths meet. She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, at the entrance of the doors” (vv. 1–3). Neither wisdom nor understanding are persons, but each is described as possessing *personal characteristics* in this passage. The personification of wisdom and understanding continues throughout the chapter: “I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge and discretion.... Counsel is mine.... By me kings reign....” (vv. 12, 14, 15).

This device of giving inanimate objects the characteristics of a person is also found in the beginning verses of Proverbs 9: “Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars; she has slaughtered her meat, she has mixed her wine, she has also furnished her table” (vv. 1–2). Whether or not we understand that this form of expression is *called* personification, we all understand the meaning of these passages. We would never conclude that wisdom or understanding are persons! So, when Jesus spoke of the Comforter, He was not contradicting other passages of Scripture that clearly show the Holy Spirit is the projection of the power and mind of God instead of a person.

Translators retain the masculine pronoun for the Greek *parakletos* when referring to “Comforter,” for one good reason and one not-so-good reason. The good reason is that *parakletos* is a masculine noun and requires a masculine pronoun in the Greek original. Grammatically, *He* is a correct literal translation, and corresponds in a way to Solomon’s use of *she* and *her* when he was personifying wisdom in the Proverbs we saw earlier. However, if one does not understand the bigger picture—that Jesus is clearly *personifying* the Holy Spirit in this passage—then the use of the pronoun *He* can be misleading. (See chapter one of my booklet, *John 3:16—Hidden Truths of the Golden Verse* for further clarification regarding the heretical Trinity doctrine.) The not-so-good reason is that translators often see this passage and are comfortable using the pronoun not because of their understanding of personification, but because of their misunderstanding of the nature of the Holy Spirit.

No, the Holy Spirit is **not** a person, and is **not** the third person in the non-existent Trinity!

Understood rightly and read in the light of the rest of the Bible, these two passages do not disagree in any way with the rest of God’s Word!

### Then What Is God’s Spirit?

So, what is the Holy Spirit? What is its purpose? And what does it do for us? Quoting from our Statement of Fundamental Beliefs,

The Holy Spirit is the very essence, the mind, life and power of God. It is not a Being. The Spirit is inherent in the Father and the Son, and emanates from Them throughout the entire universe (1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 139:7; Jeremiah 23:24). It was through the Spirit that

God created all things (Genesis 1:1–2; Revelation 4:11). It is the power by which Christ maintains the universe (Hebrews 1:2–3). It is given to all who repent of their sins and are baptized (Acts 2:38–39) and is the power (Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 1:6–7) by which all believers may be “overcomers” (Romans 8:37, *KJV*; Revelation 2:26–27) and will be led to eternal life” (*Statement of Fundamental Beliefs*, “The Holy Spirit”).

But let us look further, especially as the Holy Spirit relates to Pentecost. I often read a passage from Isaiah 55 to individuals seeking baptism. Part of the passage says, “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’” (vv. 8–9).

Some take this passage as a complete statement regarding man’s ability—or inability—to understand the mind of God,

Yes, the spiritual man can understand even “deep things of God”! What follows in this passage is, first of all, an explanation of what makes man different from animals. **There is a spirit given to man that animals do not have!**

but it does not reveal the whole story. A similar passage found in 1 Corinthians 2 gives further insight. It is easy to focus on verse 9, where it tells us, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” Again, some carelessly take this to

mean that no one can understand the mind of God. This, of course, is partly true, but it is not the whole picture, as explained in the verses that follow. “But God has revealed them [the things of God] to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God” (v. 10).

Yes, the spiritual man can understand even “deep things of God”! What follows in this passage is, first of all, an explanation of what makes man different from animals. There is a spirit given to man that animals do not have! The Apostle Paul then compares the spirit in man to the Spirit of God, and how it makes the begotten children of God different from those who do not possess His Spirit. “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God” (v. 11). Yes, we *can* know the things of God, if the Spirit of God dwells in us (v. 12)! What an incredible revelation!

What did Isaiah mean when he wrote, “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD” (Isaiah 55:8)? The prophet is speaking to the unconverted, as the context beginning in verse 1 shows. The carnal

# The Blessings of Being Single



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By **Scott D. Winnail**

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**H**ow did you react when you read the title to this article? Did it frustrate you, or did it pique your interest? Are there really *blessings* that come with being single, or is the author just trying to sugarcoat a very challenging season of life?

Being single is a unique time of life when a person is no longer a child, is an independent adult, and has a tremendous amount of control over his or her future. Some singles are at a place in life where they have flexibility with their income, may have excess free time and fewer demands on their time, and can make many decisions quickly without consulting others. They may also have more youthful vigor and ambition. For those who are single later in life, they may find “youthful vigor” a little elusive, but most of these same characteristics may still apply.

The reality is that singlehood is a unique *season* in life that may bring with it certain challenges and difficulties. But, when viewed from a godly perspective, this season of life can also bring with it many blessings and opportunities. This article will highlight and discuss several blessings and opportunities often found in the *season of singleness*, and the opportunity many singles have to capitalize on these

blessings as they work to “redeem” this important time (Ephesians 5:15–16) and use it for maximum benefit of themselves and others.

## **Perspective**

First, it is essential to remember that *marriage is not the finish line*—God’s Kingdom is! God placed us on earth and called us to help *preach the Gospel to the world* and to *grow in godly character*. Regardless of our stage in life, God has these two important expectations for all of us.

James, the Lord’s brother, poignantly observed that life is “a vapor” (James 4:14). It is *fleeting* and so is opportunity. Therefore, we need to be sure we are using well the time on earth with which God has blessed us! During his own season of singleness, the Apostle Paul also observed that we can learn to “be content” in *whatever* state we find ourselves (Philippians 4:11)—and Paul, no doubt, had most of the same struggles today’s singles have. That doesn’t mean “settling” for our current state, necessarily, but we should clearly recognize our blessings, be thankful for every day we are given, and be at peace with our lives (Colossians 3:15) *while* we seek to grow and overcome (2 Peter 3:18)!

It is encouraging to recall that many of the heroes and heroines of the Bible were single during the times in their lives when they were most useful to God! Remember Jeremiah (for

a time), Daniel and his three friends, Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul, Philip's four virgin daughters who prophesied, Timothy (for a time) and others. In fact, Paul focused a portion of his comments in 1 Corinthians 7:25–40 on the benefits of being single! Even Christ recognized that being single gives a person greater capacity to serve (Matthew 19:12). Those who learn to be content and apply themselves during their time as a single can be powerful tools in God's hand!

So, what are some of the blessings available to those living in the *season of singleness*?

### **The Ability to Experience Abundant Life in a Godly Way**

As mentioned earlier, some singles have more flexibility with their time and financial resources than many of those who are married and have children. Those resources can provide opportunities for travel, for education, and for other special experiences that may not be feasible within the time and financial constraints that marriage and family bring.

Many working singles have relatively more Festival tithe than those who are married with families. Because of this, singles may be able to travel and experience Feast sites in more expensive locations. Singles may even consider traveling to a distant Feast site that normally receives very few visitors, perhaps in a developing nation. In doing this, singles can serve their distant brethren in a very special way. Singles can also use their excess second tithe to take brethren out for meals during the Feast—brethren who may not be able to afford to do this on their own. In some cases, loving singles have helped others with limited resources who may not have been able to attend the Feast at all, by donating their excess second tithe for use in the Festival assistance fund.

Many singles visit other Church congregations for family or singles' weekends or even when there is no special occasion, just to broaden their own perspectives, meet new people and see different places. Extra financial resources also make possible the ability to try out new restaurants and new types of food, experience different adventures, and even assist others in doing the same. The season of singleness is also a time when a man or woman may be in the best position to *save* extra money for the future. Extra time and money is a blessing that many singles experience, should be thankful for, and should take advantage of while the opportunity exists. There are many memorable and unique opportunities that come during the season of singleness that may only be available during this special season in life.

### **Time to Study and Grow**

In 1 Corinthians 7:35, Paul observed that single brethren have the ability to “serve the Lord without distraction.” Many younger singles work at a job, but at the end of the work day,



and often on weekends, they possess the time to focus on deeper Bible study and spiritual growth. They are not drawn in multiple directions by the needs of a mate, children, and in-laws (all of which can also be blessings). Singles who manage their time well and are mindful concerning potentially wasteful distractions have the ability to focus powerfully on spiritual growth. They have more time to get to know their Bibles, study Church literature and utilize many other educational materials from the Church. They have more time to pray and more opportunity to fast. Paul also observed, regarding singles in the Church, “He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:32).

Additionally, singles often have more time available to grow in other areas of their lives and to prepare for their future—even their future as husband and father or wife and mother. What can be learned and studied and whose counsel can be sought in order to prepare well for these future roles? What can a single man do to lay the foundation for a future career? Many young singles long for marriage and may pursue this state before doing the spiritual, intellectual and financial groundwork that will help to foster a happy and peace-filled marriage. Young singles should use this time in their lives to gain their education or training for their future life. A younger single man should do all he can, while in this season of life, to prepare to be a truly godly husband and father who is well equipped to take care of his wife and children. A younger single woman should do all she can during this season of life to prepare to be a truly godly wife and mother who is prepared and equipped to serve her husband and children (Proverbs 24:27). For those who are currently single, the question is: How well are you using your time and energy to serve God and to grow and overcome spiritually? And how well are you using it to prepare for your future?

### The Ability to Serve

Many singles in God's Church have more time, energy and flexibility than those who are married and have families. As Paul noted, "But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife" (1 Corinthians 7:33). Paul's comments in no way disparage the marriage state. The truth is that married brethren have *different* and *additional* obligations before God and *as a result* a diminished capacity to serve God's people and His Work in other ways. Singles who work during the day often have time in the evening or on the weekends to serve others. Whether making phone calls or sending cards to shut-ins, aiding a widow in cleaning her home or yard, babysitting for a young couple who need some private time together, spending extra time serving in a local Church congregation, taking another single on a fun date, or just sitting with and encouraging someone—singles are usually in a unique position to give more of their time to others, regardless of their age.

Compared to those who are married or rearing children, some singles have more flexibility with their time to *drop everything* and lend their assistance when they see a person in need. Maybe this is helping someone move from one home to another, or maybe this is serving in the local congregation when an unexpected need arises. Single men are in a position to serve at church dances in a special way. They can dance with all those single ladies who may be sitting on the sidelines at a dance, waiting to be asked. Single men can also

look around the congregation for single women who may be sitting alone or with each other during Sabbath services. Ask a lady or two to sit with you during services, and *mix up* who you sit with each week. Singles can serve others in many ways that are simply not as feasible for those who are married with children.

**Young singles should use this time in their lives to gain their education or training for their future life. A younger single man should do all he can to prepare to be a truly godly husband and father. A younger single woman should prepare to be a truly godly wife and mother who is prepared and equipped to serve her husband and children.**

How well are you using your time to serve others? Are you lonely and in need of more attention from and interaction with others? Do you feel like you are by yourself much of the time? Perhaps it is time to ask yourself how you might *use* some of this time to serve others. For those who are doing this, be sure to keep up the good work! God desires for us to spend time

fellowshipping together (Hebrews 10:24–25). He really does want us to use our time to serve each other in love (Galatians 5:13), and singles are usually uniquely positioned to do this!

### Conclusions

The Bible clearly teaches that men and women were not generally designed to be alone (Genesis 2:18). God *intentionally* designed us male and female in order to build marriages and families and to learn from and grow through these institutions. Most singles should plan for and take action to move toward marriage—and it is never too late to do this. However, the season of singleness should not be viewed resentfully or with contempt—to be *endured* until marriage finally occurs. Christ certainly did not look at it that way, and as we work to put on more of His mind (Philippians 2:5) we should not look at it that way either.

God's Church needs single members and married members alike. Each brings blessings and benefits to the body of Christ! Every season in life can be a blessing in its own way and can be used of God to serve specific purposes. The season of singleness can bring certain challenges, but it is also full of blessings and opportunities *if we seek and take advantage* of them. Being thankful for and redeeming the time as a single is not only wise and fulfilling, but it is also pleasing to the God who designed this special time in life. In addition to Paul's words concerning being content, God also reminds us through Moses, "So you shall rejoice in every good thing which the LORD your God has given to you" (Deuteronomy 26:11). To those in the season of singleness: Make the most of it, because just like the summer or winter, it will pass and another season will begin. (L)





# Pentecost— Why Count 50 Days?

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By **Peter G. Nathan**

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**P**entecost differs from the other Holy Days. Rather than being given a fixed day of the calendar for its observance, we are instructed to count 50 days.

We rightly associate the day of Pentecost with the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19) and the receipt of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). Yet the name Pentecost means “the fiftieth”—or to use the biblical injunction, “count 50.” Is there anything we can learn in the observance of that Festival by counting 50 days? Why do we need to wait 50 days for Pentecost? Should it not immediately follow the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread? Pentecost pictures the giving of God’s Spirit, which we desperately need, once we have accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as our Passover and seek to put sin behind us. When we baptize a person into the body of Christ, do we tell them, after laying hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit, “50 days from now you will receive it”? No. We pray that they receive it *at that very moment and time*—and they do! And yet, in terms of the Holy Days, God says, effectively, “You’re going to wait 50 days.” There’s a 50-day break between the Days of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost.

So why count 50?

While any answer we may find will fall in the realm of speculation, at the same time, numbers are important to God! And that includes the number 50. So consider this article a meditation on 50 and Scripture, prompted by God’s curious Pentecost command.

## **Is There Anything Special About 50?**

Some may say that 50 days was the time it took to walk from Egypt to Sinai. That could be a possibility. Obviously, the journey took about 50 days. But still, why 50 days instead of 49? Alternatively, others suggest 50 days were needed to finish the first harvest each year. But then, why not 49 or 55 days, just in case it was a bad year and more time was needed for the harvest?

Many commentators pass off the need to count 50 days as something Israel learned from the Babylonians. But, unable to find anything from the Babylonians relating to the number 50, they then dismiss the matter as having no consequence. Yet each of God’s Holy Days are designed to teach multiple lessons in their depiction of God’s plan. With Pentecost, we understand about being firstfruits, about God’s Law, about God’s Spirit, and about the importance of and relationships among each of these concepts.

So then, is there anything we can learn from having to count 50 days? The Eternal’s instruction in Leviticus 23:15–16 about the counting of this Festival was not just a casual comment. It forms a major part of the instruction. What lesson might be learned from the Eternal’s choice of timing? Of all the books on “biblical numerology” that can be consulted, not one of them has any useful comment about the number 50. It is as though no one has given it any thought.

There are two other occasions in the Bible in which the number 50 is directly used as part of the Eternal’s instructions to Israel. So, there are three separate occasions, including Pentecost, for which the number 50 is used by God. What can we learn meditating on them with Pentecost in mind? Let’s examine them.



### **The Jubilee—Release After an Appointed Time**

In Leviticus 25 we find the number 50 being used. This chapter deals with the sabbatical year and with another very important occasion, known as the Jubilee. When seven sabbaticals were completed, a span of 49 years, there was another year to be set aside, the fiftieth year, known as the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8–15).

And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each one of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family. That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine. For it is the Jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat its produce from the field. In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his possession. And if you sell anything to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor's hand, you shall not oppress one another. According to the number of years after the Jubilee you shall buy from your neighbor, and according to the number of years of crops, he shall sell to you (Leviticus 25:8–15).

The Eternal was setting up a system of land ownership, whereby land was never alienated from a family. If a landowner fell upon hard times and needed to “sell” the land, it was never permanently *sold*. Today we would call it a lease. The value of that lease was based upon the number of years left until the Jubilee, when it would return to the original family's ownership. That lease value would depend upon what the person buying the lease could expect to make from the land, in terms of harvests, before the Jubilee. The Jubilee was to be a means whereby oppression was avoided within the land (vv. 12–15). Even after years of hard times, a family could always count on the eventual return of their land to them.

Notice the instruction in Leviticus 25:8 in light of what we have read about counting the Day of Pentecost (which you can compare in Leviticus 23:15–16): “Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath”—that is what we do at Pentecost. But on this occasion, it is a Sabbaths of years. “Seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years” (Leviticus 25:8–9). And then, we are to consecrate the fiftieth. Three elements are stated

that are common to Pentecost and the Jubilee—you have to count. Seven Sabbaths must pass for it to be complete; and then, on the fiftieth, the time is consecrated to the Eternal. In terms of the Jubilee, it's a year—not just one day, as on Pentecost. So then, 50 is used of Pentecost in a manner complementary to that of the Jubilee.

Sadly, the last Jubilee that is believed by some to have been kept was at the time of Josiah and Jeremiah. But here was the instruction that the Eternal gave. Of course, none of our nations are a divine theocracy as Israel was, and no Jubilee years are kept nationally today. But it is the word of God, and such years will be a feature of the Millennium under the reign of Jesus Christ.

But Moses hadn't finished the Eternal's instruction about the Jubilee. As we carry on in this chapter, we will find how the God family has talked about the land and how it is to be taken care of, as well as the way in which the people would be provided for during the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee year.

### **Redemption Before the Time**

The Eternal establishes that the land is His (v. 23) and that we are only strangers and sojourners. If leased, the land can be redeemed *ahead* of time by the action of a relative or a redeemer (vv. 24–25). Thus, the God of Israel made a provision whereby a person *didn't have to wait* for the end of the 50 years. Something could happen in the interim that could restore them to their divinely given inheritance. If a person had no one to redeem it for him, then he could, if able, redeem it himself. The price of redemption had to be based on the remaining years until the Jubilee. The Eternal's desire was that people be able to return to their possession (vv. 27–28).

It doesn't take us very long to realize that the Holy Days picture a plan that involves a Redeemer. Notice how the Apostle Peter addresses our calling:

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:13–16).

Peter has just stated the theme of the book of Leviticus: being holy, or how to be God's holy people (Leviticus 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:7).

He continues:

And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear

[remember: we are sojourners in this land]; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers (1 Peter 1:17–18).

You and I have been redeemed from the “aimless conduct received” from our fathers. A person who lost his land because of the aimless or negligent conduct of his fathers could have his land redeemed. In the case of *our* redemption, we are not redeemed with silver or gold:

...but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God (vv. 19–21).

So, Peter brings in other ideas here, right out of Leviticus 25. He talks about our being sojourners, redeemed by the blood of Christ. If you’re redeemed, that means you don’t have to wait till the end of the 50 years, as it were. Is it too much to say that there appears to be a parallel in Leviticus 25 between those who were redeemed ahead of time and the firstfruits of God’s Family? Those firstfruits have an opportunity to move into a relationship with the Eternal ahead of time, rather than waiting until the end, when the Jubilee would take place.

The Apostle Paul understood this aspect of redemption as well (Ephesians 1:3–11).

In Hebrews 9, the aspect of the redemption provided through the sacrifice of Christ is connected directly to our ability to have an eternal inheritance—or eternal life (Hebrews 9:11–15).

If we go back to Genesis 3:22–24, we find that humanity was cut off from eternal life. They could no longer have access to that which was necessary for eternal life, or an eternal inheritance. So, humanity no longer had access to the Tree of Life and the eternal life it represented.

But the Apostles speak in terms of us having access to eternal life because of our redemption by Christ (see Romans 8:8–14).

The book of Ruth is traditionally read on Pentecost. Probably the most important word used throughout the book of Ruth is the Hebrew word *goel*, which means “redeemer.” It refers to Boaz and his relatives, who had the privilege of being able to redeem Elimelech’s land, rather than waiting for the Jubilee. Boaz acted out the type of Jesus Christ as a redeemer, intervening on behalf of his relatives. This aspect of “redeeming” has a direct link to the Day of Pentecost, because *we’ve been redeemed*—to have eternal life, which will be given at

the return of Jesus Christ to those who built godly character through the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit.

If we go back to Leviticus 25:19–22, we can see the keeping of the Jubilee in terms of the way in which the land would operate. The result of obedience is safety, ample food supplies and blessings from God. In providing these promises, the Eternal is pointing us back to the blessing that He would have provided to humanity if they had eaten from the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, rather than from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. What the Eternal is describing concerning the land during the Jubilee is the opposite of the curse that came upon mankind because of eating the wrong tree (Genesis 3:17–19).

This passage in Leviticus speaks of a changed condition. It talks of a relationship between humanity and the earth that has been modified by God in a very profound way. Why? Because the Jubilee represents the time of humanity’s return to the right foundation for life. When Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they decided for themselves and their descendants the foundation upon which they would build their lives.

And so, the Jubilee and its possibility of redemption within those 50 years represents the opportunity to return to the right foundation. Nebuchadnezzar’s vision, interpreted by God through Daniel, presents a picture of this change, with the heavenly stone “cut out without hands” (Daniel

**Boaz acted out the type of Jesus Christ as a redeemer, intervening on behalf of his relatives. This aspect of “redeeming” has a direct link to the Day of Pentecost, because we’ve been redeemed—to have eternal life.**

2:34). God wants to place us on the right foundation. Those called as firstfruits have the opportunity to be redeemed early and to build their lives on the right foundation.

### **Connecting “50” to the Temple—and Us!**

The third occasion on which the number 50 is used is found in relation to the building of the Tabernacle. How might this tie in?

Exodus 26 and 36 give the instructions for the building of the Tabernacle. The Eternal spends *chapters* dealing with the details of the design of the Tabernacle and then repeats it again with the construction. To most readers, it is absolutely arcane or irrelevant. But is it?

There were layers of curtains or coverings: five of fine linen and then five of goat hair. Each curtain was joined to the next of its type by 50 loops and 50 clasps (Exodus 36:8–12).

Upon what were the curtains placed? Later in the chapter, we learn of the structure of the Tabernacle, and verses 20 and 21 tell us about the size of the uprights that provided the structure. There were to be twenty boards on each side, and then ten across the end—thus, fifty uprights. So, we see the number 50 becoming a very relevant number in terms of the Tabernacle: A portable temple or dwelling place for God was supported on 50 uprights, and it was covered with curtains

**We have an interesting situation. We keep Pentecost by counting 50 days, just as 50 years are counted for the Jubilee. The Eternal commanded that they both had to be counted in a similar manner, which suggests a connection worth considering.**

held together by 50 clasps on each curtain. You might say the fabric of the Tabernacle was defined by the use of 50. (The same holds true for the future temple that Ezekiel saw in vision. The use of 50 cubits or a multiple thereof is a defining feature in Ezekiel 40–47.)

Hebrews 9:11 states that Jesus Christ came not in terms of a tabernacle of man’s making, but of *God’s making*. And as Paul states in the book of Hebrews, Moses was instructed to be very careful about the work of creating the Tabernacle, because what they were building at Mount Sinai was modeled on God’s throne. So, there was no room for artistic license, so to speak. In fact, as we read through the instructions about the Tabernacle, we find that the Eternal used His Holy Spirit to guide and direct those who had the oversight of the building of the Tabernacle to accomplish His purpose (Exodus 31:1–6).

In what way was the heavenly tabernacle more perfect? It wasn’t in the design aspects. It was rather that it was not made by *human hands*.

Paul addresses the subject of the temple to the church in Ephesus. He stated: “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). How do we come into this relationship? We have already been told in the first chapter that it is because of the redemption of Christ. We have been freed—redeemed—from the bondage of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit which works in the children of disobedience. We now have the opportunity of being part of the household of God, which means we are built as part of God’s temple (Ephesians 2:19–22).

With the building of the Tabernacle, the Eternal instructed that the people give an offering for its creation

(Exodus 35:4–19). The people gave very willingly and were so generous that Moses had to say enough, and no more (vv. 21–29; 36:4–7). Why did the Eternal want Israel to give an offering for the Tabernacle? It seems reasonable to believe that He wanted them to see themselves as being part of the fabric of God’s dwelling place. In other words, a man could say to his children and family, “We gave so much gold or other commodity for that tabernacle. We are a part of that.” Or a granddaughter could say, “My grandmother helped weave those curtains. I’m part of it. My identity is bound up with that tabernacle.”

God says *we are to be part of His temple*. We as the Church are to be the household of God. We are to be like a building. But we are built by the action of God’s Holy Spirit, working with our minds. That building has to be built upon a specific foundation, that of the prophets and the apostles, with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19–20).

So, when Paul speaks of this in Ephesians, he’s talking about God’s word. This is the foundation God has provided upon which our lives are to be built. So once again the number 50 brings us back to the aspect of right foundations on which God wants our lives to be built—not just individually, but collectively. That foundation affects and speaks to every part of our lives. Since *we* are now the building God is creating, we were, in a sense, foreshadowed by the Tabernacle and the Temple, which were characterized by “50” in various aspects.

So, we have an interesting situation. We keep Pentecost by counting 50 days, just as 50 years are counted for the Jubilee. The Eternal commanded that they both had to be counted in a similar manner, which suggests a connection worth considering. The 50 years of the Jubilee existed so that people could be redeemed and go back to the right starting place, this time building on the right foundation. You and I have been redeemed before the “50-year period,” so to speak, is completed. You and I are part of the first-fruits, and we’re redeemed—not to do our own thing, but to build and to *be built* upon that right foundation. Why? Because we have been called to be part of the building our Father is creating: His Temple, built on a very specific foundation that gives us an opportunity to seek *life* rather than death. Pentecost clearly portrays God’s Holy Spirit being given so that we can have that life. So, we are, in a sense, taken back to the Garden of Eden and given the opportunity to eat of the Tree of Life, which symbolized God’s Holy Spirit.

The counting of 50 days can provide us with much food for thought. (LH)

# Living Education Begins



**B**eginning in August, our new Living Education program will pick up the educational baton from Living University. Over the past eleven years, our staff and faculty at Living University have worked tirelessly to provide a high-quality educational experience through its online framework. With more restrictive regulations in place, more and more states were blocking non-accredited colleges and universities from offering classes within their borders. Ultimately, the decision was made to fold the Living University class material into a new program, Living Education.

The Living Education program is focused on building a solid foundation of biblical knowledge and understanding for the membership of the Living Church of God. Three specific areas will be targeted.

First, we have established **Living Education-Charlotte**. This will be a Charlotte-based, face-to-face program geared toward young adults, both male and female. It will be an affordable, nine-month, full-time program for those aged 18–30. For our young men and women just completing high school, this program will prepare them for further education and a career. Our aim is to help them build a solid understanding of the word of God, preparing them as defenders of the faith and pillars in the Church. Mr. Ken Frank, Dr. Scott Winnail and I will serve as our core instructors and mentors, with guest instruction from Mr. Gerald Weston, Mr. Richard Ames, and other ministers here at Headquarters. The classes will focus on a basic understanding of the Old and New Testaments, the fundamental doctrines of the Church, and applying the Bible in daily life. Students will also have the opportunity to build friendships with like-minded young people, through lots of activities in the Charlotte area. The Charlotte congregation provides a warm welcome to students and the staff at the Headquarters office creates a positive and enthusiastic environment in which students will learn and grow.

The **Living Education-Online** program will be an innovative approach toward online learning. Beginning in August, members and prospective members of the Living Church of God will have the opportunity to enroll and participate in classes such as “Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ,” “Acts of the Apostles,” “The Epistles of Paul” and more. Each month will bring the introduction of a new class, covering topics from Christian Living to Prophecy. There is no cost for enrolling in a class. Upon enrollment and the start of the class, a new lesson will be made available every three days over the course of the month. Each lesson will include a video/audio component, a study guide, a written lesson and access to additional material. These lessons are ideal to listen to in the car while travelling, and the study material is perfect for your personal Bible Study. In addition, each area pastor will receive an Instructor’s Guide for each month’s class, with additional information to help individuals in their studies. For those without Internet access, the pastor will have the ability to print out lessons. This approach, linking pastors and members together in a study of the Bible, should be a powerful tool in building and binding congregations together!

The third component of our program will involve a continuing education program for our ministry. As an educational support system, **Living Education-Ministry** will strengthen our congregations by strengthening our pastors.

Living Education is about building the Church through education. As learners together, we grow stronger in our ability to serve God and His Work.

Whether you want to begin the free online classes or find out more about our new on-campus program in Charlotte, it all starts in the same place: [LCGEducation.org](http://LCGEducation.org). Come join us!

—Jonathan McNair

# Prepare for a Great Feast!



*The Feast of Tabernacles is only a little more than four months away, and excitement is already building! God designed the Holy Days to be highlights of the year, and the Feast of Tabernacles—with the excitement of traveling and joining brethren from all over the region or world—presents a special opportunity to appreciate God’s blessings to us. In this article, we’ll discuss why we prepare for the Feast and some specifics in what we need to do.*

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By **Rod McNair**

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**A**ny major endeavor takes preparation. Planning for three or four hundred brethren to spend more than a week together takes forethought and planning. As you prepare for worshipping God this year, we have compiled a list of the major things we all need to remember for planning purposes. Please take note of the following items as you prepare for this Fall’s Holy Days—and have a great Feast!

## **Feast Site Registration (Ongoing)**

Festival registration is open! All members and guests of the Living Church of God are encouraged to register for the site of their choice. You can find all the information you need at the Festival website ([fot2018.lcg.org](http://fot2018.lcg.org)) or by going on [lcg.org](http://lcg.org) and clicking on “Feast of Tabernacles” on the left menu. Once you are successfully registered (or if your transfer request has been approved), you may begin making housing arrangements.

## **Which is My Assigned Feast Site?**

How do you know which Feast site you are assigned to? Assignments are according to congregation. For easy reference, we have included the U.S. congregation site assignments below:

### **La Quinta, California**

California: *Banning, Concord, Eureka, Fresno, Garden Grove, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego*  
Nevada: *Las Vegas, Reno*

### **Snowmass, Colorado**

Arizona: *Phoenix, Prescott Valley, Tucson*  
Colorado: *Colorado Springs, Denver, Grand Junction*  
Idaho: *Boise*  
New Mexico: *Albuquerque, Santa Fe*  
Utah: *Layton*  
Wyoming: *Casper, Saratoga, Thermopolis, Wheatland*

### **Panama City, Florida**

Alabama: *Athens, Birmingham, Montgomery*

Florida: *Ft. Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Lake City, Ocala, Pensacola, Tampa*

Georgia: *Columbus, Thomasville*

Louisiana: *Baton Rouge, Ferriday, Lafayette, Monroe, New Orleans*

Mississippi: *Columbus, Jackson, Laurel, Ocean Springs*

Puerto Rico: *San Juan*

### **Kauai, Hawaii**

Alaska: *Anchorage, Homer*

### **Northern Kentucky**

Indiana: *Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, Knox, Terre Haute*

Kentucky: *Berea, Louisville*

Michigan: *Kalamazoo, Lansing, Traverse City*

Ohio: *Akron, Cincinnati, Columbus, Lima*

West Virginia: *Bluefield, Charleston, Morgantown*

Tennessee: *Chattanooga, Clarksville, Crossville, Etowah, Knoxville, Nashville*

### **Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri**

Arkansas: *Fayetteville, Fort Smith, Little Rock, Russellville*

Iowa: *Des Moines, Dubuque, Keokuk*

Kansas: *Chanute, Wichita*

Missouri: *Columbia, Joplin, Kansas City, Rolla, St. Joseph, St. Louis, Springfield*

Nebraska: *Lincoln, Omaha*

Oklahoma: *Oklahoma City, Tulsa*

Tennessee: *Memphis*

### **Seaside, Oregon**

Montana: *Great Falls, Helena*

Oregon: *Myrtle Creek, Portland*

Washington: *Richland, Seattle/Tacoma, Tonasket*

### **Hilton Head, South Carolina**

Georgia: *Atlanta, Augusta, Blairsville, Braselton, Macon*

North Carolina: *Asheville, Charlotte, Fayetteville, Greensboro, Jacksonville, Raleigh, Statesville, Sylva*

South Carolina: *Anderson, Walterboro*

Virginia: *Bristol, Norfolk, Richmond, Williamsburg, Winchester*

### **Marble Falls, Texas**

Louisiana: *Shreveport*

Texas: *Abilene, Amarillo, Austin, Beaumont, Big Sandy, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Houston, Lufkin, Midland, San Antonio, Temple, The Valley*

### **Mount Snow, Vermont**

Connecticut: *Danbury*

District of Columbia: *Washington*

Maine: *Waterville*

Maryland: *Baltimore, Salisbury*

Massachusetts: *Auburn*

New Hampshire: *Tilton*

New Jersey: *Hammonton, Rahway*

New York: *Albany, Binghamton, Corning, New York City, Plainview, Rochester, Syracuse*

Pennsylvania: *Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, Tannersville*

Rhode Island: *Providence*

### **Lake Geneva, Wisconsin**

Illinois: *Chicago, Joliet, Peoria, Springfield*

Minnesota: *Duluth, Minneapolis*

North Dakota: *Bismarck*

Wisconsin: *Appleton, Merrill, Milwaukee, Wisconsin Dells*

### **You Can Sign Up (and Pay) for Activities Starting August 1**

Activity Registration opens for most Feast sites on **August 1**. So, on that date, you can begin signing up for activities at the Feast site for which you are registered (and have been approved, if transferring). Payments for activities can also be made, for most sites, when you sign up for activities. To sign up for activities, simply go to [lcf.org](http://lcf.org), and click on the "Feast of Tabernacles" link to gain access to registration and payment pages. If you have any questions, please contact your Festival Site Coordinator.

### **Tithe of the Second Tithe**

The "tithe of the second tithe" is a practice that the Church has followed for decades. The general principle is that, in the command to keep a Festival tithe, there is a mention of "the Levite." What this means is when we save our second tithe, we should contribute a small portion of it to aid in the actual logistics necessary to set up the Feast. This small portion is used to pay for hall rentals and other expenses associated with arranging for the annual Festival observances, as well as to help brethren with limited funds attend the Feast of Tabernacles. If you haven't yet sent your "tithe of the second tithe" to Headquarters, please do so. Your generosity is much appreciated.

### **Preparing Messages for the Feast**

Each year, the Festival Office, in conjunction with International Offices, sets up a speaking schedule for each Feast site. The goal of the Festival Office is to provide our members and guests with inspiring and encouraging messages about the coming Kingdom of God. Truly, the sermons and sermonettes at the Feast are the highlight of the season! With that in mind, we plan to have all speaking assignments completed and distributed by **August 1**, and we ask all speakers to send the titles of their messages to their Festival Site Coordinators

by **August 31**. And, for the rest of us, please remember to pray for all of our Festival speakers and their messages!

### **Online Payments Close on Wednesday, September 12**

Online pre-payments for Festival activities for U.S. sites must be made by **8:00 a.m. (Eastern Time Zone), Wednesday, September 12**. This will give the Accounting Department at Headquarters time to disburse funds to the U.S. sites. If you have any questions about paying for activities at your site, please check with your Festival Site Coordinator. For international sites, please check with your Festival Site Coordinator for more information.

### **Sabbath Times and Contact Information for the Day of Atonement and the Sabbath of September 22**

A chart listing the places, times and contact information for Living Church of God services on the Day of Atonement and on the Sabbath of September 22 will be posted on the *MyLCG* website. Log in to your *MyLCG* account at the following address to access the chart: *cogl.org*. We hope this information will be helpful for you as you plan your travel, especially so you can minimize travel on God's Sabbath.

### **Serving at the Feast is Fun!**

Thank you to all our brethren who have volunteered or will volunteer for the many necessary functions at the Feast. Volunteering for service is a crucial function that enables the Feast to run smoothly—and it's fun, too! If you have any questions about what service area you signed up for during registration, you can log in to your Feast registration and see it there. If you volunteered and haven't yet heard what area you will be assigned to serve in, please contact your Festival Site Coordinator. You can find his contact information by going to the Festival website (go to *lcg.org*, click on "Feast of Tabernacles," and follow the links).

### **Schedule of Services**

This year, the Opening Night service will be **Sunday evening, September 23**. Brethren are encouraged to make every effort to arrive at their Feast site in plenty of time to attend this opening service at the beginning of the Holy Day, which is the first day of the Feast. As last year, there will also be a special DVD welcome message from Mr. Weston during this service. Be sure to check the Feast website or talk to your Feast Site Coordinator for the exact time of the Opening Night service at your site.

### **Holy Day Offerings If Transferring to a Different Country**

If you are traveling internationally for the Feast, it is recommended that you send in your Holy Day Offering in your

home country. This will ensure that you receive proper documentation for a tax deduction, if your country allows it. You should make an additional offering at the international site you attend, and can plan accordingly. Your attention to these instructions and your use of the preprinted Holy Day envelopes is greatly appreciated.

### **If You Travel: Beware of Bed Bugs!**

In recent years, bed bugs have made a "comeback," especially in hotels at some popular vacation spots. Therefore, it is prudent to check the beds of your accommodations when you check into your Feast hotels. If you see signs of bed bugs, you should request a different room. Here is a summary from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on how to check your room for bed bugs. Essentially, one should look for physical signs of bed bugs, which include:

- Rusty or reddish stains on the bed sheets or mattresses.
- Tiny dark spots (about the size of a "period" on a typed document) on bed sheets or mattresses.
- The actual bugs themselves, in the seams of mattresses or cushions.

Bed bugs not only inflict painful and irritating bites, but they can travel back home with you and are difficult and expensive to eradicate. God can and will protect His Feast-goers from bed bugs, if we are prayerful and vigilant. We also know that a prudent man foresees danger and hides himself (Proverbs 22:3).

### **Before You Go... Take a Hymnal!**

Brethren who don't have a personal hymnal to take are encouraged to bring a hymnal (one or two songbooks per household) from their local congregation's supply for use at the Feast. For those who do take a blue congregational hymnal, please be sure to bring the same hymnal(s) back to your congregation after the Feast, so that the number of hymnals returned to each congregation is equal to the number of hymnals taken. Please make sure that all hymnals are clearly marked as to which congregation they belong.

### **Stay Healthy as You Prepare for—and Travel to—the Feast!**

As we prepare to depart for the Feast of Tabernacles, it is not uncommon for many of us to push ourselves and compromise on our sleep and diet. Then, when we finally get in the car, on the train, on the bus, or on the airplane, our bodies slow down and we get sick. In past years, this has resulted in some bringing the flu or a cold to the Feast site

and spreading it to other Church members. If we do arrive at the Feast feeling ill, for the benefit of our brethren, it is important to avoid fellowshiping and attending services until all our symptoms are gone. Taking measures to stay healthy and even improve health before the Feast will mean we are more likely to arrive at the Feast “healthy,” less likely to be temporarily detained by local health officials (if traveling abroad), and we will be physically and mentally prepared to partake of the powerful spiritual food and fellowship that God is preparing for us.

### **What Is Appropriate Dress at the Feast?**

As we prepare to be “lights to the world” at the Feast, it’s good to review some basic principles about our outward decorum and dress. When we look to the Holy Scripture we find *definite instructions* about dress for both men and women—instructions that our modern liberal societies and even some members of God’s Church seem to forget or ignore, unless we are reminded periodically. Jesus stated in a parable that some invited to the wedding supper will be *turned away* because they are *not dressed appropriately* (Matthew 22:8–14). While the parable is certainly spiritual in intent, Christ used the fact that some occasions require appropriate clothing to make His point. Individuals who feel that, because He looks on the heart, God is not concerned about how we choose to dress when we come before Him, are simply missing the point that how we choose to dress is a reflection of what’s in our heart. We have taught for decades that when we come to services, we are coming before the God of the universe and we should dress in the best appropriate clothing we have, to show proper respect to God.

In most modern cultures, coats, collared shirts, ties and nice slacks are considered appropriate attire for men on special occasions. Jeans, T-shirts, tennis shoes or other sportswear are simply not in good taste at Church services or other special occasions. This may vary in tropical climates, yet, in all climates there is a distinction between what is appropriate and what is not. 1 Timothy 2:9–10 explains that ladies should dress “in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation.” This does *not* include the trendy and immodest apparel that is commonplace for many women in our society today: short, tight, form-fitting dresses, necklines displaying cleavage, bare shoulders, backless dresses, belly-baring tops, etc. These are simply not appropriate forms of attire for Church services and many other situations!

We come to services to worship God, not to display our bodies. Just because something is comfortable or acceptable in our modern society does not make it appropriate at Church. When people dress in a manner that attracts attention to their bodies, they become a distraction to others from the real reasons for being at services, and may put a stumbling block before others. Our challenge as Christian men

and women is to *come out* of this world (2 Corinthians 6:17) and *recapture* true values so we can be *lights* to a world that has lost its way (Matthew 5:14–16). This is especially true as we gather to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles—picturing Christ’s glorious reign on earth!

### **What About at the Beach?**

Appropriate beach attire for men and women is swimwear that is modest and in good taste. We are to be guided by the two great commandments—to love God and love neighbor (Matthew 22:37–39; Mark 12:29–31)—so as not to offend God *or* neighbor by our dress at the Feast. Fathers and husbands have a responsibility to be leaders in their family to *teach and guide* regarding what is appropriate and what is not (Ezekiel 22:26).

### **Caring for—and Watching—our Children at the Feast**

Children are a joy to parents and fellow Feast-goers. The Feast is great family time—and it’s inspiring seeing children attend the Feast with their families! But parents, please remember that children are not permitted to run or engage in horseplay before, during, or after services. Children playing on the stage or near speakers and microphones can damage expensive equipment. Children darting in and out among fellowshiping brethren can be a trip hazard. For the elderly, this can be dangerous, even life-threatening. Ushers or deacons don’t need to physically restrain children who are misbehaving—unless required to avoid injury—but they should tell them to stop if need be.

Parents should also always be vigilant when it comes to their children at the Feast. Parents have full responsibility for their children at the Feast of Tabernacles, including at services. While precautions are taken and there are activities for children, the Church meeting or event is not a childcare facility. The Church does not take responsibility for the care of children at Church meetings or events. Their absolute safety cannot be guaranteed. The ultimate responsibility for the care of children *always* remains with parents or guardians. Please ensure that the conduct of your children and young people is adequately supervised throughout their attendance, and that your children are fully under your control. Children/teenagers under the age of 18 years should never be wandering around unsupervised.

Experience has shown that children and teenagers pay better attention and therefore learn more from the messages when sitting with a parent than when sitting elsewhere with a group of other young people. Therefore, it is the policy of the Church to have children and teens sit with their parents during services. An exception may be where an individual child or teen may sit with a friend’s parents and family. Obviously, a teen attending whose parents are not also in attendance would be exempt.



### **Do You Love Your Brother or Sister? Go Light on the Perfume**

We want to remind everyone to be aware while at the Feast of some people's serious sensitivities to perfumes and colognes. For some of our brethren, even being in the same room as someone with a lot of perfume or cologne can send them to the Emergency Room. Let's use extra care to show love to others in this way at the Feast—please use moderation.

### **If You Can't Go to the Feast**

While many of us will prepare to leave our homes to attend this annual highlight of the year, we must not forget those who cannot attend the Feast, for health or other reasons. Make sure to remember our shut-ins in your thoughts and prayers while at the Feast. And if *you* are among those not able to attend the Feast, please note that Feast sermons are uploaded (one per day) during the Feast at [lcg.org](http://lcg.org) for those who have Internet access. Also, many of our Festival sites will offer remote, live services to shut-ins in the areas assigned to that site. These sites will offer either livestream (Internet), telephone connection, or both. Here are instructions for connecting to video or audio livestreaming:

#### **Directions to Access Livestream Services during the Feast:**

- Go to the website [lcgwebcast.org](http://lcgwebcast.org).
- Click on the "Request Password" link in the top center of the page.
- Find your assigned Feast site and select the password contact for your site. Please e-mail him at the e-mail address listed to request a password.
- Once you receive the password, return to the [lcgwebcast.org](http://lcgwebcast.org) site and click on your Feast site from the list of Feast sites, then enter the password to access services. Please follow the instructions to enter your full name and the number of people viewing the services.

### **Telephone Access to Services during the Feast:**

Some sites will offer telephone services for those assigned to their site but who cannot attend. For information on how to connect, contact the Festival Coordinator directly.

### **When You're Expecting...**

Women going to the Feast in the late stages of pregnancy can face unforeseen complications. If you are pregnant and will be due around Feast time, please exercise caution and discretion when making your decision about attending the Feast. The long-standing tradition of the Church is to recommend that you stay home from the Feast if your due date is around Feast-time, for the sake of yourself and your unborn child. As in all matters of health, it is a personal decision, which must be weighed carefully and prayerfully, and with the advice of your physician or midwife. The Church provides pre-recorded sermons on CD and posted online for shut-ins, and you can certainly avail yourself of those. And, as mentioned above, some Feast sites will also provide livestream or call-in telephone service for members assigned to that site.

### **We Want to Know What You Think!**

Every year we take a survey to get valuable feedback from brethren attending the Feast. We will again have the Festival Survey available online, as well as having paper survey forms handed out at the Feast. The web address for filling out the Feast survey will be [fotsurvey.lcg.org](http://fotsurvey.lcg.org). We ask everyone at the Feast to be sure to fill out the survey form (either the hard copy or the online version) during or soon after the Feast, as it provides us with helpful information to assist with Festival planning for future years.

This year's Feast of Tabernacles will no doubt be an exciting and memorable highlight for God's people! As we gather together, let's remember why we are going—to "learn to fear the LORD your God always" (Deuteronomy 14:23). Let's be grateful for the Feast, and the opportunity to draw closer to our Father—and each other—at this special time. (LH)



# Woman to Woman

## *Husbands on Husetops*

By **Amber Leonard**

*“It is better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.”*

—Proverbs 25:24

*“A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.”*

—Proverbs 27:15

**T**o be contentious is to cause or be likely to cause a heated argument. Sound familiar? All of us have probably felt like that at one time or another.

Like a heavy, wet, blanketing fog, it comes rolling in: the feeling of being underappreciated. I’m not just talking about PMS or menopausal mood swings. I’m talking about actually feeling like no one cares or appreciates you or anything you do.

One minute you’re standing at the sink, feeling pretty good because you just finished cleaning the kitchen. The dishwasher is running, the counter tops are wiped clean, the floors are swept, and you can finally go and have a much-needed break. Then, suddenly, there is an arm sneaking past you to put a dirty dish in the sink. There is no “thank you” for doing the dishes, no pat of encouragement on the shoulder. That’s when it sets in.

### **It Happens Fast**

Suddenly, you begin mentally reviewing all of the things you’ve worked so hard on throughout the day. *“If only they knew what a struggle it was to keep the house clean and everyone fed and alive.”*

You think of how your husband always comes home, pulls off his shoes and leaves them lying around. Then the kids come inside with mud on their shoes, forgetting to take them off before traipsing on the freshly mopped floor. No one seems to notice how hard you work. You feel tempted to never clean the house or cook another meal again—maybe then they will notice. When your husband gets home he better watch out, because he just might get a piece of your mind. Actually, when he walks in the door and sees your

stormy face, he just might rather be on the roof of the house than be around you!

That one small action of putting a dirty dish in the sink took you from happy relief all the way to “crazy town.”

Of course, it is nice to be appreciated, and we tend to feel “over the moon” when someone sincerely thanks us for doing something for them. But we can’t expect our husbands and children to live with a constant focus on expressing an “attitude of gratitude” toward us. So how do we overcome this feeling of being underappreciated and replace it with something less contentious?

### **What Do I Deserve?**

That sense of not being appreciated probably means that you feel that you are deserving of more praise and gratitude. It can also mean that you are valuing yourself and your own feelings over others and their feelings. Regrettably, it’s pretty natural.

There is an infamous and extreme example of this in Ezekiel 28: “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty... You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you’” (vv. 12, 15).

Lucifer was a perfectly beautiful angel at God’s throne—until he began to think that he deserved to be God and that he should be more than he was. Most people would like to believe that they are deserving only of good things, but is that the right way to think, as women in the Church of God? Aren’t we still human? Don’t we still have human nature? What *do* we deserve?

The book of Romans holds the answer, when we read there that “*all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and that we don’t know “how to perform what is good [on our own]” (Romans 7:18). Then Paul asks a telling question: “O wretched man [or woman!] that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (v. 24).

Suddenly, all of those puffed-up thoughts of not getting all of the good things I “deserve” go flat when compared to what my sins have earned. The only thing we deserve is death, but through the grace of God in Christ, we can repent and have a much brighter future!

### Think Positively

In November 2008, “positive psychology” researcher Barbara Fredrickson and others published a paper in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* concerning her “broaden-and-build” approach to focusing on positive emotions. According to the abstract,

[the approach] asserts that people’s daily experiences of positive emotions compound over time to build a variety of consequential personal resources. The authors tested this build hypothesis in a field experiment with working adults... half of whom were randomly assigned to begin a practice of loving-kindness meditation. Results showed that this meditation practice produced increases over time in daily experiences of positive emotions, which, in turn, produced increases in a wide range of personal resources (e.g., increased mindfulness, purpose in life, social support, decreased illness symptoms).

In short, that study found that good thoughts, actively cultivated, produce positive results. In contrast, experience teaches us that negative thoughts produce emotions that narrow your mind and focus you on the bad. We all know how hard it is to get out of the “negative thought” ditch. You have to make the effort to climb out by praying for God to give you a good attitude. We have to actively choose to *think positively* in situations when all we want to do is to grumble. If you have known someone who constantly complains about everything and lives in a state of misery, you know that it can be a real challenge to spend time around someone who is so negative.

How contrary to the spirit Paul exhorted Timothy (and all of us) to have: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

Mr. Richard Ames once mentioned in a sermon that he knew of a lady who kept a journal in which, every day, she wrote five things for which she could be thankful. Recently, I decided to make this a habit, and I can report that it has made a big difference in my mindset. Usually, the first thing that comes to mind is an overwhelming feeling of being grateful to God for choosing someone like me to be one of His people and, eventually, a servant in His Kingdom. Then I realize how many blessings God has given my family just in that day. This is soon followed by appreciating something that someone in the family did or is doing for me that I usually would not notice.

### Put Others First

You have to admit that you aren’t the only one who works hard to keep the family functioning smoothly. So why not first show appreciation for the things others do for you? Being thankful to others produces good fruit and creates in you a grateful heart. Chances are that the recipients of your appreciation will be likely to do more than what is required of them in the future. An overall approach of gratitude towards others will also increase a positive and peaceful atmosphere at home. Who can’t use more peace of mind at home?

Why not throw up the white flag, and tell your husband he can come down from the rooftop? Let him know that, instead of being a constant drip on a rainy day, you have decided to stay positive and have an attitude of gratitude. You are on your way to becoming a less contentious woman—a woman after God’s own heart. <sup>(L)</sup>



## Births

**Isabella Charlene Lene** was born on November 5, 2017, weighing 6 lbs., 15 oz. (3.15 kg.). Isabella is the daughter of Auckland member Pua Lene. Mother and baby are doing well, and Isabella's two older siblings are very excited about the new addition to their family.

Mr. and Mrs. Peder (Melisa) Moluf, of the Kansas City, Missouri congregation, are pleased to announce the birth of their second child, **Jocelyn Elise Moluf**. She was born on December 20, 2017, and weighed 8 lbs., 15 oz. Big sister Charlotte is so excited to have a new baby in the family!

Mr. and Mrs. Jordan (Cortney) Wayne are happy to announce the birth of their "very little" miracle bundle of joy,

**Joanna Grace Wayne**, who was born on January 22, weighing 1 lb., 4 oz. She was very premature, being born at exactly 24 weeks, and continues to live at the NICU in the hospital. She has already survived heart surgery, among other procedures, and continues to fight and improve. Jordan and Cortney are looking forward to bringing her home so she can finally meet her sister Addison, and brothers Emmett and Harvey.

Michael and Becky Thiel are happy to announce the birth of **Joshua Lucas Thiel** on Sunday March 18. He weighed in at a healthy 8 lbs., 9 oz. They had a fantastic and quick home birth. They are currently all getting settled in and adjusted to the new little man. Katherine adores him and is already turning out to be a great sister. Momma and Joshua are doing well.

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## ORDINATIONS

**Mr. George Twigg** was ordained a deacon on the Sabbath of January 20 by Area Pastor Bill Long. Mr. Twigg serves in the Lansing, Michigan congregation.

**Mr. Lester Clifton** was ordained a deacon on the Sabbath of February 3 by Pastor Martin Fannin and Elder Larry Rigling. Mr. Clifton serves in the Etowah, Tennessee congregation.

**Mrs. Carrie Walker** and **Mrs. Margie Crockett** were ordained Deaconesses on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, April 6, by Area Pastor Gary Stein and Elder Dale Bailey. Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Crockett serve in the Big Sandy, Texas congregation.

**Mr. Anthony Mew** was ordained an elder on the Sabbath of February 17 by Evangelist Douglas Winnail, Regional Pastor Robert Tyler, Pastor Dayrell Tanner, and Elder Dan Love. Mr. Mew serves in the Brisbane, Australia congregation, as well as assisting with the Philippines Work.

**Mr. and Mrs. Jeremy (Anotte) Nicolas**, and **Mr. and Mrs. Jean-Jacques (Alice) Augustin** were ordained deacons and deaconesses on the Sabbath of February 17 by Regional Pastor Rick Stafford, Area Pastor Wilner Pierre, and Elder Etienne Duval. Mr. and Mrs. Nicolas serve in the L'Asile congregation and Mr. and Mrs. Augustin serve in the Port-au-Prince congregation, both congregations in Haiti.

**Mr. Ken Medja** was ordained a deacon on the Sabbath of February 17 by Area Pastor Bill Long. Mr. Medja serves in the Kalamazoo, Michigan congregation.

**Mrs. Adeline Bauman** was ordained a deaconess on the Sabbath of March 10 by Pastor Winston Gosse and Area pastor Shane Kruse. Mrs. Bauman serves in the Guelph, Ontario congregation, where her husband serves as a deacon.

**Mr. Thomas Walls** was ordained an elder on the Sabbath of March 17 by Pastors Bill Whitaker and Scott Winnail. Mr. Walls serves in the Walterboro, South Carolina congregation.

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

## 50 Years of the Church in Barbados!

On February 3, the brethren in Barbados celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first Sabbath service in that country, which was held on February 3, 1968. The entire day was truly inspiring and God's Spirit could be felt throughout. Mr. Herbert Armstrong and Mr. and Mrs. Dibar Apartian were present when the Church was raised up, and six of the 93 people who were at the anniversary Sabbath service had also been present on that occasion 50 years ago. After Sabbath services, everyone shared

a meal in the new meeting hall and then enjoyed a variety show. The highlights of the program were warm greetings and insightful comments from Mr. Weston; greetings and a wonderful description of the first service, sent by Mrs. Apartian; and then a video with encouraging words from Mrs. Clarence Bass, widow of the first pastor in Barbados! Mrs. Bass is a member of the Church who now lives in Florida, and it was deeply moving to the brethren to see her again, even by video. A lady who was present as a

child 50 years ago organized the meal all enjoyed, a "second-generation" member handled decorations, and the emcee of the variety show was newly baptized—the three of them thus represented the congregation in Barbados over the past 50 years, as well as its future. As Pastor Paul Shumway reported, "God certainly blessed our little celebration in so many ways and we all went home truly inspired and thankful to be an active part of the great Work of our Father in Heaven!"

## In Loving Memory

**Mr. Jessie James Andrews**, 73, of the Columbus, Georgia congregation, died January 27. A long-time devoted member of God's Church, Mr. Andrews was loyal to God's truth to the end. Quiet and reserved, with an unsuspected sense of humor, Mr. Andrews had the heart of a servant and could be depended upon to serve where needed. One of his most outstanding traits was his spirit of gratitude and thankfulness. He is survived by a brother, Tom, and a sister Rosa. Regional Pastor Daniel Hall conducted his funeral.

**Mr. John Carson Cathcart, Sr.**, a longtime deacon serving in the St. Louis, Missouri congregation, died on February 8 at the age of 79. Mr. Cathcart always had his heart and mind in God's Work and in serving the brethren. His courageous leadership was instrumental in 1995, when he helped many make the transition to the Global/Living Church of God. He is survived by his wife, Evelyn, and children Kimberly (Kenny) May, Terry (Steve) Engler, Tammy Phelps, Johnnie (Julie) Cathcart, Jr., Brian (Mary) Cathcart, as well as 21 grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren. He is sorely missed by family, brethren, and friends.

**Ms. Starlescya Maxwell** died on January 23, 2018 at 85 years of age. She was baptized into God's Church in 2011, and her brethren in the Tri-Cities congregation in Washington knew her well for her love for everyone and her positive outlook on

life, despite the very difficult experiences of her life. She is very much missed.

**Mrs. Ruth Evelyn Murray** died on November 21, 2017, at the age of 87. She was a long-time member of God's Church, baptized in 1956. In 1964 she married Mr. John Nestor; they were married for 38 years, until his death in 2003. She married Mr. Durwood Murray, who survives her, in 2006. Mrs. Murray was a hardworking and serving woman and served in many ways over many years in the Church and the Work. For ten years, she worked as a nurse at Ambassador College in California. She also served as personal nurse to Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. She worked as Nurse and Assistant Librarian at Imperial Schools. Her service to the Church and Work continued until she was in her eighties, working in the Mail Processing Department of the Living Church of God. Ordained a deaconess by Dr. Roderick C. Meredith in the early years of the Global Church of God, her care for the people of God drove her to perform each task that she was given with enduring enthusiasm.

**Mrs. Vera Annette Norwood** died of a heart attack on January 24, at age 76. Mrs. Norwood was baptized in 2016 and delighted in attending services. She never complained, and her outgoing concern, thoughtfulness and contagious smile for everyone made her a beloved member of the Atlanta, Georgia congregation. Mrs. Norwood is survived by her son Tylus (Tasha) Rogers, also of the Atlanta congregation, as well as her daughter Jacqueline Hardnett, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Regional Pastor Daniel Hall conducted her funeral.

# Advancing the Work at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention

In late February and early March, several ministers from the Living Church of God attended the National Religious Broadcasters Convention (NRB). This non-denominational convention—bringing together several thousand broadcasters from all over the world—represents an opportunity to remain current on technology, equipment and best practices in the areas of television, radio and Internet broadcasting. Political and cultural topics that impact religious broadcast efforts are also discussed, including sessions featuring panels of experts from multiple disciplines and media types.

In the past, God has used these conventions to open doors for the Church to many new opportunities, such as broadcasting *Tomorrow's World* into new countries and in other languages, saving money on equipment and services, and providing contacts that further the Church's efforts in ways we would not have previously imagined.



Mr. Gerald Weston with panelist and radio host Larry Elder

The 2018 convention was held in Nashville, Tennessee, and Presiding Evangelist Gerald Weston, Mr. Wyatt Ciesielka and Mr. Wallace Smith attended. The NRB was considered significant enough to draw the attention of the White House, which sent Vice President Mike Pence to address the attendees in one of the sessions. And of particular interest to the Work was this year's focus on issues of censorship and the growing media bias against conservative and religious social values. One panel included popular media figures, such as commentator Larry Elder and popular radio host and author Dennis Prager. Mr. Prager, in particular, has been a victim of YouTube censorship for his intelligently made and culturally conservative videos, many of which the media platform has wrongly placed in the same restrictive category as violent and sexually explicit material.

Some of these sessions discussed the scope of the problem and presented strategies for overcoming biased and unfair restrictions. Since our own *Tomorrow's World* telecast is increasingly experiencing the growing force of this culture of censorship of anything resembling godly truth and values, the session was appreciated and very helpful. As panelist Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council pointed out to all attending, the efforts to silence voices that do not agree with our culture's current slide into moral degradation are growing in strength, and for those who seek to get out a message like ours, we are in a *sprint*, not a marathon! It was clear from what these speakers presented that this is no time to slow down or "take it easy."

In addition to the panels and presentations on new media technologies and broadcasting opportunities, Messrs. Weston, Ciesielka and Smith spent time at the NRB with many of our television representatives and vendors, discussing strategies and prospects for expanding and magnifying the impact of the Work.

What a privilege to be able to do God's Work in the world at such a time as ours! We are grateful for the opportunities presented at the NRB and look forward to applying the information gained there for the sake of the Gospel.

—Editorial Staff

**HOLY SPIRIT** continued from page 4

mind is the natural human mind without God's Spirit. The Apostle Paul explains the difference between the carnal mind and the mind guided by the Holy Spirit in these terms: "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:6-9). God's ways are not our ways unless Christ lives in us. It is through Jesus' dwelling in us that the hostility to God's law is removed. It is then that the law, expressing the very mind of God, is written in our hearts.

This must not be understood to mean that our job is finished once we receive the Holy Spirit. Paul explains that we must fight against our human impulses (Romans 6:8-14) and allow Christ to lead us if we are to be God's children. "For as many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

### **The Pentecost Connection**

The Old Covenant was given at Mount Sinai on the Day of Pentecost. Israel received the law written on stone. Tragically, they did not have the

heart to obey it (Deuteronomy 5:29), thus the need for a new covenant (Hebrews 8:7-8). Jesus introduced this New Covenant at the Passover: "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20). In other words, it is only through His shed blood that we can enter into the New Covenant. The Living Church of God Statement of Fundamental Beliefs explains:

At baptism, the Christian enters the "new covenant" with God (Matthew 26:28). That new

**You sometimes hear people say, "God speaks to my heart." More often than not, they really mean, "My heart defines right and wrong."**

covenant does not do away with the law of God. God writes His laws in our minds and hearts (Hebrews 8:8-10). When one is baptized, he or she makes a solemn covenant with God that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, he will keep His commandments and live a godly life from that day onward! It is Christ who actually lives His obedient life within us through the Holy Spirit. As the Apostle Paul was inspired to write, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now

live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20, *KJV*) (*Statement of Fundamental Beliefs*, "Receiving God's Grace").

One misunderstanding that many have is the idea that they should simply "listen to their heart" concerning what is right and wrong. You sometimes hear people say, "God speaks to my heart." More often than not, they really mean, "My heart defines right and wrong." They fail to realize that their human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). It is not what *they* think. It is not what *you* or *I* think. It is God who defines right and wrong, which He reveals through His law. The hostility to His law must be removed and His way of thinking must replace our way of thinking. His law must be written in our hearts (Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:26-27).

On the first Pentecost after the crucifixion and resurrection, God poured out the Holy Spirit on the fledgling Church of God. The law given to Israel was written on tablets of stone. That same law is now being written in our minds and hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit, but that does not happen magically. It happens as we put to death the old man and become a new man as we are led by the Holy Spirit. We have our part to play. *Let us be sure we do our part!* (LN)

### **Amazon Smile—A Free, Easy Way to Help the Church Financially**

If you ever make purchases through Amazon, please consider using Amazon Smile. When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), 0.5 percent of the price of your eligible purchases will be donated to the Church. Just sign in online at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) and select the

Living Church of God as your charity. You can then purchase the *same* products at the *same* prices, but Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase to LCG. This is a free, easy way for you to generate donations to the Church, and, if we all do this, it could result in

thousands of dollars a year in extra contributions that we can put to work preaching the Gospel around the world. Thank you for your prayers and your support of God's Work!

—Wyatt Ciesielka

## COMMENTARY

### Israel at 70: “Out of All Their Troubles”

When modern Israel was founded in 1948, the newly-formed nation faced an uncertain future. From the moment Israel’s declaration of independence was signed on May 14, the nation was beset by many troubles. War came swiftly when its angry neighbors attacked. Seventy years later, what is the condition of the nation that so many threatened to “drive into the sea?”

Israel celebrates its 70th anniversary this year, in conjunction with another holiday memorializing the fallen soldiers of the Israeli Defense Force—and there are many to remember. Linking the two observances is a significant reminder of the debt Israelis owe to their armed forces.

Israel, having endured much, does well to remember and dedicate national holidays to the sacrifices that have paved its way to success in the modern age. How especially poignant Israelis’ memories must be, since many of them personally lived through their nation’s birth and survival, seeing it with their own eyes and shaping it with their own hands.

It is interesting to note that American culture, in general, has been identified by some as “forgetful” regarding its past. Sadly, such forgetfulness exacts a price.

But it would seem that a young nation like Israel, balanced on a knife’s edge through much of its existence, would be even less able to afford such forgetfulness. Modern Jews do well not to take the *future* for granted by forgetting the horrors of the past.

But what if there were a connection between Israel and the West that *much of the entire world* has forgotten? And what if the Holy Bible contained the key to understanding that con-

nection, in prophecies that many find confusing? The United States, Great Britain and Israel today are allies, sharing much in common—including their devotion to the traditions of freedom and liberty they’ve fought hard to achieve and protect.

But their connection runs much deeper than that.

Genesis 48 and 49 record the ancient prophetic blessings the Hebrew patriarch Jacob, whose name God changed to “Israel,” pronounced on his two grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh: “God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked... bless the lads; let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth” (Genesis 48:15–16). They were to become a great nation (Manasseh) and a great company of nations (Ephraim) (v. 19), while from Judah the “scepter would never depart” (Genesis 49:10) and the Savior would come (Micah 5:2).

Hopefully the modern nation of Israel celebrates this year not only with a sense of reflection on the past, but also in a spirit of wonder concerning the overall plan and purpose God has for *all* of His people in the future. And it would behoove Israel to seek, as well, a more profound and passionate relationship with celebrations and observances that have been at the very root of their culture for far longer than 70 years: the holy days of the Bible.

Will we remember the role God Himself has truly played in our protection, or will we continue to forget the most important requirements for our many blessings to continue? Will we show the character spoken of in Psalm 34, and cry out to God, who will deliver us from “all our troubles”? We pray so!

—William Williams