

Living Church News

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Let Your Light Shine

Dear Brethren and Friends,

We are living in a very vicious world! When we think about the recent beheadings of some of our western countrymen—and others—and the many other atrocities going on around the world, it is obvious that Christ needs to come *soon*! With all our hearts, we need to get out the message of Christ's coming government and His way of life.

But we ourselves must *practice* the way of God, so that we can set the example. We need to “practice what we preach!” Also, we must get all our priorities *straight*. We must *not* think that just “doing the Work” is enough. We must not think that whoever is the “most strict” is necessarily the *best*.

What is the real “heart” of Jesus Christ's actual teaching? To find out, look at the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5, we find Jesus Christ expounding *key attitudes* of a true Christian. Jesus explains that those who are “poor in spirit”—who realize how *weak* they are and how great God is by comparison—are the ones whom God will honor. Jesus then describes how blessed are the “meek.” The word “meek” means not just humble, but **teachable**. All of us who truly want to be in God's Kingdom must allow ourselves to be **taught** by God's Word and by God's faithful ministers. We must truly let God, over time, place within us the “mind of Christ.” “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (v. 6). If we truly cry out to be like God, and want to be filled with *His* ways and not our own, we will be blessed and be in God's Kingdom forever. Jesus said: “Blessed are the *merciful*, for they shall obtain mercy” (v. 7). Here we find that it is **not** those who are just “strict” or “tough on sinners,” but the **merciful** who will attain God's mercy.

Brethren, all the way through the Sermon on the Mount we find Jesus teaching the attitudes of profound humility, kindness and mercy—and the approach of even forgiving and **loving** your enemies (v. 44)!

As many of you older brethren know, the attitude in our past Church association too often seemed to be that those who were the *most strict* were the most “righteous.” Some ministers and elders seemed to take delight in “catching” sinners, and perhaps even “picking” on them, over relatively minor issues. This was the **exact opposite** of what Jesus Christ's teachings instruct us to do!

In Matthew 6, Jesus talks about doing our “charitable deeds” in a private manner to please God—not man! (Matthew 6:1). We are told to pray

in privacy. We are told to **fast** before God in a private way, which we will do if we truly *believe* that God is *real*, and that He will reward each of us—in His way and time—if we truly seek Him with all of our hearts. In Matthew 7:1–3, Jesus tells us: “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?”

In the following verses, Jesus explains that we had better be very careful about becoming too strict over little tiny “specks” or minor issues in others, while at the *same time* perhaps having huge “planks” of sin, self-righteousness or self-will in our *own* eyes! We in the Living Church of God must be *very careful* not to be judging each other—and especially new brethren coming from the world—over immodest skirt lengths, hair styles, make-up or such items that are truly *very minor* compared to the attitudes of arrogance and self-will often expressed by those who unrighteously judge people with these supposed problems. These problems—if they are indeed problems—should be left up to the ministry to handle! Even then, we in the *ministry* must be *extremely careful* to be kind and nurturing, emphasizing *love* and *mercy* rather than “judgmentalism”!

The Apostle James made this very clear when he wrote: “So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:12–13). So the one who *shows no mercy* may find himself receiving **no mercy** when his time of judgment comes! *We all need to learn from this!*

Above and beyond the personal kindness and mercy we need to show one another, we also need to be busy helping and serving one another—and the outside world—when it is clearly our responsibility to do so. Remember Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 25:31–46. Jesus talks about feeding the hungry, taking in the stranger, clothing those who are in need and genuinely **servicing** other human beings in any and every situation of need! He says: “Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (v. 40).

Most of you realize that neither Jesus Christ, nor the Apostles Peter, James, John or Paul are ever recorded as gathering together a bounty of money or foodstuffs to send to starving peoples around the world. For example, Africa was reasonably close to the nation of Israel at that time, and there were dire needs in some African nations just as there are today. Rather, the *actual examples* of helping others are always in the context of a neighbor who is *nearby*, where it becomes a *personal responsibility*. Jesus and the Apostles did not go all over the world *seeking out* those who were sick—although it is not wrong to do that. Most of us realize that the absolute **greatest need**, by far, is to get out the *message* of the right way of life—so people will not be sick, uneducated, without purpose, or poverty-stricken in the first place! We know that our greatest service is preaching to the world the “answer”—the Kingdom of God and **His ways**—rather than catering to the temporary material needs of deceived people.

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The Big Picture

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

An enduring lesson I have learned throughout my 55 years in God's Work is the need to *focus on the Big Picture*. So many of the brethren—and even fellow ministers and evangelists whom I have loved and with whom I have worked over the years—have fallen away or drifted into apostasy, because they failed to focus on the truly **major** things. Many had their feelings hurt over comparatively little things. Others were turned aside or confused by rather trivial arguments and ideas. This is *disastrous!*

It is vital that all of you dear brethren learn to see the truly “Big Picture” in the truths and in the events that God is orchestrating here on earth today. Right now, prophetic events are *definitely* heading to the *final conclusion* of the 6,000 years allotted for our humanly devised governments and institutions. But many do not see these things. Even in God's Church, many brethren focus on the “immediate”—on the things that are happening today or tomorrow—and **not** on the huge underlying events that have happened and are happening in fulfillment of prophecy. Many people focus mostly on the people and ideas immediately around them that are part of their “little world.”

These individuals can easily become *lukewarm*, *confused* or perhaps even **bitter**, because of the seemingly “slow pace” of prophecy

and their constant awareness of the *imperfections of God's people* around them. In Proverbs 29:18, God tells us: “Where there is no **vision**, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he” (KJV). This need for “vision”—having a concept of the Big Picture and of the future—helps us put all the “little stuff” in proper perspective. This is what **God** looks at. This is what **Christ** looks at. If our Father and Jesus Christ, our living Head, constantly focused on all the *little faults* you and I have, *where would we be?* And yet, we often focus on the “little faults” of those around us—or the seeming “mistakes” of the ministry, the Work or even of **God** who seemingly does not fulfill His prophecies according to *our schedule!* But we need to realize that “our schedule” is often **not** God's schedule! We need to learn a great deal more *humility* and *patience* in dealing with these things in our lives.

In Matthew 24:42–44, Jesus warned us: “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” *If* we are constantly aware of the Big Picture and *if* we are truly “watching”—constantly aware of God's purpose and God's intervention in human affairs—we will be enthusiastically anticipating Christ's return and more likely to serve Him

with all our hearts. But **if**—as Jesus outlined in the verses after these—we turn to fighting and competing with one another, putting our minds on the “little stuff,” then we are likely to turn aside into confusion and bitterness.

Remember, dear brethren, some of the **huge** events that *only* God's true Church has preached and understood for decades:

- The United States and British Empire did become the **great** nation and “company of nations” as God promised through Abraham. We *did* win World War I and World War II together. We have controlled three-fourths of the world's greatest developed resources and, together, have been the major force in the world for more than 200 years, until recently.
- Jerusalem was either controlled totally by the Gentiles or was a “divided” city for hundreds of years until 1967. Then, God allowed Israel to gain complete control of Jerusalem and prepare the way for the prophecies contained in Zechariah 14.
- The inspired prophecy of Revelation 3:7–13 about the “Philadelphia” era of God's Church **has** been fulfilled! God raised up Mr. Herbert

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Child Rearing:

Consistency—The Path to Security

By Jeffrey Fall

Our Spiritual Father is totally consistent in how He deals with us, His children. His guidelines are always valid, and His Word is totally trustworthy. He does not violate His own spiritual law; His attitude is not: “Do what I say, not what I do.”

God tells us: “For I am the LORD, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6). This means that God is consistent in His laws, His spiritual principles and His way of life. What if our God were inconsistent?

We often see the fruit of inconsistency in the daily lives of those around us. Years ago, my wife and I watched one such glaring example at the supermarket. A mother with several children was doing her shopping, and her children were wild. They were running up and down the aisles and pulling things off the shelves. Every so often, the mother would yell out in extreme frustration: “Get over here or I am going to spank you!” They would calm down for a moment or two, and they would take off again. After a few minutes, the mother would yell out: “Do you want me to whip you?”

This yelling, screaming, inconsistent mother made her life miserable! Her children always knew that if they slowed down for a few moments, their mother’s wild and irresponsible threats would subside, and they could soon go back to what they were doing.

Unlike this harried mother, Jesus Christ and God the Father are totally consistent, for our benefit. They want what is best for us, and they will not confuse us with inconsistency.

The dictionary defines “consistency” as: “constant, steady, regular, persistent, unchanging, undeviating, unified” (*Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*). That describes the type of parent that anyone would want, especially when accompanied by a healthy dose of unconditional love and appropriate forgiveness. This is the fertile ground for a child’s healthy growth, along with having a sense of being valued and the security of firm guidelines that will not change.

Even rebellious teens will tell you that they need *consistent* parents. Consistency is the bedrock of confidence! It is something that children can count on. Children with consistent parents may not always like every parental guideline, but at least their world is stable and not constantly changing. They know what to expect.

Consistency in discipline and parental example is crucial! People most often think of discipline as “punishment,” but punishment is only one aspect of discipline. Discipline is “training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental or moral character” (*ibid.*).

Christ’s early followers who were being trained in the Way of life were called “disciples.” The word “disciple” is derived from the word “discipline.” Christ taught the disciples; He encouraged them, and sometimes corrected them. His goal was to train disciples who could live and teach the Christian discipline (the Way of life).

Parents train, or discipline, their children with encouragement, praise and rewards, and also with correction and penalties. This is the same principle that God uses with us. He promises us blessings for obedience (Deuteronomy 28:1–14) and correction and penalties (curses) for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15–46).

Regrettably, many parents have tried to rework the Creator’s child rearing (child training) principles into whatever seems best to them. Unwittingly, they may be acting as though they know more about child rearing than God Himself does.

In previous decades, many parents relied primarily on restrictive authority and on punishments for disobedience. Little encouragement or unconditional love was given, and parents with this approach became unloving authoritarians. In recent years, the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction, with parents offering ample praise and encouragement, but little or no correction or discipline for disobedience. Permissiveness is the ditch in which children never learn or gain self-control.

So being consistently authoritarian is not the answer! Being consistently permissive is not the answer! True consistency requires the balance that we find in God’s Word—which includes real blessings for obedience, and penalties for disobedience.

Consistent penalties for disobedience teach children a lesson that will benefit them for their entire lives—the lesson of “cause and effect.” This is how the world operates. If you jump out your second-story bedroom window, gravity will always work, and you will pay a price for your mistake. Drive your car too fast around a curve, on a rainy night, and there will be a price to pay. Break the laws of the land, and there is a price to pay. Transgress God’s spiritual laws, and there is always a price to pay.

Children need to live in a family environment where they know that if they violate the parents' rules or standards of behavior, there is always a price to pay.

Parents who do not teach their children “cause and effect” do their children a serious disservice. How can a child learn cause and effect if he never experiences the effect of his behavior? How can a toddler learn cause and effect if, when he is told to “come here,” he can ignore his father without any follow-up discipline? How can a young child learn cause and effect if he throws an angry tantrum in his mother's face and she simply shrugs her shoulders in exasperation? How can a teenager learn cause and effect if he receives a ticket for reckless driving and his parents pay the fine?

Consistency with a toddler, with rules and guidelines and punishment for disobedience, leads to consistency as a teen, which leads to consistency as an adult, which can lead to consistency as a future son of God. The process of learning cause and effect—with consistent blessings for obedience and correction for disobedience—is the foundation for future character formation and for a successful life. Parents can either assist God with this process, or can make the eventual conversion process more difficult for their children.

“Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8:11). The pattern that is set in childhood generally carries on throughout life. A parent who does not consistently discipline quickly for disobedience does not establish the “cause and effect” principle in a child's early years. The resulting child, teen and adult sees rules and guidelines (whether in the home or in the school system or on the job) as restrictions that only occasionally bring negative consequences.

Both my wife and I were blessed to have parents who were very consistent in child rearing. Not all have been privileged to experience a pattern of consistency in child rearing, but we all experience the pattern of our Spiritual Father, who is totally consistent with us. We can clearly see from God's Word that the Creator of the universe operates on the “blessing for obedience and correction for disobedience” principle. If we follow this principle consistently in child rearing, we lay the foundation for the future family of God.

This can be taught at the very beginning of a child's life. Years ago, our eight-month-old daughter began to enjoy exploring her environment while seated in her little walker. One day she rolled up to a large potted houseplant, and began grabbing the soil with her hands, making a big mess and dropping dirt on the floor. I remember walking over to her and telling her that this was a “no-no,” and that she must not play with the dirt or the plant.

A few minutes later, the excitement of the houseplant must have returned to her mind. Once again she rolled over to the plant, and dug into the soil with her little hands. I immediately pulled her away from the plant, gave her hands a few quick and gentle swats, and reminded her that the plant was not to play with. Of course, she cried at this new experience of discipline, but I believe she only tried to dig at the plant one more time (after which she received the same discipline as a result). From that point forward, her eight-month-old mind recognized that the houseplant and its dirt were never to be played with again.

By contrast, how might parents handle my daughter's behavior if they do not consistently teach their children cause and effect?

- They might pull the child's hands out of the plant soil, and every time tell the child “no” without giving any corrective discipline.
- When they saw the child heading toward the plant, they might grab its walker, turn it around and head the child in the opposite direction.
- They might move the plant into another room where the child could not reach it.
- They might ask an older child to stand guard in front of the plant.

In each of these examples, would the child learn anything? All the child might learn is that persistence in disobedience “pays off” with their parents. Parents who do not teach “cause and effect” would most likely give in eventually, and allow the child to play with the plant; after all, the child is “so cute” and “doesn't really know any better at such a young age.”

I remember a couple whose three-year-old daughter had a fascination with a small wooden figure that sat on our coffee table. While we talked with her parents, the little girl would walk up to the carving and grab it, attempting to pull it apart. The parents would repeatedly grab the carving out of her hands and tell her “no,” but she would return to it again and again. There was never any thought of discipline, and the child never learned cause and effect from her parents.

Consistent discipline in child rearing makes life so much easier. Once a child receives understandable guidelines, any infraction results in discipline. The reality of cause and effect sets the pattern for life. Some “do-gooders” may not believe in any corporal punishment whatsoever, thinking that they have children's well-being at heart, but they fail to understand human nature and what is truly best for children: unconditional love and learned obedience with applied correction.

God's Word tells us: “Now no chastening [discipline] seems joyful for the present, but grievous.... afterward it

yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11, KJV). How peaceful it is when children have been taught obedience right from the start. Even young children can be a real joy to a family when they are taught the habit of obedience.

When a child is old enough to be taught to “come” when called, for example, there are never any exceptions to obedience. I have seen some parents actually count: “1, 2, 3” and when the child does not come, the parent may finally walk over to him and pull him by the hand. This becomes an early lesson to the child on how he can control his parents.

Another popular threat is: “I’m telling you for the last time.” Even this threat may become: “This is your last... last chance.” I saw one amazing example of this with a young father and his little son: the “three ‘no’ rule”—meaning that the father’s first two “no’s” were ignorable; only the third was supposed to count. Yet even after “‘no’ number three,” there was never any follow-up discipline; the father would simply walk over, grab his son, and take him away from whatever he was not supposed to be doing.

Many parents tell their children, over and over again, to “do something” or to “stop doing something.” Finally, they explode in anger when they cannot tolerate their children’s disobedience any longer. This teaches a child that “cause and effect” only applies when parents become exasperated, and that the “trick” for a child is to learn to read the signs of when parents are coming close to their limit.

Parents make it *so much* easier on themselves when they teach their children that “no” means “no” and “yes” means “yes.” Life is much more difficult for parents who allow whining and pleading to occur. “But Mom... why can’t I? Pleasssse, I really want to!” When parents give in to such pleas, they teach their children an important lesson: if they whine and plead long enough, the parent will eventually give in, and they will get what they want.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong taught that parents should tune in to a child’s attitude just as much as his actions. Any sulking, anger or obvious rebellion should always be corrected. Children who stamp their feet, or throw themselves on the ground in an obvious show of anger, should always be disciplined. Pseudo-psychologists who believe that children should be allowed to express their anger to their parents simply do not understand human nature. Anger is like a muscle: the more it is allowed to be exercised, the stronger it becomes.

Every parent has likely disciplined a child, even with an appropriate spanking, and found that the child was crying not from sorrow or repentance, but from obvious anger. If this is not addressed, the necessary lesson will not be learned—and nothing will be gained

but a hardening of the child’s attitude. In this circumstance, it becomes necessary to remind the child why he was disciplined in the first place, and then explain that he will also be disciplined for his attitude of anger. In most cases, the child’s attitude will change quickly, and his cry will turn more to a repentant spirit than to rebellion or anger.

For most young children, there are other appropriate forms of punishment besides spanking. Of course, “the punishment should always fit the crime.” In our household, we would occasionally have our children stand in a corner for minor offenses. This seemed to be effective, since they really disliked the boredom of standing facing the corner of the room without being allowed to look around.

Once, one of our sons ran outside, slamming the door behind, rattling the windows with the force of the slamming door. My wife had previously pointed out why slamming the door was not acceptable in our home, so he knew better but had simply “forgotten.” When children are quickly disciplined in spite of the excuse “but I forgot,” it is amazing how quickly their memory is sharpened. In this particular situation, my wife simply had our son open and close the door quietly 25 times. It really seemed to drive home the point, and his memory was no longer an issue.

One form of punishment that we found to be *ineffective* was sending a child to his room. Most children today have plenty to do in their rooms, and this “punishment” simply allows them extra time to be angry and to sulk. In most cases, loving discipline can be carried out quickly, and the parent can then comfort the child, reminding him of how much he is loved. It is also helpful to remind the child occasionally that God holds the parents responsible for how they train their children.

As children are taught the principle of cause and effect: “blessing for obedience and punishment for disobedience”, it is important that we not forget the “blessing for obedience” side of the equation. Verbal approval for a job well done, including a greater level of eye contact and a smile, can accomplish a great deal. Children, like adults, appreciate being appreciated. We need to follow the example of our Spiritual Father who absolutely promises to reward those who seek Him. “For he who comes to God must believe that He is [exists] and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). God’s promise of reward for obedience can be a strong motivator.

Years ago, when two or three of our children were still pre-school age and could not yet read, my wife made a chart for all four of our children. She used pictures to remind them of their daily and weekly chores, rewarding them with a certain amount of money for each completed

job. There was a drawing of a made-up bed to remind them of that daily chore. There was a picture of a toothbrush, of a dog with its bowl, of a pair of pajamas hanging on a hook, and of children sitting at the table (with smiles on their faces) with a clock nearby to remind them to be on time at the breakfast table. At the end of the month, the rewards were added up and money was given to the children. It was theirs to save or spend, after their tithes to God was set aside.

Occasionally you hear of people who believe that children should never be paid for doing chores. They think it will ruin their character to be paid for their work. Yes, it is true that children should not be paid for routine obedience, such as coming quickly when called or playing nicely with their brothers and sisters. But teaching children the value of the work ethic with rewards is cer-

tainly a right principle. Giving children an allowance without expecting anything in return is the wrong principle. Even God promises to reward us for our efforts: “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.” (Matthew 16:27) Are we wiser at child rearing than God the Father Himself?

The sooner we ingrain in our young children the overall principle of consistent blessing for obedience and correction for disobedience, the more obedient a child becomes—and the more peaceful a household becomes. *Consistency* is a tremendous key!

Many parents, like the mother mentioned at the start of this article, cannot comfortably shop with their children

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Common Questions About Discipline

• Is physical punishment or spanking harmful, as many in the world believe?

What does our perfect Parent have to say about this? “He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly” (Proverbs 13:24). If we truly love our children, we will discipline them promptly and consistently. We can think of a “rod” as a twig or switch that could sting the skin, yet not injure the child. Even just a few light swats on bare legs, using the flat surface of the hand, can be sufficient to discipline very young children. Under no circumstance should a child *ever* be “hit” or “beaten” in any sense of those words. A spanking should *never* result in injury, or leave bruises or marks on the skin.

• Should children be spanked publicly?

Not in today’s society! There have been many cases of reported child abuse where the parents were simply applying proper corporal punishment in a loving manner. The fact of the matter is that if parents apply consistent discipline early on from childhood, children will rarely need discipline when in public. On the rare occasions when public discipline may be needed, a simple reminder of the infraction, and a promise that they will be receiving their punishment when they return home, will be quite effective. As always, of course, the key is follow-through.

• At what age is spanking effective?

Spanking is effective when a child is old enough to understand a parent’s instruction. When our eight-month-old daughter received a few light taps on her hands for digging in the dirt around a houseplant, she certainly had enough understanding to learn from that experience, after which she avoided the houseplant as if it was not worth the trouble.

What is the upper end of the age-range for appropriate spanking? Obviously, children are individuals, and the answer must be tailored for each individual. Most everyone agrees that spanking a teenager is not effective. At that age, spanking tends to generate humiliation, anger and rebellion. Some children who are pliable, and have been taught with consistent discipline, probably do not need corporal punishment beyond the age of five or six, or at least their spankings are reserved for only the rare disobedience and defiance. Other children, with a more resistant nature, may need occasional spankings up to the ages of eight or ten. The need should become increasingly rare as a child matures.

—Jeffrey Fall

Lessons from the Parables of the Kingdom

By John H. Ogwyn

Shortly after King Herod put John the Baptist into prison, Jesus Christ came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God. For most of the next three years, He and His disciples trudged up and down the dusty roads of Galilee, Samaria and Judea as He preached this message to multitudes that assembled to hear Him. Much of Jesus' preaching, remarkably, was in the form of parables.

Why did Jesus preach this way? What are parables, and why did Jesus use so many? During the fall festival season, we focus much of our attention on the Kingdom of God. What lessons can we learn from Jesus' parables about God's soon-coming Kingdom?

Did you know that the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke mention parables approximately 50 times, while John's gospel contains none at all? Matthew, Mark and Luke record more than 30 different parables—three that occur in all three gospels, several that occur in two, and many that occur in just one. Luke records the most parables. Matthew joins seven parables of the Kingdom together and lists them one after the other in Matthew 13.

What exactly is a parable? The Hebrew word that is translated as "parable" in Ezekiel 17:2 is translated as "proverb" in the book of Proverbs. It refers to a comparison used to teach a

lesson. In the New Testament, the Greek word *parabole* refers to a symbolism, or a comparison, and is the origin of our English word "parable." Hebrews 9:9 uses the word *parabole* when we are told that the Tabernacle (and later the Temple) was "symbolic" for the time, illustrating God's plan of salvation through its layout and furnishings.

When teaching the multitudes about God's Kingdom, Jesus used such parables—symbolism or comparisons—almost exclusively. Most people believe that Jesus used parables to make His teachings understandable to the masses, but Scripture says the very opposite (Matthew 13:13). Only for Jesus' disciples, to whom He gave clear explanations, did the parables make plain His various lessons about the Kingdom (vv. 10–11).

Each of Jesus' parables stands on its own, using an illustration to teach a specific lesson. The Kingdom of God is such a vast subject that no one comparison can do it justice. The examples that Jesus used help us to understand different aspects of the Kingdom.

The Parable of the Sower and the Seed

Matthew's gospel often links together, because of common subject matter, teachings that Jesus gave at different times. Such is the case in

Matthew 13, which records seven parables of the Kingdom. Mark includes three of these seven parables, while Luke repeats just one.

The parable of the sower and the seed is the first of these seven in Matthew. When we compare it to the parallel accounts in Mark 4 and Luke 8, we can recognize this as one of Jesus' early parables, given before He first sent the disciples out to proclaim the gospel. Luke 8 describes Jesus personally preaching the gospel message, healing the sick and casting out demons, while He taught and trained the Apostles who accompanied Him. In Luke 9, we read of Jesus sending the Apostles out to do what He had been doing—preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. In effect, they were "planting" the gospel message, "sowing the seeds" of the Kingdom.

This is why the disciples first needed to understand the parable of the sower and the seed, which explained the results they would experience from sowing the seed of the Kingdom. We in God's Work today must also understand this parable, since we have the same commission and should expect the same result.

The parable describes four types of soil on which seed fell, each producing a very different result. Each type of soil represents a different response to the gospel message. Some seeds fell by the wayside, where the birds

ate them. In other words, these seeds never even germinated. Many who heard the gospel message directly from Jesus failed to respond at all, and His disciples should expect the same. Other seeds fell on stony ground with a thin layer of topsoil. Though these seeds germinated and came up quickly, they had shallow roots; they soon withered when the weather became hot and dry. Jesus compared this to people who responded quickly and emotionally to the gospel, but did not prove things deeply, and who would soon wither under trials and difficulties. Still other seeds fell among thorns; they germinated and came up, but weeds and thorns eventually choked them out. Christ compared them to people who responded to the gospel and began progressing toward the Kingdom, but whose spiritual growth was eventually choked by the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches. Only the final group of seeds, which fell on good ground, yielded a crop. Some produced more fruit and some a little less, but all grew, matured and were harvested.

Christ wanted His disciples to understand that, as they went out to proclaim His message, many who heard it would not respond at all—and of those who did respond, most would not come to harvest. Some would offer a quick response, but it would prove shallow and they would soon wither. Others would last a little longer, but their spiritual growth would be choked by the pulls of the world around them. Only a little of the seed sown would produce mature, fruit-bearing plants.

Six More Parables Of the Kingdom

The second of Matthew 13's seven parables—the parable of the tares—further developed a similar

theme. In this parable, the master sowed good seed in his field, but an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat while the master slept. When the seed had sprouted and produced a crop, both wheat and tares were growing together in the same field. Tares are weeds that look very much like wheat in the early stage of development, but that never produce grain for the harvest. In this parable, the master told his servants

Most people believe that Jesus used parables to make His teachings understandable to the masses, but Scripture says the very opposite (Matthew 13:13). Only for Jesus' disciples, to whom He gave clear explanations, did the parables make plain His various lessons about the Kingdom (vv. 10–11).

not to try to uproot the tares during the growing season, lest they also uproot some of the wheat. Rather, he told them to let it all grow together until harvest time, when the tares would be gathered, bundled and burned. The wheat would then be harvested and gathered into the master's barn.

Christ used this parable of the tares, as He used the parable of the sower and the seed, to teach His disciples how people would react when they heard the gospel of the Kingdom preached. Much of the “seed” they sowed would either fail to germinate, wither under persecution or be choked by the cares of this world. Only a little would come to

harvest, and some of what grew to harvest would not be seed that they had planted. Some would be “tares” sown by the wicked one.

As the first century AD progressed, it became obvious that not everyone “in the Church” was the result of godly seed; many were carnal people who were never spiritually a part of the Church. Jesus wanted His disciples to understand, as Church history unfolded, that He had foreseen all along what would happen!

The next two parables in Matthew 13 make a different point, offering needed encouragement. The mustard seed is the tiniest garden seed, yet eventually produces a large bush where birds can perch. The parable of the mustard seed taught the disciples that the Kingdom of God, though appearing small at its beginning, would grow great (vv. 31–32). With the parable of the leaven, Jesus compared the Kingdom to the leaven that a woman worked into her bread dough. As she worked, leaven permeated the dough and the entire lump became leavened (v. 33). These two parables reveal that the Kingdom would not only start small and grow large; it would eventually spread everywhere and permeate everything.

Just as Christ had foreseen the disciples' disappointments in spreading seed, He foresaw that what He was preaching among a handful of people in a remote and obscure part of the Roman Empire would grow, encompassing the earth and beyond.

Two of the Matthew 13 parables stress the priceless value of the Kingdom that Jesus came offering. Christ compared the Kingdom to a treasure hidden in a field, so valuable that, when a man found it, he sold all he had and bought that field (v. 44). Anyone who finds such a treasure, and recognizes its true

worth, will make every sacrifice to obtain it. The Kingdom, of course, is a treasure of greater value than anything else we might possess. Jesus made a similar point, from a slightly different perspective, with the parable of the pearl of great price (vv. 45–46). Here, He compared the Kingdom to a merchant who recognized a pearl's great value, and sacrificed all he had to obtain it. The Kingdom is of indescribable value. Those who will eventually possess the Kingdom are those who recognize true value when they see it—and are prepared to sacrifice all for it.

The seventh Kingdom parable in Matthew 13 is the parable of the fisherman's net (vv. 47–50). Several of Jesus' original disciples were commercial fishermen, very familiar with casting a net and drawing in their catch. They knew that when the full net was finally drawn to shore, the sorting process began. Unclean fish, and those that were otherwise unsuitable to be sold in the market, were thrown back, and the others were made ready for use. So also it will be at the end of the age. Christ was explaining that God will sort through the "catch" of these fishers of men. The disciples would not need to worry about the final sorting out of those who responded to the gospel message. God will know who is who.

Parables of Judgment and Joy

Aside from these seven in Matthew 13, other parables also illustrate important lessons regarding the Kingdom of God. Some parables emphasize God's coming judgment, and the accountability required of all who are invited to share in the Kingdom. Along with judgment, however, we also need to understand a vital lesson about God's joy at

repentance. God is not only a God of judgment; He is also a God of great mercy.

The parable of the wicked vine-dressers is one of the judgment parables. Jesus spoke it shortly before His final Passover, and it is recorded in Matthew 21, Mark 12 and Luke 20—one of just three parables recounted in all three of these gospels. Christ directed this parable at the Jewish religious leaders, whom He knew were already plotting His death.

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These leaders had heard Jesus' message for three years, and had direct knowledge of many of His miracles, including His raising Lazarus from the dead after he had been dead and buried for four days. Several weeks before the Passover, when the priests and Pharisees received word of Lazarus' resurrection, they made the decision to kill Jesus (John 11:47–48, 53).

Jesus, knowing what they were plotting, brought it into the open and made plain the consequences to them. He told a story about a landowner who planted a vineyard,

let it out to keepers and traveled to a far country. Later, he sent servants to collect his portion of the harvest. Over several years, the keepers abused the servants whenever they were sent, beating some and killing others. Finally, the householder sent his son and heir, whom the keepers murdered so they could seize the property for themselves. "When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" Jesus asked in Matthew 21:40. The chief priests and Pharisees had to respond that the owner would undoubtedly take the vineyard from them, and give it to others who would properly render their dues. Jesus told them that their answer was correct, and that the Kingdom would be taken away from them and given to a nation bringing forth fruits. These religious leaders understood that the parable was directed at them, and became more determined than ever to eliminate Jesus (Matthew 21:45–46). Christ made plain that possession of God's heritage involves accountability and judgment.

In Luke 14, Jesus Christ recounted the parable of a man who invited many people to a great supper. When the time came for the banquet, and the servants invited the guests to come, those who were invited began to offer excuses as to why they could not come. They clearly did not attach much value to the invitation that they had received. The host then declared that none who had previously been invited would taste his supper; he told the servants to go out to the highways and bring to the supper the poor and maimed and blind. Christ's point was that if those who first received God's invitation to His Kingdom did not appreciate and value that invitation, others would be called to take their places. Again, with opportunity comes accountability and judgment.

Luke 15 records three parables that describe God's joy over repentance. The first two are short illustrations. One involves a man who had 100 sheep and lost one; the next describes a woman who had ten pieces of silver and lost one. The point of each illustration is that a diligent search was made for the lost item, and great joy was experienced when it was found. Christ then illustrated the same point with a longer story, the well-known parable of the prodigal son. This, too, is a story that illustrates God's great joy when a sinner comes to repentance. Remember that the story of the prodigal son is not only about the son who went astray, finally hit bottom and came to himself. It is also about the love of the father who saw him coming home, and went to embrace him and receive him joyfully. The Kingdom of God is not only a message about accountability and judgment, but also about the Father's great joy at receiving back those who were once lost.

The Kingdom Is Coming

As Jesus left Jericho, heading for Jerusalem with His disciples shortly before the Passover season of 31AD, there was excitement among those who were following Him. They just "knew" that the Kingdom of God was going to be established right away. Knowing what was on their minds, Jesus told the story of the young nobleman who went away into a far country to receive a kingdom and then return (Luke 19:11–27). Before the nobleman left, he gave ten minas to ten of his servants, with instructions to make wise use of it on his behalf. When he returned, having received kingly authority, he called his servants and demanded an accounting. Each servant was rewarded with a

position of rulership in the newly established kingdom based on what he had done while his master was absent. One was given rule over ten cities; another was given rule over


Jesus taught many lessons in parables, often about different aspects of the Kingdom of God. As we turn our minds to the good news of God's coming Kingdom, we should realize the importance of Christ's parables in understanding that Kingdom more deeply.

five. One servant who had not been productive at all had his mina taken away from him. The point of the parable was that the Kingdom of God would not be set up immediately; rather, Christ would go away to the Father—but would eventually return, and *then* would reward His disciples based upon their faithfulness and diligence in His absence.

One parable in Luke 14 concerns the common human trait of ambition, and the desire to advance by political maneuvering. While attending a large Sabbath dinner hosted by a leading Pharisee, Jesus noticed how the guests sought to achieve status and recognition by obtaining the most prestigious seats, to make themselves seem important. In response, He told His fellow guests a parable about a wedding banquet. Some guests at the banquet sought a prestigious seat, and were embarrassed when asked to move to a lesser place. Others willingly took lower seats, and were pleasantly surprised

when asked to move to a more prominent place. Christ's point was that those who seek to exalt themselves will be humbled, while those who humble themselves will be advanced. In worldly governments, the people who seem to advance are those adept at using political means to pursue ambition. In God's government, that is not the case: the way to advance is not by seeking high office, but rather by humbly pursuing service.

The last of the three parables recounted in all three synoptic gospels is one that Jesus spoke in the context of His Olivet prophecy. He had made plain that there were definite signs of the coming Kingdom, but that no one—not even the angels—knew exactly when it would be established. Jesus told His disciples: "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near" (Matthew 24:32). In the same way, when the various signs that Jesus had earlier described (recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21) begin to take place, His true followers will know that the Kingdom is drawing near. Just as summer shortly follows the budding of the trees, so the Kingdom will follow these signs within a single generation. While heaven and earth might pass away, Jesus declared, His words would not.

Jesus taught many lessons in parables, often about different aspects of the Kingdom of God. As we turn our minds to the good news of God's coming Kingdom, we should realize the importance of Christ's parables in understanding that Kingdom more deeply. While their real meaning is usually obscure to the world around us, Christ's parables reveal the mysteries of the Kingdom of God to those whom God is calling! 



International Corner...

Philippines Update

by Rod King

The Philippine Islands are a grouping of over seven thousand islands in the Western Pacific Ocean strategically situated in the shipping lanes of Asia. Considering their position, climate and population, it would be expected that the Philippines would have played a more important role in Asia than it has.

With a population of nearly 80 million, and an industrious and well-educated people, the Philippines seems to have missed opportunities that have come its way. Some have cited inept or corrupt leadership as the reason, but part of the answer surely lies paradoxically in the good qualities of the Filipino people, whose culture generally teaches them to be amiable and polite, and not to pursue power aggressively. As a result of this common trait, many Filipinos find it easier to respect and follow foreigners than one of their own. The country has paid dearly for this trait.

The Spanish ruled the islands for 350 years until the United States took control in 1898. After a short but bloody occupation by the Japanese in World War II, the country reverted to American control, then a year later the Philippines were granted independence.

Sadly, economic malaise and a lack of a clear national goal have left the country with high unemployment and debt. Overseas Filipino workers send a staggering US\$8 billion a year to relatives back home.

The greatest legacy of the colonial era is that 90 percent of Filipinos profess Christianity, with most of these being Roman Catholic. The Vatican thus plays an important part in the political process. Former Cardinal Jaime Sin is said to have influenced the outcome of presidential elections during his time.



Philippines ministers (back row, left to right) Gideon Benitez, Felipe Casing, Basilio Osillos, Freddie Benitez, Anastacio Catamco and Benito Parbo, pictured with Messrs. Tyler, Bryce and King (front row, left to right).

As we survey the history of God's Church in the Philippines, an interesting story emerges. The Church of God, Seventh Day had quite a presence here in the

first half of the 20th century. When Mr. Armstrong's programs and literature became available in the 1950s and '60s, many of these members became a part of the Philadelphian era God was building. Two of God's pastors serving in the Philippines today can trace their roots to the Sardis era. After the apostasy of the

1990s, many who were faithful to God's truth recognized where God was working and are now supporting Mr. Meredith in proclaiming the end-time gospel message.

The Church here is served by four full-time pastors: Mr. Felipe Casing, Mr. Gideon Benitez, Mr. Basilio Osillos and Mr. Benito

Parbo. Together they serve 650 people in 27 congregations. An office staff of three takes care of the Church's administration in Metro Manila. Mr. Abdon Buena, Mr. Sylvestre Bujau and Miss Merle Chua work in a small but efficient office in the central business district of Makati City.

Our members face day-to-day problems such as low incomes, health risks and, in Mindanao, the threat of terrorist kidnapping and extortion. Please remember them in your prayers, and you can be assured they are praying for you!

Australasian Update

by Bruce Tyler

Responses to the *Tomorrow's World* program continue to remain constant. With the closure of Channel 31 in Sydney, due to licensing issues, we are currently averaging 100 responses per program. These responses are mostly from Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth. The new Adelaide television station is not yet properly functioning. What is of interest is that we are still



Messrs. Bryce and King (back row) pictured with (front row, left to right) Philippines office staffers Mr. Abdon Buena, Miss Merle Chua and Mr. Sylvestre Bujau.

receiving many requests for literature from the Sydney area, as well as some very positive growth and subscriber interest. In the last month, Mr. Michael Gill commented that he has had 10 new visits, not including phone visits. Hopefully Channel 31 Sydney will be back on air sometime early in 2005. Each month we are adding an average of 244 new subscribers to the mailing list. Most of these are a result of the television program. Currently our *Tomorrow's World* subscriber list stands at 10,151. We presently have 417 individuals studying the *Bible Study Course* lessons. Co-worker numbers are also very encouraging. Since mailing Mr. Meredith's latest semi-annual letter, we have added 13 new co-workers. We now have a total of 90 co-workers. This means that God has blessed us with a 47.5 percent increase in co-workers since the start of the year.

A few months ago, we received a letter from our deacon in Thailand, Mr. Mehm Pho Saw. Please read the following and pray for the safety and well-being of our brethren there:

"We are constantly facing with some difficulties in our daily living status because Thai authorities are still looking at us as illegal immigrants although we are doing to the best of our ability of walking in the spirit with love, kindness, goodness and longsuffering. We are also unable to know when and where we can be able to have the rights of citizenship although my family has lost of country for 16 years. I would be very grateful if all of us are in your daily prayer forever. While I am writing this message, the rumor is spreading out that Thai border police and security officials will be investigating some Burmese in the village, so I have to tell all of our brethren not to leave their shelters for a few weeks. Even we have to close our gate doors and windows

while we are gathering for the Sabbath Service. Hundreds of Burmese are arrested every day at the police boxes. According to my 16 years experience in this border area, we never have free will on every occasion. We do not have faithful friends except God and ministers of the Church. Our happiest times of the year are the days of the ministers visiting. However, the voice of hymn singing is more beautiful on every Sabbath as our attendance is increasing. Right now I have already translated four hymns into Burmese. But the brethren have to sing quietly because of the security problems."

Mr. Rajan Moses recently visited the Thai and Burmese brethren. While in Thailand he held a Bible Study and anointed a number of people. Mr. Mehm Pho Saw has been seriously ill of late and was greatly encouraged by Mr. Moses' visit. He also received a beautiful get-well card from the Charlotte congregation. Mr. Meredith also signed the card with words of encouragement. Mr. Thomas Tial Ho in Burma reports that most of the Burmese brethren are doing well. In the past couple of months he has traveled extensively around Burma and into Thailand, performed a wedding for a couple of Church members and in May he went to Gangaw twice to console our lone member there, whose wife and daughter died within one month in May.

European Update

by Douglas S. Winnail

The first six months of 2004 have been encouraging for the work in Europe. We received more than 3,400 responses to spring booklet ads in the UK and Ireland. Ads for *The Real God* and *Restoring Apostolic Christianity* will run at the end of the summer. The German Web site saw a

27 percent increase in visitors (24 percent from within Germany) over 2003, with more than 2,100 booklets and 4,300 articles downloaded so far this year. In the first six months of 2004, the French Web site had more than 40,000 unique visitors, who downloaded more than 65,000 booklets, 11,000 articles and 4,100 sermons—for an increase of 578 percent over last year. We are also seeing an upswing in visit requests from a number of areas in the UK, Ireland and Europe.

Nicaragua Update

by George Schaubeck

On Friday evening, July 23, we had the opportunity of conducting a Bible Study with nine prospective members in attendance in the city of Rivas, Nicaragua. Some of them had previous knowledge of the Church of God, but this was our first personal meeting. The subject of the Bible study was the *Official Statement of Fundamental Beliefs* of the Living Church of God, which prompted a lot of interesting questions. The ability they demonstrated in understanding the doctrines was surprising to see.

We had services in the same city on Sabbath morning. The sermon's theme was on how God is preparing us now, while dispersed, for eternal life. We intended to visit several ladies in El Ostional, a coastal town, during the afternoon. We had to turn back about 2 kilometers from our destination, even though we had already traveled 22 kilometers on a road in poor conditions, faced with the threat of increased rains and crossing a rising river. With God's help, we were able to return without a problem—and now we have the hope that the people visited will stand firm in their interest and become part of God's chosen people.

We Are *Not* All the Same

By Lambert Greer

Does it make a difference which Church of God you attend? Today, there are more than 300 Church of God groups that acknowledge the Sabbath and the Holy Days. Only a few are organized bodies; most are very small and may represent only a family or a very few individuals. Of these larger Church of God bodies, some claim: “We are all the same.” This statement, however, ignores real and defined differences. In truth, we are *not* all the same. So we must ask the question: what difference do these differences make to you, as a member of God’s Church? Are they important to your salvation?

Some of the differences are quite plain. There are some groups that believe it is wrong for a woman to wear makeup. Some insist you must believe Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was the Elijah. Others practice differing forms of Church government. Many other doctrinal variations also exist when you compare teachings and biblical explanations. Many believe the “Work” is over. Among those that are doing a Work, most define the Work as “sharing their faith,” but they feel no responsibility to proclaim a warning message, as per Ezekiel 33.

Are any or all of these important issues? Do any of these differences affect your spiritual life—your growth, your character and your heart? Will they make a difference when you stand before Jesus Christ? Are the differences that separate the Living Church of God really important to you?

Years ago, when I was coming to terms with what was happening in the Worldwide Church of God, I spent quite a bit of time in debates that helped me focus more clearly on the issues about which people, although they were in the Church of God, disagreed. Some Church members told me, “You need to be more tolerant.” This advice came from friends, not enemies. This is an important point. We should certainly be tolerant of each others’ weaknesses, and of others trying to grow and change. But in terms of what we believe, and the faith we practice, Jesus Christ addressed this when He said: “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13–14).

If you were personally walking with Jesus Christ while He was on earth, in the flesh, how would you act? If you thought to yourself, “What I am doing here is really borderline; maybe it’s barely acceptable, but it’s not at all what Christ wants,” would you continue to do it? Of course not!

Jesus said: “And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Mark 7:7). Christ plainly stated that we can worship God, yet miss the mark, if we worship in error. Jesus said that the Pharisees and scribes were “making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do” (v. 13). The “effect” of which Christ is speaking here is what “enters the heart of man” (vv. 18, 19). We need to understand that true doctrine and correct practice will change the inner man. The “effect” is to fulfill God’s purpose. It is to prepare us for the Kingdom of God and membership in the very family of God (see also 2 Timothy 3:15; 2 Peter 1:2–3). The “effect” is the very *crux* of why the differences that distinguish the Living Church of God should be important to you.

Keeping this in mind, we need to examine key differences between the Living Church of God and the other “Church of God” groups.

Church Government

The first area—the one about which the different groups tend to say the most—is Church government. As we know, Church government in the Living Church of God has continued in the same pattern that God used in the ministry of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong believed very strongly that Church government is a central issue in the way God prepares us for His Kingdom. Some think Church government is just a “ministerial issue.” Is that all it is? When you pray for the Work of God, you acknowledge and embrace the way we work together and support one another. In the Living Church of God, we pray that God will inspire the leadership to lead according to the will of God. We do so in the structure of government from the top down, with the Council of Elders providing counsel as the scripture exhorts (Proverbs 11:14 and 15:22). We pray asking God to inspire the discussion and counsel given. We then pray God will guide His ser-

vant, Presiding Evangelist Mr. Meredith, to lead the Church according to the will of God. In our prayers, in our service in the Church and in our relationships with those to whom God gives responsibility, we learn to think in a certain manner. The foundation of our thinking is based on the structure of government in use.

Many in the Church of God like to debate the subject of government. There is a very simple principle that can help us understand what to do. The Apostle Paul wrote that we should “keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:14–15). When God has shown us His way, we ought not to discard it in favor of our own ideas. Remember that God Himself has only exercised one type of government. For nearly 6,000 years, mankind has tried different forms of government. But for how many *billion* years prior to that was God practicing government? And how many years *after* this 6,000 will government be practiced? We know what that form of government will be. It will remain the same.

You may have heard some say, “I don’t ever want to be under a one-man government.” There are those who say, “I want to have a voice.” The Bible records that someone said this in the past. “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God’” (Isaiah 14:12–13).

God had given Lucifer a position among the other angels, but Lucifer was not satisfied. He wanted to exalt his position. Did this please God? We know that it did not. Government plays an important role in preparing us for God’s Kingdom. If we believe that we are being prepared for eternity in the God Family, we should be living that way now. The reality, of course, is that we are under a one-God government. A human leader has a serious responsibility before God, and those who would take that responsibility onto themselves are taking a very serious risk with their own spiritual lives.

Correct Government Teaches Us “The Way”

Throughout the book of Acts, we find the Christian life described as “the Way.” When we attend the Feast of Tabernacles, people outside the Church often say of us: “That’s that group that has big Bibles and lots of kids!” And even though people may not understand our devotion and our focus, they appreciate how the brethren treat their facilities, and show people courtesy and kindness. That phrase—“the Way”—describes our Way of life.

That Way means living our faith in Christ. That faith extends into our personal life, and is also a description of God’s government, because it is faith *in* Christ (Acts 24:24). He is the Head. He is the One we look to. Yes, Christ works through the individuals He places in leadership. But it is faith *in* Christ that we practice as a Church.

While he was in prison, Paul wrote to the Colossians that he was “rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 2:5–7).

Ours is a Way of faith in Christ. He is our Head. He is indeed the Head of the Church. He is *alive* and He is very capable. By practicing the right form of government, we exercise a living faith—trusting God will guide and lead His Church in all things.

In the book of Hebrews, Paul wrote: “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:7–8).

It is interesting that many will quote verse 8, but do so out of context, not noting the verse that came right before. A similar statement comes later in the chapter. “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (v. 17). In other words, the issue is your salvation—your heart, your soul and who you are. He continues: “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (v. 20). Who is ultimately our shepherd? Christ is our Shepherd.

How, then, did Paul relate those “who rule over you” in relationship to Jesus Christ? As you read Hebrews 13, you see how Paul understood that Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd, who had control, working through and encouraging the brethren (vv. 20–21). Paul thus exhorted the brethren to follow the leadership that Jesus Christ had put in place.

This principle of God’s government also touches us in the home. God gives us instruction that, in the home, the husband is to be the head, and the children are to honor their father and mother. God says to the head of the family, “Husbands, love your wives” (Ephesians 5:25). You must be willing to follow Christ’s example and sacrifice for her. This is servant leadership.

Marriage counselors have observed that when a husband and wife have grown up in substantially differing

family structures—with varying assumptions about how to cooperate, how to adapt, how to make decisions, how to set priorities, and so forth—they are most likely to experience significant conflicts as a couple. When a husband and wife have widely differing expectations about “government” in their household, it is no surprise that conflict can arise. The family background in which you are reared affects your relationships in the family you create by marriage.

Why is this principle important to our salvation? Because God is preparing us now for His family! We are being prepared to be the bride of Jesus Christ. Would God prepare us in a way that is totally alien to how His own family operates? Of course not! We are preparing to join His family, and live the way He has lived for all eternity. He will make us His children, and we will honor Him. We are not going to call the shots.

Those who have difficulty understanding this point, and who trouble themselves with the issue of government because of problems in government in this life, have the wrong focus. They are focusing on this life—while our focus needs to be on preparing for God’s Kingdom.

Doing the Work

Another point that has distinguished the Living Church of God from the other Church of God groups is the Work that God is doing through us. You might ask: “How is the Work preparing me, and how will I benefit?” The Apostle John explained that God views our support of the Work as vital. What was Christ’s priority? “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34). That is an interesting statement, because we often look at what Christ did and think of it as His ministry. Yet Jesus Christ saw Himself as doing the Father’s Work, seeking to finish His work.

Christ saw that there was plenty to do. He said: “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” (v. 35). It is amazing that there are people today who say the Work is over. My children’s generation never heard Mr. Armstrong preach the message of the Kingdom of God. Since the death of Mr. Armstrong, more than a billion children have matured as young adults. There is still a Work to do!

Jesus continued: “And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors” (vv.

36–38). These verses make several important points. There is not just one operation in planting and reaping a crop, yet all who play a part rejoice together. When you support the Work, you are sowing. When people come to understand the Truth, they realize that the Truth reached them because of those who sowed before them.

And today, we see that we are often reaping what we have not sown. Many ministers, when visiting new prospective members, hear comments such as “Mr. Meredith reminded me so much of Mr. Armstrong” or “When I received the booklet, it was just like receiving something from the old Worldwide Church of God.”

Another point is that we are reaping as others carry out their responsibilities. We each have our responsibilities—we tithe, we serve in various ways—but by doing our part to support those around us we have “entered into their labors.” Others have labored, and we have entered into it so that, as Christ said, “both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together” (John 4:36).

The Ezekiel Warning

The Living Church of God also stands out from so many other groups because it takes seriously the warning message as part of doing the Work. How is this important to you? In Ezekiel 8 we read of the abominations taking place in Israel, and in Ezekiel 9 we read of Jesus giving His servant a mission: “Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer’s inkhorn at his side; and the LORD said to him, ‘Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it’” (Ezekiel 9:3–4).

This warning is not merely about those whom God is calling into His Church. It is a warning to a people engrossed in paganism, who will soon face great calamity. It is a compassionate message, given by God’s servants who are touched by the knowledge of the punishment awaiting these people.

When the Church acknowledges this warning message, and makes it a vital part of the Church’s message to the world, it broadens our focus and fixes it on the reality of end-time events. It reminds us that Jesus Christ must return to end the suffering that will otherwise destroy the earth. Without that focus, reminding us of the reality of what is to come, many people gradually become narrower and narrower in their focus, and eventually the only thing that is important to them is their own little world, or their own little fellowship.

What will God do to those who do not heed His warning? “To the others He said in my hearing, ‘Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary’” (vv. 5–6).

Do you care about the people around you in the world? It is very important to God that you care. In the Living Church of God, Mr. Meredith and the ministry help you and encourage you to care about what is going on in the world. Our vision as a Church is not just inward and about ourselves. It is about the responsibility we have, and what we look forward to. It is about much more than our own salvation—it is about God’s plan for all mankind.

God is not wasting 6,000 years! This time of man’s learning through the bitter experience of being subjected to Satan’s influence has a tremendous purpose in preparing the Family of God. Even though we as

our nations of their sins, talking about what the future holds—indeed, saying that God will, in time, “spank” our peoples. This is about having a heart that cares. We need that heart; it is important in this Work. It is helping you and me prepare for God’s Kingdom, and for His Family, and it is very important to your salvation. It is not just about Mr. Meredith, Mr. Ames or Mr. Ogwyn. It is not just about the Headquarters staff or the ministry. It is about each of us as a member of the body.

Being an Overcomer

Another important way that the Living Church of God differs from many other Church of God groups is that it stresses the need to be an overcomer—that each of us needs to personally walk with God. Perhaps you take this emphasis for granted. You might be surprised that many Church of God groups do not really stress this in their messages or their literature. Some acknowledge it, but do not emphasize it at all. In fact, in the

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Christians have been called out of it, we are witnesses to it, and we will not forget. We should be very grateful that we have been spared, and we should have compassion on the people around us who have not been spared. God is very concerned about compassion. Regarding his own people, the Apostle Paul wrote: “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart” (Romans 9:1–2). Those words would not be there unless they were absolutely true. God, who sees the heart, inspired those words, and they are a part of His scripture. Paul is sharing with us something deep within his soul. He goes on: “For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises” (vv. 3–4).

If you live in America or another British-descended nation—if you are a part of Israel—and you do not care, you do not share the spirit that the Apostle Paul had in his heart. If you do not believe that we should warn our countrymen, then something vitally important is lacking in your spiritual life. We in the Living Church of God are part of a Work that recognizes the importance of warning

Living Church of God, this message is being preached in a powerful way that has rarely been done in the past.

It is extremely important that you let Jesus Christ live in you. In the messages to the seven different churches of Revelation 2–3, they all are told that the reward is for: “He who overcomes.” We are here to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). It is not merely about what we believe. We are called to embrace a way of life that will change us. We have to work to make those changes. We have to strive. Paul reminded us: “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it” (1 Corinthians 9:24).

The Olympic Games were held in Mexico City in 1968. Mexico City is at a very high altitude, and pushes athletes to their limits. After finishing one of the events, three runners fell to the ground and collapsed into unconsciousness. They did not just collapse in weariness; they fell unconscious, and needed to be revived. But notice: they collapsed after they finished the race. That is the kind of effort Paul is describing. In the world, only one receives the gold medal. In God’s Kingdom, we each receive a reward of life eternal. However, beyond that, we will each receive different rewards that will reflect not

only our potential, but how we can best serve in God's family. And there is no position in God's family that will not be glorious, just as there is no part of the body that should not be cherished and honored. That is how God describes His Church—it is like a body, and we give honor to every member.

Brethren in Other Groups?

Do we have brethren in other Church of God groups? Certainly, we do. Mr. Armstrong said that we had brethren in the Church of God Seventh-Day. We have brethren in other groups today. This is a point that has confused some people. They think, "Well, if we have brethren in some other group, what's wrong with being there?"

How does God present this matter of different groups? Notice what He says to one: "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their gar-

We are a small group. Sometimes we are not able to do everything the Church did in the past. So it is important that we recognize our priorities. Jesus told the Philadelphians: "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" (Revelation 3:11).

ments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy" (Revelation 3:4). There are "worthy" brethren in Sardis. Notice what else God says: "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: 'I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead' (v. 1). Would you want to be in a Church where you had to strive mightily against the influence of so many around you? One of the functions of the Church is that we provoke one another to love and to good works.

Notice, in Revelation 2–3, that Jesus Christ is in the midst of all seven churches. People today often have trouble with that. Some think that because people in different churches are our brethren, we must therefore all be the same. If you think that, you have not read Revelation 2–3, because those chapters describe churches with Christ in their midst—but they are churches that are not alike!

In the Living Church of God, we believe that as we do the Work—as we follow the leadership of Christ, who has the key of David—we are Philadelphians. Is that important to you? Look at what Christ said to the Philadelphians: "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (Revelation 3:10).

This should be important to you. It is important to God. He wants us to persevere, not to be watered down or

stripped of our vision. Because we persevere, He promises to protect us. Let us understand: it is not that we would not accept our salvation if we had to be martyred, or to go through the Great Tribulation. Throughout history, God's people have given their lives, or been ready to give their lives. Great men of God died as martyrs. God's people put Him first, above all things. This is the very heart of a Philadelphian. Because we are Philadelphians, ready and willing to give our all—to persevere, and never give up—God promises protection.

We are a small group. Sometimes we are not able to do everything the Church did in the past. So it is important that we recognize our priorities. Jesus told the Philadelphians: "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" (v. 11).

Naturally, we wish that all our brethren were here in the Living Church of God with us. We wish they were learning right government. We wish they were part of a

Work that reaches out compassionately, recognizing that we need to carry to our nation and our world a warning message of what soon lies ahead. We wish they were part of this Work to be encouraged to walk with God personally, and to focus their lives on Jesus Christ.

But we need to understand that we are not all the same. We consider ourselves the Philadelphia remnant, but we should not wear that as a label. If we start putting that on as a label—"I am Philadelphian"—we miss the point. The point of Revelation 2–3 is a message of what we need to do. We need to look on being Philadelphian as a responsibility and a duty—something we strive to be—not a label that makes us superior to others. A label means nothing. What means something is that we are Philadelphian from the heart.

We are not all the same. Differences do exist. These differences are key issues. They are important to you as a member of the Church of God. The Living Church of God is helping each of us to be better Christians, and is giving us an opportunity to practice our Christianity, doing the Work that Christ commanded—preparing us for our salvation and the soon-coming Kingdom of God. LCG

This article is an adaptation and condensation of a sermon Mr. Greer gave on several occasions in late 2002. One version of the full sermon is available at www.lcg.org, in the Sermon Library section, dated November 9, 2002.

The Big Picture

(continued from page 3)

W. Armstrong—a visionary and successful businessman—to lead His Church, which had languished in relative obscurity for *hundreds of years* before. God guided him to go through the “open doors” of radio, the printing press and later television. The true message of the Kingdom of God was broadcast all over the world in a way **never** done before! Many of us were a *direct part* of that work. We are now the “*r e m n a n t*” of the Philadelphia era, continuing to preach the *full Truth* and carrying on the Work, even though the dominant “spirit” or approach of the Churches of God as a whole is certainly “Laodicean.”

Remember, God *never* condemns the Laodiceans for false doctrine. He only condemned them in this way: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. *So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth*” (Revelation 3:15–16). Sadly, it should be obvious to all with open eyes that most of God’s people today fulfill this statement *perfectly*. Many of them are “good people.” But they are **not** filled with zeal to carry God’s message around the world—going through the “open doors” to warn the entire world, and zealously clinging to the *full Truth* they were taught during the Philadelphia era!

As I have explained before, these and many other enormous prophecies have *already* come about. Many other events are *now* under way. And **only** the Church of God groups descended from Mr. Armstrong’s

Work understand most of these truths. Now the Work of the Living Church of God is powerfully “trumpeting” the message of the coming Kingdom of God as a “witness” to all the world as best we can—and at the same time lovingly, faithfully preparing a people for God and teaching them the right approach to the *very kind of government they will be administering* in Tomorrow’s World! So we should all *praise God* and **not** let ourselves become upset and turned aside by the “small stuff.”

As trials and tests come along, we need to truly *believe* God’s instruction through the Lord’s brother, James: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2–4). We must sincerely desire—hard as it may be at times—to learn the *humility* and *patience* that God wants us to learn so that we can be in His family **forever**.


Also, we must constantly read and reread 1 Peter 1:6–7: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Again, we are instructed to focus on the “Big Picture” as we go through trials and tests. We must get on our knees and *besech* God to help us truly **learn** the lessons of humility and **faith** that we need to learn, as we are “tested by fire” through the trials and tests that come—and that **will** come far more in the years just ahead.

When God first called the Apostle Paul, he sent Ananias to pray for him. God told Ananias: “Go, for

he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things *he must suffer* for My name’s sake” (Acts 9:15–16).

Are you willing to go through trials and tests to prepare for the reward of **eternal** life in the very family of God? Is it worth it? Will you try to keep your mind on the “**Big Picture**” instead of letting the “small stuff” upset you and turn you aside? I pray that this may be the case. For God is now giving us time to grow and “ready ourselves” during this period of comparative quietude. I sincerely believe that we are now in the “quiet before the storm.” We are getting ready for the **end** of the age. We are getting ready to **finish** the Work powerfully, before the **Great Tribulation** begins.

But our minds must *always* look *beyond* the immediate if we are going to make it. Our minds and hearts must *always* reflect this attitude that the Apostle Paul expressed: “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you” (Philippians 3:13–15).

May God guide, inspire and strengthen all of you to learn this lesson. May He help you to “back off”—mentally and emotionally—from the “immediate” situations around you and learn to focus on the **Big Picture**. *Then*, and only then, will you be spiritually mature enough to go through the coming trials and tests and to faithfully “endure to the end” that you may become a **full** son of God when Christ returns in glory! 

Consistency

(continued from page 7)

because they are out of control. When our children were little and I was at work, my wife would take all four of our children with her when she went grocery shopping. She was able to shop with them in peace—not because they were abnormal children with some genetic disposition for obedience, but because both unconditional love and consistent discipline were applied from the earliest years. The bottom line is that God's principles of child rearing work! He knows what He is doing.

We must remember that children, having acquired human nature, are attracted to disobedience like a magnet—and disobedience must be *dealt with* consistently. On the other hand, obedience and doing what is right must be *taught*. Proper child rearing is a huge dose of *child training*. Proverbs 22:6 instructs us to “train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Every rule or guideline should be logical and explainable. “Just because I said so” does not inspire the right motivation for long-term obedience. Instead of just telling a toddler “don't run into the street,” you can add: “I don't want you to be hit by a car and injured or killed.”

“Don't jump on the couch,” could be explained by “it will ruin the couch” or “you could fall off and injure yourself” or “it is distracting adults who are trying to have a conversation.” Then, after the explanation, *every* infraction must be followed by further loving discipline.

The foundational purpose of *any* discipline must be the child's well-being! The underlying reason for discipline should never be anger or a desire to “get even.” Most parents have probably, at some time, lashed out in anger when frustrated or exasperated. This is something that we should all work to overcome. Remember God's instruction: “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of

the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Children must learn and know that we discipline them because we love them. We really do want what is best for them, and we want them to grow up to be happy and successful adults as well as fulfilled members of the Family of God.

How crucial it is that we begin to teach our children today, no matter what their age, the vital lesson of “cause and effect”—blessing for obedience and correction for disobedience. This is the foundation for their eventual eternal life. My wife has a “theme scripture” for child rearing; she may have “worn it out” on our children, but I am extremely thankful for it: “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19). This is God's principle of child rearing for us as future sons of God. It should also be our principle of child rearing, with our own children, for their life-long happiness. ☞

Let Your Light Shine

(continued from page 2)

Nevertheless, it is good for us—as well as a great help to our immediate neighbors—if we follow, *as we must*, the teachings of Jesus' “Good Samaritan” parable. Remember that the religious leaders “passed by” on the other side of the road when they found a man in dire need. But an *unknown* Samaritan saw this man, and “he had **compassion**” (Luke 10:33). He took care of this man in every way, and even gave an innkeeper money to *continue* to take care of the man in need, until he could come again. He was a true friend—a true “neighbor”—to this man who had fallen among thieves. He had shown *mercy*. And Jesus said: “*Go and do likewise*” (Luke 10:37).

So when there is a genuine emergency or special need in *your neighborhood*, or with someone you pass by personally, then—as *you are able*—you are responsible to have mercy on those in need! We definitely should pitch in and try to help a person in our neighborhood who is

sick, and in need of food or care. We should help rebuild the home of someone whose house has burned down. We should pitch in—as best we are able—to help out if there is a severe flood in a nearby city or a ravaging wildfire, earthquake or other natural catastrophe. We will probably have *many opportunities* to help out in such situations in the traumatic years just ahead!

Even though we are small in number, we in the Living Church of God *should* try to “pitch in” and do all we can to develop the attitude and the habit of **giving**, helping, serving and **showing mercy** to those around us! This is good for us, as well as for the individuals in need.

In 1 Corinthians 12:12–14, we read: “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.”

In the above passage, we see that the *entire Church* is the “body”—the *physical instrument*—through which Jesus Christ works today. We are **all** involved! We each need to do *our part* in serving one another, serving the world and doing the **Work** of getting out Christ’s message all over the earth. As we grow in numbers, it may be helpful in many of our congregations to begin to have committees or “teams” of appointed individuals to visit and encourage the sick on a regular basis and call those who miss services occasionally to find out if they need help. We may want to have different teams of individuals to visit newer brethren, to have them over to our homes and to make *everyone* feel genuinely part of the “family” of the Church of God. This deep understanding and feeling that we are all “family” is very important for each of us to think about, pray about and cultivate in the way we interact with one another. In all of this, it is *vital* that we have genuine love and outflowing concern for others.

The profound teaching of Christian love we find in the writings of the Apostle John, and also in 1 Corinthians 13—the “love chapter”—should help all of us as we deeply *study* and *meditate* on these passages.

God speaks to each of us in 1 John 4:7–8: “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” Here our Creator powerfully tells us that we **must** learn to love one another if we are to be like God! This total *giving* of ourselves—this total *outflowing concern*—is more important than any other single quality!

The Apostle John was also inspired to tell us: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us” (1 John 4:11–12). So we *ought* to truly love one another and lay down our lives for one another—as *Jesus did for us!*

Of course, if we are to be honest about it, *this is not easy!* All of us tend to want to take care of the “self” much more than to take care of others. But we find throughout the New Testament that if we learn to *give* of ourselves, we receive much, much more in return from our Creator.

John wrote: “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also” (1 John 4:20–21). So as each of us meditates and prays about the profound need for love, mercy, forgiveness and continual *outflowing concern*, we will truly grow to be more like Jesus Christ—and His blessing will indeed come more powerfully upon the Church, the Work and each of us individually.

Jesus commands us: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35). Here we find that we are to *love one another as Christ set the example* with continual kindness, service and outflowing concern! In fact, as is the Sabbath, the outflowing *love* we show for one another is a *sign* that we are, indeed, the people of God!

As you think about the kind of person with whom you would like to share eternity, ask yourself honestly: “Would you like to be with other people who are always very **strict**, *demanding* and quick to **judge** you if you make even the slightest mistake?” Or would you rather spend eternity with a person who is indeed *conquered* by God and walking in His commandments, and who exudes warmth, kindness, mercy and *outflowing concern*—with *profound patience* for others when they are not totally perfect?

I think we **all** know the answer!

Since we are indeed in the process of being fashioned and molded to become like God Himself, it is *vital* that we learn—through God’s Holy Spirit within us—to *practice* the kind of love and outflowing concern exemplified by Jesus Christ. First, of course, we are to **love God** with all our being. That is the first and great commandment (Matthew 22:35–38). But the second commandment is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (v. 39). One of the most beautiful expressions of how to do this is found in the “love chapter” that Paul wrote, 1 Corinthians 13. I will not at this time try to expound this chapter as I have done so often in sermons. But please remember the final verse: “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the *greatest of these is love*” (v. 13).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us to let our “light” shine (Matthew 5:16). If all of us sincerely take to heart this matter, we can, as a Church, begin to be the kind of “light” Jesus talked about, more fully than we have ever been before. As the end of this age draws near—as horrifying trials, sickness and death are experienced all around us—we should let this draw us *closer together!* We should let this draw us *closer to God!* We should let this bring us *to our knees*. And we should be more willing than ever to truly *give* of ourselves to God *and to our fellow man* in love, kindness and service. For we **know** that *this* is the way to honor our Creator as *He* tells us. *This* is the way to eternal life and joy in the Kingdom and family of God!



Local Church News

Ordinations

On March 23, 2004, in Johannesburg, South Africa, *Mr. Hermanus Gerhardus Bouwer* was ordained as an elder by Messrs. Roderick C. Meredith, Syd J. Hull, Louis J. Bouwer and Christo L. Botha. Mr. Bouwer resides in Johannesburg, South Africa, and serves the brethren there.

Mr. Jonathan McNair ordained *Mr. Eddie Breaux* and *Mr. Donald White* as deacons, and *Mrs. Abraham (Velma) Vice* as deaconess on the first day of Unleavened Bread, April 6, 2004. Messrs. Breaux and White and Mrs. Vice serve the Lafayette, Louisiana congregation.

Anniversaries

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Ames, of Charlotte, North Carolina, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on August 12. Headquarters staff honored them with a small party at the end of the workday. Mr. Ames said he was delighted that several who had been at his wedding 40 years ago were present at the party—including Mr. Roderick C. Meredith, who had performed the ceremony, Mr. Dibar K. Apartian, who had given away the bride, and Elizabeth Martin, who had served as flower girl.

Mr. & Mrs. Ken Robbins, of Charlotte, North Carolina, observed their 25th wedding anniversary on August 9. Charlotte brethren gathered at the home of Elizabeth Martin on August 15 to celebrate the occasion. Mrs. Robbins said she was “overwhelmed” by the warmth of the gathering, and that it had a “family” feeling, which was especially heartening to her since this was the first anniversary in many years that she and her husband had spent without their children present.

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*, P.O. Box 3810, Charlotte, NC 28227 (or to send e-mail to media@cogl.org).

In Loving Memory

Gordon Ray Byerly died on June 20, 2004, at age 63, of complications from diabetes. Born in Forsyth, Montana, son of Ray Byerly and Helen Ennis, he married Roma Lusk on August 20, 1960. He was known as an honest man, with high integrity and a wonderful work ethic. He grew up with the Milwaukee Railroad literally in his backyard, and worked many years as a diesel mechanic. His love of railroading remained throughout his life. He loved his family. His grandchildren were all very special to their Papa. Baptized in 1972, he was a founding member of the Billings,

Montana congregation of the Church, and was ordained a deacon in 1975. He is survived by his wife Roma of Bozeman, Montana, and his sister Linda (Allen) Himsl, of Kalispell, Montana. He is also survived by his children J.A. Byerly of Garden Grove, California, Sindi (Wade) Hasler of Ogden, Utah, Mitch (Kathy) Byerly of Rapid City, South Dakota, grandchildren Sari, Casey, Stacy, Stephanie and Tristan Byerly, Jessica and Ashley Hasler and Elizabeth Gates and by great-granddaughters Abigail and Megan Gates. A memorial service was held on July 5.

Mr. Randy G. Tieken died on July 16, 2004, at age 60. A dedicated and long-time Church member, born in Waco, Nebraska, Mr. Tieken was ever helpful to all of his family and to the brethren. He was not interested in thanks; he had learned about the joys of giving and serving. He is survived by his wife, JoAnn, his daughter Janice (Matthew) Cox and grandson Wyatt Cox, all of Omaha, Nebraska; and by daughter Janelle of Roseville, Minnesota. Funeral services were held in Omaha, Nebraska on July 20.



New Booklet!

Twice each year, Mr. Meredith sends a “semi-annual letter” to each *Tomorrow’s World* subscriber. In that letter, he offers some new piece of Church literature to those who are interested.

This November, Mr. Meredith will be offering a freshened and updated version of a booklet he first wrote more than 40 years ago—*The Ten Commandments*. The booklet will be sent to all Living Church of God member households.

LCG Internet Update

Activity on the www.lcg.org and www.tomorrowworld.org Web sites has undergone an encouraging increase in the last year and, as a result of Mr. Meredith’s recent decision to greatly increase Internet advertising, we look forward to even more growth in the months ahead.

July 2004 was the sites’ busiest month yet, with more than 150 gigabytes of material downloaded, more than 73,000 visitor sessions and more than 300,000 page views.

Our Google AdWords and Overture Site Match advertising is bearing good fruit. At present, each “click through” by someone responding to an advertisement costs the Work approximately 15 cents. We are sending out, on average, slightly more than one piece of literature for every four “click throughs” to the sites. This does not mean that one out of every four visitors orders literature; the number is closer to one out of nine, but these visitors often request multiple pieces of literature.

To date, the sites have recorded visitors from at least 190 countries; the most recent new country to visit our sites was the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan.

Upcoming *Tomorrow’s World* Telecasts

WGN: Sunday, 6:00 AM ET

VISION (Canada): Sunday, 5:30 PM & Thursday, 3:00 AM ET

Air Date	Broadcast Title
September 5	Secrets of Revelation
September 12	The Beast of Revelation
September 19	The Antichrist Is Here!
September 26	The End of the World!
October 3	The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse
October 10	Who Is Burning in Hell?
October 17	Can You Trust Prophecy?
October 24	Will Christ Actually Come Again?
October 31	What Happens to You When Christ Returns?

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

Bible Study

“Proverbs 16:4”

By Charles E. Bryce

“The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Proverbs 16:4, KJV).

Everything that God has created has a purpose—His purpose. Everything that He has done, and everything that He has created, is for His purpose. He is love. He is kindness. He is compassion and forgiveness. So, His purpose is a tremendous purpose. It is for the good of all creation, and for the good of everything and everybody in that creation. There is nothing that is kind of “bootlegging out here”—doing its own thing, being its own person, walking its own way—except that God *allows* that because of free moral agency. But, even in that case, He makes it work for Him and work for His purpose. Even Lucifer’s rebellion—when Lucifer turned into Satan, and went throughout parts of the universe and all over the earth wreaking havoc—God has allowed it. He steps in and stops it here, and thwarts it over there, when He needs to. But He is even making that work for His overall great purpose of bringing mankind into repentance, and of helping mankind build character by overcoming the pulls of the flesh, the pulls of the world and by overcoming Satan the Devil. He helps us do that.

And: “...yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.” His plan includes the outcome for the wicked—not that He has predestined them to be wicked, because He

has not. Predestination is not “whatever will be, will be.” Predestination is not “fate”—that “no matter what you do, fate is going to see to it that it comes out a certain way.” What we do makes a difference. Predestination has to do with “group predestination.” That is, God would call a group of people to be in His Church and do His Work. But who would be in that group was not predestined. It depends on responding to His call. The same is true with the wicked. Nobody has to be wicked, but the outcome of the wicked is already set. They are going to be punished because they break God’s law, and if they do not repent they are going into the Lake of Fire and will suffer eternal death.

So, God’s great purpose—God’s great plan—will be carried out. Nothing can thwart it. In that great plan, He has made everything and everybody for a great purpose, but we have free moral agency either to fulfill that purpose (that is, to one day be a part of His family) or to walk away from that purpose (that is, to rebel and go our own way and then end up in the Lake of Fire—that’s what’s reserved for the wicked). That’s what it means when it says: “even the wicked for the day of evil.” They will not be allowed to continue to be wicked for all eternity. Once they have had a full opportunity, if they do not repent and change, then their outcome is already set. God has a purpose and a plan for the wicked who will not repent and who will not change—and that is eternal death.

The above is an excerpt from Mr. Bryce’s online Bible Study audio series on the book of Proverbs. A new installment is available each week at the www.lcg.org Web site.