

Living Church News

Vol. 7, No. 2

March–April 2005



Inside:

A Higher Level	3
An Inside Job	4
Do Not Be Deceived!	7
Final Things: Is Your House in Order?	10
Counting Pentecost	13
International Corner...	14
Spectator or Participant?	16
Local Church News	22
Commentary	24

Our Future Leaders

Dear Brethren and Friends,

Our Father in heaven is truly granting us the opportunity and the inspiration to greatly increase the impact of the Work. As you may know by now, we are testing *three* television options in Britain—and also plan to go on a satellite radio station there, God willing. This is *in addition* to the new television stations we are adding here in the states—most recently in Memphis, TN, and in Houston, TX. Together, these new outlets will add *millions* of people to our potential audience. So we *thank God* for this opportunity!

In the past, as you know, we in our former association were never able to have a really big impact in the British Isles. We did have Ambassador College at Bricket Wood—where I acted as Deputy Chancellor for a couple of years and which I had earlier helped establish back in 1960. But, in spite of this, our actual *Church attendance* never even reached the 5,000 level and was *far below*, proportionally, the attendance in Canada and Australia.

However, we did reach a few people in Britain, for a couple of years, through the “pirate” radio stations. Mr. Armstrong was given the *impression* that most of the people in Britain knew about us because of this and other outlets. But, as I learned from *all five* of the leading British ministers just a few months before Mr. Armstrong’s death, probably only about *1 percent* of the British people would even recognize the names *World Tomorrow*, *Plain Truth* or *Ambassador College*. Our low Sabbath service attendance certainly verified this, as well.

Personally, I helped get the Work started there on various trips including one in 1954, another in 1956, and another in 1960—when I held extended evangelistic campaigns and raised up the churches in Bristol, Birmingham and Manchester. Then, Mr. Armstrong asked me to stay on for several months to help teach, and help the college there become established. During those extended visits to Britain, my eldest daughter and next-older son were born. I *love* the British people, and have prayed for decades that we might do a far more powerful Work there. But, somehow, it just never worked out.

Now, as the *end* of this age approaches, the living Christ does seem to be opening up opportunities to genuinely affect the British people in a *significant* way. For years, as I just mentioned, I have prayed about this because of my deep interest in genuinely reaching the “mother country” of our English-speaking world. Now, dear brethren, I ask you in Jesus’ name to *please join me* in **praying fervently** that God will enable us to stay on these television stations, to obtain additional outlets on television in the future,

on radio and in the print media and to have a truly significant impact on the British people. Those dear people need to be reached with the full message of Jesus Christ and the "Ezekiel Warning" of the coming Great Tribulation—before it is too late!

On another vital matter, I pray that all of us can begin to pray, plan and work toward helping the youth in God's Church even more effectively. We on the Headquarters team here in Charlotte have recently had meetings on this matter with Mr. Gerald Weston—our Youth Director. We are very grateful for the excellent job, at the Living Youth Camp, that Mr. and Mrs. Weston have been doing for years—and for the tremendous help provided by Mr. Lambert Greer, Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan McNair, Mr. and Mrs. Sheldon Monson, Mr. and Mrs. Larry Solomon and so many others. There have also been many youth gatherings across the country with some of our key ministers and other leaders involved in helping conduct these programs, and some fine Bible studies and inspiring talks and programs for our young people. These must continue and even be improved upon as we go along.

We all need to think and pray about this need, and become involved! For our young people in their teens and twenties are the "leaders of tomorrow." We need to appreciate their potential and involve them more and more in our Church activities—and in various opportunities for leadership and service. They can become involved in serving the congregation in many ways, such as helping out in the parking lot, setting up chairs, passing out songbooks, participating in our music services and song-leading—and our young men can lead in prayer at Church services.

All of us who are older should be more than willing to step aside occasionally and give a young person this opportunity to serve and to genuinely feel part of the Work of the Church! Remember how David was looked down on as the youngest and the least important before he became king of Israel? He was almost overlooked before Samuel thought to ask his father Jesse, "Are all the young men here?" Then he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here'" (1 Samuel 16:11).

And why did Samuel anoint with oil this very young man, to be the next king of Israel? Before choosing David, God had instructed Samuel not to select the outwardly impressive Eliab. For "...the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart'" (v. 7). God saw David's heart. So, as with David, even in his teens or early twenties God might designate a young man as a future leader—though perhaps it would be a few years before he would actually take office or assume responsibility.

Remember that the Apostle Paul told Timothy: "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:12–13). Although he may have only been in his twenties when Paul wrote this, Timothy obviously

continues on page 21

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The Living Church News is published bimonthly by the Living Church of God, 2301 Crown Centre Drive, Charlotte, NC 28227. Subscriptions are sent without charge to all members of the Living Church of God and others who may request them.

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Postmaster: Send address changes to
The Living Church News
P.O. Box 3810
Charlotte, NC 28227

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A Higher Level

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

Mr. Herbert Armstrong often used to tell the Church of God that many among us were not truly “conquered” by God. Sometimes he also stated: “Only about *half* of you brethren are really converted.” Near the end of his life, Mr. Armstrong stated: “Perhaps only a **tithe**—only about 10 percent—of the Church is truly converted and **conquered** by God!”

In the years since his death, it has become obvious that these comments were essentially true. The Church of God since that time has been scattered and splintered, and many brethren have simply gone back to the world. Many thousands have stayed with the leaders of the greatest apostasy in modern times, rejecting nearly *all* of the basic truths that distinguished us as the Church of God. Can we understand and *learn* from what has happened to so many of our former brethren? And what about us? How can you and I avoid falling for the same types of false ideas coming from Satan? Even though we in the Living Church of God are sincerely trying to restore the *genuine* Christianity of Christ and the Apostles, are we coming up short?

Let us be honest!

As the well-known American philosopher and essayist George Santayana wrote: “Those who do not learn from history are doomed to

repeat it.” It is truly *vital* that we meditate and learn from the lessons of the past. We also need to realize how terribly *weak* so many of us are, and not kid ourselves about it.

The Apostle Paul wrote: “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). Even though we in Living Church of God are sincerely *trying to grow*, are we—perhaps unwittingly—comparing ourselves with one another, or perhaps with weak individuals we know in other groups? Remember, our *real* comparison ought to be with **Jesus Christ Himself!** When we make *that* comparison, we all come up very, very short!

Dear brethren, as the end of this age is surely approaching, I deeply feel that we must “get with it” beyond what we have ever done before. I am sure God wants us to take our spiritual growth to what I will call in this editorial, “A Higher Level.”

As one of the Church’s leading evangelists stated many years ago, God’s people tend to be heavily influenced by the general attitudes and moral levels of the world around them. We need to fully grasp this fact. We need to realize that many of the western nations are descending into a “moral sewer,” and that we as Christians must virtually “rescue” one another from this and reach a *much higher level!*

In Deuteronomy 4, we read of God’s warning to our forefathers: “When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make

a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed. And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. And there you will serve gods, the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell” (vv. 25–28). We as Christians must **not** assume that we are “okay” just because we are somewhat above the moral level of the modern Israelites who are on the verge of going into the *greatest tribulation* in human history!

God told our forefathers that, *after* they had been taken captive, “from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the **latter days**, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice” (vv. 29–30).

Brethren, I am sure that we would much rather “seek” God with **all** our hearts now rather than having to do this *after* we have entered into **slavery!** We must **not** watch the same type of television shows, movies, Internet productions and

continues on page 19

An Inside Job

By John H. Ogwyn

In the New Testament, Jesus seems to have rebuked no group of people more strongly and more frequently than He did the Pharisees. These rebukes and warnings are not recorded merely as a matter of historical interest; they are set down *for our benefit*. During this Passover season, as we engage in a time of self-examination, it is important that we come to understand a vital lesson that most Pharisees never understood.

Most of us are familiar with the beatitudes, a series of blessings that Christ pronounced for those holding and practicing seven specific attitudes and behaviors. Jesus enumerated them at the very beginning of what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew 5.

Many have not realized, however, that these seven blessings are paralleled by *seven curses* that Jesus pronounced on many of the Pharisees because of attitudes that they held and behaviors that they practiced. Jesus pronounced this series of “woes” just a couple of days before the final Passover of His ministry, as recorded in Matthew 23.

While a few Pharisees were undoubtedly sincere—Nicodemus and Saul come quickly to mind—most were simply “playing at religion.” They were actors, little different from the actors on the stage of the Greek theaters with which most of Jesus’ listeners would have been familiar. In fact, our English word “hypocrite” is taken from the Greek word for actor.

Did you know that even the Talmud acknowledges that most Pharisees were hypocrites? In fact, the Babylonian Talmud lists seven kinds of Pharisee, and six out of the seven were bad (*Sotah* 22b)! The six bad categories were:

- The “shoulder” Pharisee who wore his good deeds on his shoulder so everyone could see them.
- The “wait a little” Pharisee who always found an excuse for putting off a good deed.
- The “bruised” Pharisee who shut his eyes to avoid seeing a woman and knocked into walls, bruising himself.
- The “hump-backed” Pharisee who always walked bent double, in false humility.
- The “ever-reckoning” Pharisee who was always counting up the number of his good deeds.
- The “fearful” Pharisee who always quaked in fear of the wrath of God.

Finally, there was the seventh category: The “God-loving” Pharisee who sought to copy Abraham by living a life of faith and love.

Most of the Pharisees, in spite of all their talk of religion, totally missed the point of what God was truly seeking in them. The best that could be said of the few sincere Pharisees was what the Apostle Paul wrote: “For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:2–3). We should *deeply* understand the lesson that most Pharisees never understood—a lesson that should be especially meaningful to us during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Blessings and Woes

How can we know what God really seeks from us? A good place to start is by looking at the Sermon on the Mount—in which, right at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus laid out the approach to God’s law that was fundamental to the New Covenant. Christ began this teaching by describing the attitudes and behaviors that God would honor and bless.

Jesus first told His hearers: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). The poor in spirit are the very opposite of the proud and haughty who possess illusions of spiritual self-sufficiency and grandeur. The poor in spirit recognize how desperately they need what God alone can supply. Those who have that deep humility are the ones who will ultimately *inherit* the Kingdom that God is preparing. Contrast this with the stinging rebuke that Christ gave the Pharisees when He pronounced the first “woe” on them. These proud hypocrites “*shut up the kingdom* of heaven against men,” neither entering themselves, nor helping others to enter (Matthew 23:13). This woe is the exact opposite of the first blessing Jesus pronounced in Matthew 5.

Jesus’ second blessing may appear contradictory at first glance: “Blessed [the Greek word literally means “happy”] are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (v. 4). This describes an attitude of repentance. Ezekiel described this very spirit in Ezekiel 9:4, when God told the angel with the writer’s inkhorn to mark those who “sigh and cry” for the abominations of Israel and were to be spared God’s wrath. Contrast this with the second woe pronounced on the Pharisees in Matthew 23:14, where Jesus denounced those who make long prayers for pretense yet “devour widow’s houses”—whose continued behavior shows that they are not repentant, in spite of the

length of time they spend praying. Had they sincerely mourned sin, they would have changed their conduct!

In the third beatitude, Christ declared: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (v. 5). Those who are truly willing to let God fight their battles for them will ultimately inherit what all of the great conquerors who have struggled and fought were unable to finally obtain: possession and rulership of the earth. The Pharisees were indicted for going all over the earth to make a proselyte, yet ultimately making him a “son of hell” like themselves (Matthew 23:15). In other words, rather than inheriting the earth, they and their followers would inherit death.

Jesus’ fourth blessing is found in Matthew 5:6: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Those who truly crave God’s character and nature in this life will be blessed by being totally filled with it in the resurrection. In contrast, the Pharisees were not really seeking the true mind of God; rather, they took a legalistic approach and drew many artificial distinctions that let them avoid doing what they should. In Matthew 23:16–22, Christ pronounced curse and woe on them for making a distinction between oaths that were binding (swearing by the gold of the temple and the gifts on the altar) and oaths that were not binding (merely swearing by the temple or the altar itself). They were not really craving God’s righteousness the way a starving man desires food. Rather, they simply wanted their own way, while trying to give the illusion of obedience and piety.

Jesus’ fifth blessing was: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7). Mercy is a vital quality of our Creator, and it is a characteristic that He values greatly in human beings. We all deeply need God’s mercy, yet we can only partake of it if we are willing to dispense it to others. This contrasts with the Pharisees, against whom Jesus pronounced His fifth woe in Matthew 23:23–24. While they were very meticulous in tithing, right down to counting the leaves on their mint plants, they omitted judgment, mercy, and faith. Mercy, one of the weightier matters of the law, was totally left out of their scheme of things!

Matthew 5:8 records the sixth beatitude: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” What kind of heart does our Creator seek in us? One that is pure in motive and intent. Such a heart is not filled with guile and deceit, nor with hidden sins tucked away in the corners. An open, honest and repentant heart is clean and pure! By contrast, Jesus compared the Pharisees to those who scrub the outside of a dish while leaving the inside filthy. They were like white-washed tombs. Outwardly they appeared clean and beautiful, yet within was rot, decay and stench (Matthew 23:25–28). The continued presence of spiritual filth that made their hearts unclean and impure brought forth a solemn declaration of curses and woe from the Savior.

The seventh behavior on which Jesus Christ pronounced blessing is mentioned in Matthew 5:9: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” In order to be a peacemaker we must know and practice the way of peace—something the world around us does not understand. The prophet Isaiah declared that peace is the work or result of righteousness (32:17). Hypocritical Pharisees sought to give the impression of loving peace and righteousness, yet they possessed the same murderous spirit of their forbearers who had slain God’s true prophets throughout the ages (Matthew 23:29–33). Christ denounced this in the strongest terms, and pronounced curses and woe on those who clung to such attitudes.

In Matthew 5:10–13, Christ told His disciples that their spiritual blessing and happiness did not depend what others around them thought or did. Rather, even in the midst of persecution and false accusation from the world, Jesus’ true followers could rejoice, knowing the reward that lay ahead for them. Everything was put into proper perspective for those who genuinely loved and trusted God with all of their hearts.

What the Pharisees Failed to Understand

The Pharisees were greatly concerned about avoiding ceremonial defilement. Such defilement would exclude one from access to the altar, and prevent further participation in temple ceremonies until one could be cleansed. Desiring to be as holy and undefiled when they approached their own dinner table as any priest officiating in the temple coming before the altar—the table of the Lord—the Pharisees went to great lengths to identify and avoid possible sources of defilement. This became an obsession with them.

Despite their concerns about defilement, they fundamentally failed to understand the subject. Notice the exchange recorded in Mark 7:1–23, when the Pharisees criticized Jesus’ disciples for not practicing the Pharisees’ elaborate hand-washing ritual before eating. Jesus responded by quoting the words of Isaiah 29:13: “This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.” Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for elevating human tradition above the law of God. With clever legalistic reasoning, the Pharisees often managed to circumvent the clear intention of God’s law while appearing to remain within its letter. Jesus explained, by contrast, the nature and source of real defilement—that it does not come about by contact with outside things, but rather originates in the heart.

Jesus taught His disciples that food touched with unwashed hands could not be a source of spiritual uncleanness, for it enters the stomach and not the heart. Real defilement arises from the heart. “And He said, ‘What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from

within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man” (Mark 7:20–23).

The Pharisees failed to understand that cleanness, first and foremost, is not primarily a matter of externals; it is an *inside* job! Deleavening our homes for the Days of Unleavened Bread is designed to teach a similar spiritual lesson. As Paul explained to the Corinthians, we should not keep the Feast with the spiritual leavening of malice and wickedness, any more than we would keep the Feast with the physical leavening that we regularly eat throughout the rest of the year. Rather, we are to be partaking of the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:8).

Before conversion, we walked according to the course of this world, ultimately influenced by Satan—the prince of the power of the air—who actively motivates the children of disobedience. However, God took the initiative by sending His Son—our Savior—to give Himself in atonement for our sins. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8–10). We do not earn it or deserve it. We can never make ourselves good enough. However, we are *His workmanship*—and God is remaking us from the inside out.

Paul told the Colossians that if they had truly been raised from spiritual death to spiritual life, they would be seeking the things that are above, living in a quest for heavenly values. He exhorted them to *set their affection* (Colossians 3:1, KJV) upon things above. This is perhaps the greatest key to living a life of spiritual growth—we pursue and embrace that which we most deeply love and think about. If our hearts and minds are set on heavenly things, we will cherish them and hold them fast. We can never forsake a life based on self-will unless we love God’s will more. The Pharisees valued appearances and the approbation of other people, and many of their choices demonstrated that they cared more about what people thought than about what God thought.

God’s Power—Key to an Inside Job

The Pharisees considered the Sadducees and Herodians their bitter rivals. However, they were willing to cooperate to get rid of Jesus. Yet even after colluding to convict Him of blasphemy in the Sanhedrin, and delivering Him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, for execution, their worries were still not over. They thought they were finally rid of Christ, but they still worried about

His earlier statement that the sign of Jonah would be the sign of His Messiahship (Matthew 12:39–40). As a result, several of the religious leaders came to Pilate early on the morning of the First Holy Day of Unleavened Bread. They asked that a guard be posted at the tomb for the next three days. They told Pilate of Jesus’ promise to rise from the dead after three days, and they expressed their fear that Christ’s disciples would break into His tomb, steal His body, and spread the story that He had indeed risen. Pilate gave them the guard that they requested and allowed them to seal the tomb (Matthew 27:62–66).

The previous day’s events had certainly been unsettling to all in Jerusalem. Beginning around noon on Passover day, the sky rapidly darkened and the sun disappeared behind heavy clouds. It became as black as night for about three hours. Finally, just before the sky began to lighten, an earthquake shook the area so severely that structural damage was done to the temple. This earthquake broke the stone lintel that supported the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, ripping that heavy curtain from top to bottom. This exposed the Holy of Holies to view. In addition, the quake shook open some tombs in the Jerusalem area (Matthew 27:45, 51–52). As if all this were not unsettling enough, a lunar eclipse occurred that night. The earth’s shadow fell across the full moon heralding the Night to be Much Observed, peaking at about 9:00 p.m. Jerusalem time and causing the moon to appear blood red. Astronomers confirm that this eclipse, mentioned in Acts 2:20, occurred on Wednesday night, April 25, 31AD.

With all these unusual occurrences, which many of the common people considered to be portents, the religious leaders could not afford to take a chance on something else happening. They surely congratulated themselves on their foresight in having taken steps to prevent someone from breaking into the tomb. Of course, before the end of the wavsheaf Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread, they learned—from the very guards they had posted—that their plans had gone awry. The religious leaders intended that the guards would prevent someone from breaking into the tomb and stealing Jesus’ body. Instead, the guards bore witness that *no one had broken into the tomb*, which was already empty when the angel rolled back the stone early Sunday morning! The guards became eyewitnesses to the fact that the empty tomb was an inside job! They *knew* that no outsiders had broken in (Matthew 28:11–15).

What do true righteousness and the resurrection of Jesus have in common? Both represent *an inside job* that can only be accomplished by the power of God! Let us come to understand more deeply this Passover season what most of the Pharisees never grasped—the importance of an *inside job*! LCN

Do Not Be Deceived!

By Douglas S. Winnail

The Bible teaches us that Satan has *deceived the whole world* (Revelation 12:9).

How extensive is this deception? Jesus told His disciples: “Follow Me” (Matthew 4:19). He and His disciples kept the Sabbath and the Holy Days, yet history records that after the death of the Apostles, most who were in the Church turned to pagan practices of worshiping on Sunday (the day of the sun), and celebrating Christmas (the Roman Saturnalia) and Easter (dedicated to the goddess Ishtar)—*in spite of biblical prohibitions* (Jeremiah 10:1–3). The vast majority of professing Christians today simply *do not recognize* this deception!

Our modern scientific world has been deceived into believing the theory of evolution, even though experimental attempts to create life in keeping with this theory have *consistently failed*, and no one has been able to create a new species. In the last century, millions were deceived into believing in national socialism or communism, with tragic results! Millions today are told that fornication, adultery and divorce can bring happiness, and that biblical roles for men and women can be discarded without any consequence—yet these are also tragically deceptive ideas.

You can often recognize, quite easily, when *someone else* has been deceived. However, it is usually much harder to admit to yourself that *you* have been deceived. In this article, we will examine whether Christians who have been called by God can be deceived, and whether it is possible for even

the elect to be deceived. If our goal is to be in the kingdom of God, we must learn to recognize deception and understand how to avoid being deceived. The Bible provides vital keys to help us deal with this important challenge.

Targeting God’s People

Jesus called Peter to be a disciple and an Apostle. Yet when Jesus began to explain that He would be killed, Peter “took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying: “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not

4:3–4; 2 Thessalonians 2:9–12). From these verses, it should be obvious that individuals whom God called to understand the truth can be misled and deceived—and can fall away—if they are not alert and able to recognize deceptive thoughts, feelings and ideas. We must constantly remain aware of this!

Recognizing and Resisting

The first and most fundamental step in avoiding deception is to recognize that *Satan is real* and

The first and most fundamental step in avoiding deception is to recognize that *Satan is real* and that *his goal is to deceive*—especially to deceive those who have been called to understand the truth of God

happen to You” (Matthew 16:22). Jesus then told Peter that Satan had *misled* him in his thinking and reasoning (v. 23). Peter had been deceived! The Apostle Paul told Timothy that “all those in Asia [who had once professed belief] have turned away from me” (2 Timothy 1:15). Paul also mentions two individuals, Hymenaeus and Philetus, “who have *strayed concerning the truth*... and they overthrow the faith of some” (2 Timothy 2:17–18). Paul clearly wrote that, as the end of the age approaches, some “will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” because they were deceived and lost their love for the truth (2 Timothy

that *his goal is to deceive*—especially to deceive those who have been called to understand the truth of God. Jesus told Peter: “Satan has asked for [desired] you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail” (Luke 22:31–32). However, just knowing and believing this truth is not enough. The second step in avoiding deception is that we must be able to *recognize how* Satan tries to deceive us. Paul warned Christians that they should *not be ignorant of the devil’s devices*, “lest Satan should take advantage of us” (2 Corinthians 2:11). Satan has a whole “bag of tricks”—devious methods, which

he uses to deceive—that we must be able to recognize if we are to avoid being misled. Yet merely recognizing Satan’s methods is still not enough; we must also *resist* Satan’s cunning efforts. Peter wrote knowingly about this: “Be sober, be vigilant; because

believing or spreading lies about people, unless we actually take the time to get the real facts—which usually involves hearing and evaluating *both* sides of a matter (Proverbs 18:17). We may actually be deceived into *living a lie* if we

opment of those qualities (Philippians 4:8).

When problems arise between people, the biblical admonition is to go *directly to the person* who has been offended (or has offended you), and prayerfully and respectfully try to resolve the issue (Matthew 18:15–20). This takes patience, humility, wisdom and courage. It also requires faith and trust in God that His advice should be followed. However, people often find it much easier to ignore a problem, hoping that it will go away, or to go to *someone else* (friends or others not directly involved), to talk about their pain and frustration! However, talking widely of a problem instead of following the counsel of Matthew 18 does not solve the problem—it only makes it worse. It is simply not how a Christian is to function. But it is another way that Satan can deceive us, if we are not careful!

Satan and his deceptive methods are the cause of *confusion and division*, whereas, God’s methods produce peace, harmony and peace of mind (1 Corinthians 14:33). We are told that Satan is the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4), which can help us understand why there is such a bewildering array of religions and religious ideas in the world. However, Satan even works to divide churches that claim to be “Christian” or “the Church of God” by fostering contentions and disagreements over doctrines, practices and personalities (1 Corinthians 1:10–17). Unless we are carefully *following the truth*—and following the Christian leadership of those who are clearly *preaching and practicing the truth* (1 Corinthians 11:1)—we can easily be deceived into following an individual or an organization that only *claims* to be preaching a Christian message! God’s true Church does not have different “denominations” that believe and practice different things, but is composed of individuals who are led

We can also be deceived into believing or spreading lies about people, unless we actually take the time to get the real facts—which usually involves hearing and evaluating *both* sides of a matter (Proverbs 18:17).

your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. *Resist* him, [remain] steadfast in the faith” (1 Peter 5:8–9). James commented: “Therefore submit to God. *Resist* the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:7–8). But *what methods* does Satan use that we must recognize and resist if we are to avoid being deceived?

Satan’s Methods

The Bible informs us that Satan is a *liar* who *promotes lies* (John 8:44). If we accept or believe his lies, we can be deceived. When Paul advised, “Test [prove, examine] all things; hold fast what is good [true],” he was offering advice against being deceived (1 Thessalonians 5:21). John wrote that we must “test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Not every thought, idea or doctrine that is presented or assumed to be “Christian” is actually coming from God or the Bible; some may be cleverly conceived deceptions. We can also be deceived into

profess to be a Christian but reject—or do not really believe and follow—Jesus’ plain teachings.

Scripture describes Satan as an *accuser of the brethren* (Revelation 12:10). Anyone who gossips and spreads rumors about other people, or who assigns motives incorrectly or where no motives exist, can slip into this satanic deception and unwittingly become a tool in Satan’s hands. This is why Jesus said: “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Matthew 7:1–5). Our goal as a Christian is to focus on getting our own life in order, instead of being eager to point out others’ faults. Paul offered a similar warning, that “if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another” (Galatians 5:14–15). Paul knew that comments about other people could be very destructive, and that a willingness to make such comments (for example, about a person’s conversion or motives or actions) does not reflect real Christian love. If we make comments like this about others, we are *deceiving ourselves* that we are Christians! Real Christians are not naïve, but they look for the positive aspects of others whom God is calling, and they *encourage* the devel-

by the *same spirit* (Ephesians 4:4) to be “perfectly joined together in the *same mind* and in the *same judgment*” (1 Corinthians 1:10). To believe or teach otherwise is to be deceived!

Satan also carries out deception by *blinding* us to the true origin and nature of our own thoughts and feelings. Even as a Christian, not every thought or feeling comes from God. God states plainly in Scripture: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways” (Isaiah 55:8). Solomon warned: “There is a way that *seems right* to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12). Jeremiah observed that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). One of the regrettable and unpleasant discoveries that most people make at some point in their lives is that we can deceive ourselves through our own human reasoning. This is why the Bible advises: “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the *multitude of counselors* there is safety” (Proverbs 11:14). If we take the time to seek counsel from God’s word through prayerful study—as well as from God’s ministers, and from older and more experienced people who are willing to tell us what we may not want to hear about ourselves—we can usually avoid being deceived. However, this takes effort, and it is often not what we are inclined to do. It is much easier to dwell on our own thoughts and feelings and to nourish our real or imagined hurts. Doing so can lead us into deception.

Notice that the Bible reveals that we can even be deceived into *fasting* for the wrong reasons! Isaiah warned that some people, believing that they are religious, will fast “for strife and debate” so that their particular ideas about a doctrine or practice might prevail (Isaiah 58:4–7). When individuals fast for this reason, it may even be due to a lack of understand-

ing of how God works in His Church through those He places in positions of responsibility (1 Corinthians 12:18, 28–30; 1 Timothy 4:11–16; Titus 1:5–11). A person with a truly converted attitude is teachable and responsive when godly authority is exercised in Church matters (James 3:13–18). However, if we do not like to respond to this kind of governmental authority, we can be deceived into accepting and promoting wrong ideas (2 Peter 2:9–17)—by the very being who gained the name “Satan” (the “adversary” or “hostile opponent”) by *opposing God* and *promot-*

kind of unity does not just suddenly appear as a result of prayer and fasting. It comes as a result of following God’s instructions, which promote unity—and which teach us to recognize and resist Satan’s attempts to undermine and destroy unity through his deceptions. To achieve true unity within the Church of God, we must resist the temptation to spread rumors and accusations that may *seem* true to us, yet may not really be true at all. We must learn that going directly to someone whom we have offended (or who has offended us) is better than talking to others about


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ing his own ideas (Isaiah 14:12–14). It is sobering to realize that while we may be *sincere in our intentions*, we may nevertheless be sincerely wrong—and can be deceived—if we do not see the “big picture” of how the government of God functions. And God does have government in His Church (see Isaiah 9:6–7; Acts 15; 1 Corinthians 4:14–21).

God’s Goal

The Bible reveals that God places a very high premium on unity. David wrote: “How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Psalm 133:1–3). Paul stressed that Christians should strive for unity within the Church—doctrinally and socially (see Ephesians 4:1–16; Romans 12:9–19)—which reflects the unity within the God Family (John 10:30; 17:11). However, this

the problem. We must learn the value of seeking experienced and objective advice, and must beware of placing too much trust in our own opinions and feelings or those of people with whom we may commiserate. We must also come to understand that decisions on doctrinal matters are to be made by those God has placed in positions of responsibility—and that, when we begin to spread our own ideas about doctrines and practices, this leads to division and disunity, and plays directly into the hands of Satan, the deceiver!

Deception is a very serious trap that every Christian must strive to avoid. However, with the keys that God has revealed in His word, we can meet and overcome this challenge. We need to learn to use these important and practical keys so that we can avoid being deceived, and can be in the Kingdom of God! 

Final Things:

Is Your House in Order?

By J. Davy Crockett, III

The news was sudden and unexpected. One day he was planning a new venture, having recently retired from his trade of many years. A stroke interrupted all of those hopes, dreams and plans, and in 24 hours he was gone, his life cut short to the utter dismay of his family and friends.

After the funeral, when friends and relatives had gone back to their own homes and their own lives, the reality of dealing with the practical, mundane things pertaining to a family's business came crashing in upon the survivors. Bank accounts, pensions, real property, personal property, debts, assets—the grieving survivors had to deal with so many details. Sadly, in this tragic case, there was no Last Will and Testament to guide the family and to ensure that the deceased's desires would be carried out.

This story actually happened, and the hardship and confusion resulting from the lack of having a last will was very real for the widow and surviving children.

It is a story that is repeated all too often. People in every walk of life—young, middle-aged and elderly—die as a result of accident, disease or “natural” causes, without having put their personal business affairs in order by preparing a Last Will and Testament. The problems caused by this lack of preparation make it very difficult for

those who are left. Sadly, like many in the world, members of God's Church often neglect this very important duty to their family.

What is the Bible's perspective on the subject? Death is a reality for all of us: “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Jesus Christ made it plain that we are to be concerned about how our actions affect others' lives. He said: “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). This principle, known as the Golden Rule, certainly applies to the subject of estate planning. Christ said of those who follow His example: “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:17). Not only did Jesus Christ teach us to be concerned about others, He also set a perfect example in making preparations. John recorded Christ's words: “...I go to *prepare* a place for you” (John 14:2). Solomon, exercising godly wisdom, alluded to planning for those who come after us when he wrote: “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children” (Proverbs 13:22). To accomplish this laudable goal will require proper planning of your estate, whether large or small.

The sudden loss of a loved one—especially a “breadwinner”—can create genuine hardship and financial uncertainty

for a family. To prevent such hardship and uncertainty, families should plan and prepare. Paul was inspired to set the standard for us in his letter to the church at Corinth: “For God is not the author of confusion... Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40). He also wrote: “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8). An important part of providing for one's family is to be prepared for the unexpected, including death or disability, especially in our child-rearing years and as we grow older.

The Old Testament also contains some plain instruction with vivid examples. The prophet told King Hezekiah: “Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live” (Isaiah 38:1). Abraham, “father of the faithful,” went through much negotiation with the sons of Heth to secure a burial place for Sarah. After paying the price, he obtained a deed to the cave and fields of Machpelah near Hebron, and there he buried his beloved Sarah (Genesis 23:1, 3–4, 16–17, 20). Later, Abraham was also buried there. He did not leave these important details to chance, or for others to arrange. Subsequent generations also used this burial site; we see that Israel planned for his burial, and received a promise from his

sons that his wishes would be carried out (Genesis 49:29–33).

At that fateful Passover in 31AD, Joseph of Arimathea stepped out of the shadows, claimed the body of Christ from the Roman authorities, and placed it in a new, rock-hewn tomb that he had ostensibly prepared for himself. His own planning served a great purpose that he could not have foreseen when he was completing his own arrangements.

So we can see that, as human beings, we must be keenly aware of unpleasant realities and prepare for the inevitable. Such is the biblical example.

In the book of Hebrews, the Apostle Paul describes the physical

testator lives” (Hebrews 9:16–17). Christ died so that His will—that we receive a spiritual inheritance—could be accomplished.

When a person dies “intestate”—without a will—the laws of the state or province in which he or she lived will determine how the person’s property, both real and personal, will be distributed. This usually involves the courts, and requires the appointment of an administrator for the estate—all of which is time-consuming and expensive. When a person has a valid will at the time of death, this is referred to as being “testate,” and it greatly facilitates the payment of debts and distributing property according to the wishes of

he drove his truck on his appointed rounds, another vehicle crossed the center line of the highway and struck him head-on, causing his truck to burst into flames and killing him instantly. This is a brutal, real-life example of the dangers of modern living, which vividly points out the need for us all to be prepared.

God wants His people to be good stewards of the blessings that He gives us, and to provide for those who depend upon us in case we are suddenly taken away. In modern times, we accomplish this by having life insurance, as well as disability and accident insurance, and by keeping our affairs in order so that our heirs will know our wishes and

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tabernacle and the priestly services that pictured or symbolized Christ’s sacrifice and various aspects of His office and ministry. Paul explained that the old “testament” or covenant contained promises of a physical inheritance, but that Christ, as mediator of the New Testament (covenant) conveyed “the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Hebrews 9:15). The principle is that we learn about spiritual things from physical things (1 Corinthians 15:46).

Throughout the Bible, we see that final planning was done in both physical things and in things spiritual. Paul used the very clear example of a testament, or will, to explain the significance of the Messiah. He wrote: “For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the

the deceased, with a minimum of delay and expense.

So, while it is never pleasant to contemplate the end of one’s life, the most loving thing to do is to plan for our death and consider the ramifications for the benefit of those who will survive us. In fact, every adult should have a Last Will and Testament. This is especially important for anyone who has dependents or heirs. But, you may say, “I don’t have anything to pass on to others,” or “I’m too young to bother with such details; I’ll do that when I’m older.” Proverbs 27:1, however, exhorts us: “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.”

I once knew a young man, not yet 30 years old. On one fine morning, he kissed his wife and three children goodbye and cheerfully went off to work. Later that morning, as

be able to carry out their responsibilities when we die.

By expressing your desires in a formal Last Will and Testament, you can prevent economic hardship, confusion and acrimonious dealings within your family. There are simple forms found in “do it yourself” will kits for basic, uncomplicated wills, but most people will be better served by an attorney who practices family law or estate planning. Many are intimidated by the whole process, and simply never get around to it. However, it is very important that we get out of our comfort zone and tend to this matter—for our peace of mind, and for the benefit of surviving family members.

What are the basic requirements for a will? In most states, for a will to be valid it must follow strict guidelines as to signing, witnessing and notarizing. In the United States,

requirements vary from state to state. To make a will, you must be “of legal age and sound mind.” All U.S. states consider age 18 to be legal age. To be “of sound mind” means to be able to grasp the nature and purpose of the document, and not mentally handicapped or deranged.

A will can be handwritten (this is called a “holographic will”), but this is not recommended in most cases. All wills must be in writing. Photographs or videotapes are not considered writing, and are not valid as wills. To be valid, the will must be signed by the testator. Most states require that the testator’s signature be acknowledged by at least two witnesses.

The will can contain specific bequests of property to whomever the testator desires. It can be very detailed, or it can be very simple, depending upon the circumstances and the desires of the testator. The document should name an executor

and a contingent executor, and the terms of their service and remuneration, if any. The will can also contain instructions for the deceased’s funer-

your wishes. A letter of instruction can provide a list of the estate’s assets, such as bank and investment accounts, stock and bond certifi-

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al, specific instructions for the care and guardianship of minor children, and any other legal purpose.

In addition to a Last Will and Testament, it is wise to have a companion document known as a “letter of instruction.” This is a cost-free personal document which is not legally binding, but which can be very useful to those carrying out

ates, real estate documents, retirement accounts, including 401(k) plans and individual retirement accounts, life insurance policies, assets held in trust, and any post-death benefits due from employers, the Veterans Administration or the Social Security Administration.

continues on page 18

The Executor’s Checklist

- Locate the will
- Obtain a lawyer, if necessary
- Apply to appear before the probate court
- Notify beneficiaries named in the will
- Arrange for publication of notice to creditors and mail a notice to each known creditor
- Send notices of the person’s death to the Post Office, utilities, banks, and credit card companies
- Inventory all assets and have them appraised, if necessary
- Collect debts owed to the estate
- Check with the deceased’s employer for unpaid salary, insurance and employee benefits
- File for Social Security, civil service or veteran’s benefits
- File for life insurance and other benefits
- File city, state, and/or federal tax returns
- Pay valid claims against the estate
- Distribute assets and obtain receipts from beneficiaries
- File papers to finalize the estate

–Source: “Being an Executor,” *Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, New York, New York.*

COUNTING PENTECOST

By John H. Ogwyn

Pentecost is the only annual Holy Day commanded by God that does not come on a specific date. Rather, it is *counted* year by year, always falling on day 50 of a count that begins with the wave sheaf offering on Sunday.

Normally this is a simple calculation, but questions inevitably arise during years when the Days of Unleavened Bread begin on a Sunday and end on a weekly Sabbath. Would the wave sheaf have been offered on the first Holy Day, or on the Sunday after the last Holy Day (thus falling *outside* the Days of Unleavened Bread)? The year 2005 is such a year, and it is important that we understand the Bible answer to this question.

First, we should review God's instructions in Leviticus 23:4–21. After reminding Israel about the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, God added instructions that would only apply *after* the nation had crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land: "When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest to the priest" (v. 10). The priest was to "wave the sheaf before the LORD" on the "day after the Sabbath" (v. 11). This began the 50-day count to Pentecost (vv. 15–16). Only after this ceremony could the people begin eating the new harvest (v. 14).

Keeping these instructions in mind, we can look ahead almost 40 years to the very first Passover season after Israel entered the Promised Land. Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered the land on the tenth day of the first month (Joshua 4:19). Immediately afterward, those who had been born during the wandering in the wilderness were circumcised (5:2–9).

The Israelites encamped in Gilgal, and "kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho" (v. 10). We then read that "they ate of the produce of the land **on the day after the Passover**, unleavened bread and parched grain **on the very same day**" (v. 11). The manna ceased, and Israel "ate the

food of the land of Canaan that year" (v. 12). Considered in the context of Leviticus 23:10 and 23:14, *this can only mean* that the wave sheaf was offered on the day after the Passover: the first Holy Day of Unleavened Bread. In other words, the first day of Unleavened Bread came on a Sunday, that year—and that was when the wave sheaf was offered, *not* on the Sunday that came a week later, **after** the two Holy Days of Unleavened Bread. Remember, food preparation was specifically permitted on the two Holy Days of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:16).

Think about it! If Israel had begun to eat parched ears and bread from the harvest of Canaan before the wave sheaf offering, this would mean that the first thing they had done upon entering the land was *ignore Moses' clear instructions* in Leviticus 23:10. We know that this did not happen, because we are specifically told that Joshua "*left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses*" (Joshua 11:15).

Some become confused when they see that the *King James Version* and *Strong's Concordance* both wrongly refer to Israel eating the "old corn" rather than the fresh harvest in Joshua 5:11–12. No other major translations or reference works make this mistake, and any Hebrew lexicon will demonstrate that the Hebrew word used here in Joshua *does not* refer to consuming the previous year's harvest. Remember that any old grain from the previous spring would have been stored within the city walls of Jericho in preparation for the siege. *Only the grain in the field* would have been accessible to Israel. Furthermore, we are told that *Israel ate parched grain* on the first Holy Day—a reference to the means of preparing *still-green ears of barley*, not grain that was a year old.

We are *not* left to speculation or human reasoning to determine when to begin the Pentecost count. Rather, God has preserved an example in Scripture to make the point clear. When we observe Pentecost on June 12 this year, we can know that we are following the example God has given in Scripture. ☐



International Corner...

Canada: Poised for Growth

by Gerald Weston

Canada seems poised for significant growth in 2005. The arrival of Michael and Roslyn Elertson is already helping out immensely at the Canadian office. Roslyn is busy answering phones, doing data entry and handling various other chores three days a week. Prior to her arrival, we were only able to take messages on our toll free number, but now she answers many calls as they come in. When she is not available, calls are automatically forwarded to my wife or to one of the men in the office. This has been made possible by a new phone system.

Mr. Elertson and I traveled to Newfoundland from February 2-8, and visited nearly all the members and prospective members on the island. While there, we held a Public Bible Study in Grand Falls-Windsor. Attendance was low because of freezing rain that fell early in the morning of the Bible Study, but those who did show up were very interested—and three have started attending with us. Some family members also attended who do not usually attend, which brought the attendance to 24, a big jump from last year's average weekly attendance of nine.

The main benefit of this trip was to better understand how best to serve the brethren there. Newfoundland is a beautifully rugged place, affectionately known as "The Rock." Currently, we do not have a resident pastor to serve the members there, and up to this time the members have only seen a minister about twice a year. By taking time to visit the members and other interested

people in their homes, and to get a feel for the roads and travel conditions they face, we were able to see more clearly what is needed. The move from Springdale to Grand Falls-Windsor was a major improvement, and by starting a second congregation in or near Deer Lake, we can more than double, or possibly triple, the number of people in attendance.

Our next trip is scheduled for Alberta, where Mr. Elertson and I plan to help Mr. Wachowicz by visiting a number of the members and prospective members in the southern part of the province. We will also be checking out a Feast site and conducting two Public Bible Studies in Grande Prairie.

The following week we are planning a Public Bible Study for Mississauga, where we have more than 1,600 subscribers. We hope to build up this congregation a little and then begin a congregation on the east side of Toronto, where the majority of new contacts are originating. We have enough to start a small group there right now, but before doing so we plan to hold a Public Bible Study to see who might show up. The potential here in Toronto is huge and, if God blesses our efforts, we could see a significant step forward in the Canadian Work.

We are also looking at Barrie, Ontario (where we already have a very stable congregation) as another location for a Public Bible Study before the Spring Holy Days. If God

calls people from that area, Mr. Winston Gosse is well-positioned to work with them. We are also looking at two other locations in Ontario where we have seen significant interest over the last several years.

Television responses have been very strong since the beginning of the year, and our early morning programs on Vision TV have made a huge difference in the total number of calls. British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario have benefited most from these four additional time slots. Vision TV also plans to start a Christian network channel that we are ready to go on, but it has been delayed until at least the latter part of this year or into the next. That will be a huge door when and if it does open.

While we can never know what God has in mind for us, we are very encouraged by the direction the Church is going here in Canada. It is

far more difficult to evaluate the spiritual growth that is taking place, but we saw 26 baptisms in 2004 and we trust that Christ living in us is producing even more encouraging results in the

lives of God's children here and around the world.

Papua New Guinea

by Kinnear Penman

Wewak is the home of our elder in Papua New Guinea, Mr. Peter Devis, and his family. Wewak is a



Wewak, Papua New Guinea congregation

town on the northern coast of the country, and is about one-and-a-half hours by jet from the capital, Port Moresby, and is where the Papua New Guinea brethren meet for services each Sabbath.

Immediately behind the town are very rugged jungle-clad hills, which are dotted with many villages. Beyond the hills are the plains and grasslands of the mighty Sepik River, which winds for hundreds of kilometers right across to the border of the Irian Jaya province of Indonesia, which makes up the western part of the island of New Guinea.

Most people in Wewak live in squalid squatter settlements in swampy land on the town's periphery and are unemployed or rely on meager subsistence earnings. There is much crime—and it is crime that had a hand in bringing me here.

Late last year, Mr. Devis' office was broken into, and his computer and printer were stolen. This left him unable to carry out many of the regular duties for which we depend upon the computer in this modern age. Regional Director Mr. Bruce Tyler asked New Zealand office employee Joshua Penman to purchase and set up a laptop computer and printer for Mr. Devis' needs. It is this equipment I have brought with me. We have spent our time making sure everything works as it should, with the ultimate aim that Mr. Devis will be able to maintain the Papua New Guinea mailing list and run an office that takes care of most needs of the Church in Papua New Guinea. We have also succeeded in connecting Mr. Devis to the Internet so that he will again be able to receive communication from Charlotte and other offices in a timely manner. Illustrative of the need for such communication is the fact that a letter I wrote to Mr. Devis one month ago, telling him of my trip, has only today been delivered.

Argentina Youth Camp 2004

by Estela Bravo

Twenty adults and young people from the Bahia Blanca and Buenos Aires congregations attended the annual Living Church of God Youth Camp in Sierra de Ventana, Argentina, from December 26–28, 2004. Brethren camped at Yapay Park, located by one of the creeks that cross through town.

Upon arrival, the young people had breakfast, and the adults shared a good cup of maté (a traditional Argentinian tea). After setting up the tents, everyone enjoyed a special brunch of choripan (grilled beef chorizo with bread), cooked by a group of Church ladies. That evening, all enjoyed a long walk, admiring the work of the Creator's hand in its full splendor.

Activities coordinator Emily Canclini divided the campers into two groups for a game of finding a Bible motto, and preparing a short Bible study. Carlos Navarrete led the group that took Hebrews 13:1–2 as its motto (“Let brotherly love continue...”) and prepared a Bible study on dating. Santiago Canclini led the

group that took Psalm 37:4 as its motto (“Delight yourself also in the LORD...”), and prepared a Bible study on wickedness.

The adults who heard the Bible studies presented by both group leaders (ages 24 and 18, respectively) realized what a blessing it is for parents to have families walking in the Way, protected by the Eternal from the world's contaminations. Brethren felt that they were watching the fulfillment

of Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

On Monday and Tuesday, the children swam in the creek, played sports, helped with cleaning and meal preparation and entertained the other campers with evening games and short plays. New talents were discovered; but, above all, the brotherly love was manifested that unites us with the same spirit, and the same hope—the Kingdom of God.

We returned to our homes on Tuesday evening, December 28, grateful to God for giving us three enjoyable days of friendship and fellowship (Psalm 133:1). □



French Feast Site Is Full

Thanks to an outpouring of interest from overseas Feastgoers, the Living Church of God 2005 Feast site in Albé, France, cannot accept any more transfer requests. There remain many other Feast sites outside the United States and Canada; if you are interested in attending one of those sites, please send your inquiry to cad@cogl.org. Overseas brethren wishing to attend the Feast in the United States or Canada will be able to transfer to those sites after the *Festival Planner 2005* is released later this Spring.

Spectator or Participant?

By Henry Cooper

Every four years since 1896 (interrupted only by World Wars I and II), the world's best athletes have convened to take part in the quadrennial spectacle known as the modern Olympic Games. As the thousands of participants strive mightily to excel under the Olympic motto of "*citius, altius, fortius*" ("swifter, higher, stronger"), they are cheered on by a huge audience in the stadium, and nowadays by a far larger audience on television (estimated in 2004 at 4 billion). This worldwide spectacle brings out the best efforts of the participants—as well as many judgments, both positive and negative, by the spectators.

What lessons can we gain from this two-week sporting extravaganza that so captivates the world's interest? One valuable lesson is that the spectator and participant play differing roles—and that the whole enterprise could not exist without participants. As we shall see, this is a vital lesson for us as Christians.

How often have we seen that a spectator is more likely to be judgmental and condemnatory than a participant? An Olympic athlete who makes even a minor mistake will often draw hostile boos and other expressions of disapproval from the onlooking crowd. An athlete who makes just one serious mistake may find that any previous successes and earlier displayed skills are quickly forgotten. The arena is an unforgiving forum.

Similarly, when we as Christians strive for success in our efforts to live godly lives, we

experience firsthand many difficulties, disappointments and setbacks. We see our brethren experience similar trials. Do we criticize them the way one might criticize an athlete who has stumbled in a performance? Or do we recall how we, too, have felt when we have stumbled, and extend love, support and encouragement to those who are treading the same path as we are?

Unlike those in the world, who might criticize us, we know the resolve that is needed to overcome and to grow. How, then, can we justify condemning or criticizing others' faults and shortcomings? Remember Jesus' great illustration of one who finds fault with the speck in his brother's eye, while unaware of the plank in his own (Matthew 7:1–5). The Apostle Paul, too, who suffered grievous persecution in God's service and lived robustly the role of participant, offered a salutary warning to those who might, as spectators, sit in judgment (Romans 2:1–11).

The participant makes a far superior teacher than the spectator. All teachers must master their subjects before they can effectively teach. There is no better method for mastering a subject than being involved "at the coal-face"—being the participant. Merely acquiring academic knowledge of an activity is no substitute. Only by having been a participant can a tutor convey the full passion and innermost intensity of stretching for achievement. In the Kingdom of God, we—today's participants—will be the teachers and leaders in reeducat-

ing the world (Isaiah 30:20, 21; Revelation 20:6). Priests are teachers (Leviticus 10:8, 11; Ezekiel 44:23). Our High Priest, Jesus Christ, as our Intercessor and Judge, brings to His office His experience—His participation—of having been in the flesh (Hebrews 4:14–16).

The participant grows in stature and prowess as he trains and practices. With daily discipline and reaching for a higher goal, we may excel—even to the point of setting new records. Paul compares our efforts at growing spiritually with an athlete giving his best (1 Corinthians 9:24–27). The parable of the minas (Luke 19) clearly tells us that those who do not put their assets to work gainfully (as participators), but rather conduct passive lives (as spectators), cannot expect to succeed. Scripture records that God wants His family to be made up of overcomers (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). Jesus instructs us to strive to enter in at the narrow gate (Matthew 7:13, 14), not merely to watch others pass through. Many who see themselves as "home and dried"—who *think* they have done just fine—will be shocked to discover that their mere lip service will not grant them admission to the Kingdom of God (Luke 13:25–28).

What we say must be backed up by what we do. A participant's testimony and opinion carries far more weight and credibility than a mere spectator's. Authors and lecturers know well the value of being able to recount examples from real life and historic events,

rather than only theories. Travelers who have visited remote and exotic places can hold an audience spellbound with tales and photographs of firsthand experience, much more readily than can one who has acquired only secondhand information. The heroes and heroines of the Bible's great "faith chapter"—Hebrews 11—will be able to make powerfully compelling points *from experience* during Christ's coming millennial rule.

Paul's approach in preaching was to perceive his subject from the standpoint of his audience (1 Corinthians 9:19–23), knowing that in all probability he had experienced the same trials and had the same problems.



Like Paul, we can all look to our personal experiences for examples that we can later draw upon, which will animate the advice and opinion that may be sought of us, and which will allow us to speak with conviction and reliability.

Remember, our actions and conduct are quietly observed and noted by more people than we think. The man who habitually deals with honesty and integrity in business is rewarded with profitable trading, and shows the way to others who have eyes to see. Wise King Solomon had much to say on this matter (Proverbs 11). The woman who acts with decorum and femininity is held in higher esteem by the discerners, as emphasized by the well-known "Proverbs 31 woman." The youth who values chastity and good conduct stores up a better future. The writer of Ecclesiastes ruefully adds his endorsement (Ecclesiastes 11:9–10).

All too often, people nod in agreement with these values, but compromise them in their own practice—or disregard them where upholding them might cause unpopularity and material handicap. "Do as I say, not as I do" is, sadly, too often the hallmark of many in society. We will be profitable servants of God and Christ in tomorrow's world, and effective witnesses for the Truth today, only if we have been through the refiner's kiln, and have done as our Savior has taught us to do. We are being spiritually purified *now*, if we determine to participate in righteousness.

British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, of World War II fame, was a leader renowned for not asking anything of his troops that he would not do himself—or that he had not once done. The result was a remarkably high degree of loyalty from his soldiers. Once, inspecting a parade ground of decorated veterans, he enquired of the circumstances in which each earned the medals worn on their uniforms. Reaching the last man, he explained that he too had earned all the citations displayed by the others, and that a single badge worn by the old warrior before him was the only one on display that day that had eluded him.

As Christians, we cannot participate in the wars of this world. We are fighting a spiritual war. But we can learn from Montgomery's example; he understood the importance of being a participant, not merely a spectator. By contrast, many other generals have failed to inspire their armies to prevail in battle—and the results have been demoralization

and ignominious defeat. Through privilege of birth and safe positioning well behind battlefront lines, they failed to win the hearts and loyalties of those they were given to command, and they did not understand the misery and peril of combat. A leader cannot inspire followers and motivate them to succeed by words and theories alone—he must be a doer, as well (James 1:22–27).

As Christians, then, how can we ensure that we are fulfilling the role of participant and not merely of spectator? In our everyday lives, we are presented with innumerable instances that allow us to participate in helping others. By spending a little time with those who are burdened, we can encourage them. When we return to enquire how they are doing, we may thoughtfully bring a little help. We can pray for our brethren in their trials and plights. We can empathize with people from many walks of life, especially if we have had similar experiences. We can listen to those for whom society has less time. We can enquire after people's well-being and send messages. We can give support by just being there for people. Such participation in people's lives can make all the difference. Jesus said that as we do these little things in the right way, it is as if we are doing them for Him (Matthew 25:35–40). How worthwhile He considers these little things! Conversely, and soberingly, Jesus also said that by omitting such matters (failing to participate) we would fail Him (v. 45).

Let us be sure that we become involved in the practical, everyday matters wherein we can make a difference. In so doing, we will gain vital practice in dealing with life's challenges from a godly perspective, and we will be fitting and preparing ourselves for a useful role in the Kingdom to come! ☐

Final Things: Is Your House in Order?

(continued from page 12)

A letter of instruction should also give account numbers, contact information for parties named in the will and details of the location of accounts and documents, and should mention whether the accounts are owned jointly or individually. It can give detailed instructions for disposal of personal effects of lesser importance or value not mentioned in the will. A list of debts can also be very useful for the executor.

Detailed instructions for your funeral can be contained in the letter, including the type of service you desire, and the selection of a funeral home. Your letter of instruction can also contain personal messages, so that

a high degree of care and with impartiality and integrity. The basic role of the executor is to ensure that the deceased's estate is properly settled. You can hire a professional to provide advice and counsel and to do much of the actual work. If you are not able to serve, you can decline and let a contingent executor serve instead.

As you can see, settling an estate—even a simple one—involves a lot of detailed work. The list accompanying this article, “The Executor’s Checklist,” may be helpful for those who need to get organized to serve as an executor. It is not intended to be a complete list, and you may also find the advice of an attorney or certified financial planner helpful.

Sometimes Church members, depending upon their circumstances, deem it desirable and appropriate to

Creating a trust for the management and distribution of your assets is another useful tool for estate planning. Various kinds of trust agreements may be appropriate, depending upon what the testator wants to accomplish.

your will need not be cluttered up with them. While a letter of instruction is not legally binding, it can be of great value to your survivors at a time when grief may make it difficult for them to make decisions on these matters.

Today, many people also make a “Living Will”—which simply states your instructions regarding medical care in the event that you become critically ill or injured. You can give instructions as to whether or not you want to be placed on life support or allow other heroic methods—such as breathing tubes or feeding tubes—to be used in keeping you alive.

Creating a trust for the management and distribution of your assets is another useful tool for estate planning. Various kinds of trust agreements may be appropriate, depending upon what the testator wants to accomplish. There are a number of important advantages derived from such documents, often including tax advantages and avoidance of probate. If you plan to create a trust, it is wise to use an attorney who specializes in estate planning.

At some time in your life, you may be asked to serve as executor of someone's estate. It may be a close relative or a good friend. You may not even know that you have been named as executor until you find that you have been named in the will of the deceased. You may feel bound by duty and love for the testator, but you should be aware of the duties and responsibilities required by the job. It imposes a fiduciary responsibility upon the executor, which means you must discharge the responsibilities with

remember the Church in their estate planning and to bequeath part or all of their estate to the Church. Such bequests strengthen the financial stability of the Church, and can be an important part of doing the Work that we have been commissioned to do. While the Church does not offer legal advice or counseling in such cases, some basic information is available, at no charge, which may be helpful to someone doing estate planning with such a bequest in mind. If you are interested, you may request this information by writing to:

Living Church of God
Attn: Legal Affairs
2301 Crown Centre Dr.
Charlotte, NC 28227

You may also send your request by e-mail to legal@cogl.org.

The purpose of estate planning is to be certain that your wishes and desires are carried out for the benefit of your loved ones with a minimum of cost and delay. Having your estate in order brings a certain peace of mind and a sense of accomplishment, knowing that you have handled this important matter “decently and in order” for the good of all.

Even with the best of intentions, procrastination often keeps people from carrying out this vital exercise. Do not let that happen to you. Complete your final planning without delay, for: “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:17). ☞

A Higher Level*(continued from page 3)*

other forms of entertainment that our friends may think are “just fine.” We must **not** indulge in the *same kind* of drinking, partying and joke-telling that our worldly neighbors do, for *we* are supposed to be Christians! We are supposed to have Jesus Christ living **in** us through the Holy Spirit! We are supposed to be truly “different”! Yet, without realizing it, many of us are not really that different—are we?

We all need to go back, from time to time, and review Jesus Christ’s own stern requirements for being His follower as set forth in Luke 14:25–35. Many of us may have had this passage expounded to us at the time of our baptism. Remember? Jesus said: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate [love less] his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (vv. 26–27).

Have we come to the point of genuinely hating—or “loving less,” as it should be translated—*our own lives*? Are we, individually, willing to go through trials, tests and *severe* persecutions and “bear our cross” as Jesus Christ commands?

Do we truly *understand* Jesus’ command: “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake **all** that he has cannot be my disciple” (v. 33)?

Even though this is not a time to sell our homes and possessions, as some early Christians did (Acts 2:44–45), *most* of us undoubtedly need to *give far more* of our time, our energy, our thoughts and prayers to fervently *serving* the living Jesus Christ and **surrendering** to let Him live **His life** in *every single phase* and *facet* of *our* individual lives! We need to have *Jesus* living within us in our

family life, our sex life, our job or career, in the *way* we treat all those around us, in the *way* we respond to every situation and seek to honestly develop—through God’s Spirit—the “mind of Christ” in every situation. We need to **grow** in expressing the patience, the mercy and the loving kindness that Jesus expressed.

Otherwise, dear brethren, we may be “a little better” than some in the world around us, but fall **far short** of the example of Jesus Christ. Note that at the end of Luke 14, Jesus described the “salt” that had lost its flavor, and He stated: “It is neither fit for the land nor for the dung hill, but men throw it out. *He who has ears to hear, let him hear*” (v. 35).

A person who is truly “conquered” by God through His Holy Spirit—through Christ **ruling** his life in its every phase and facet—will hold back **nothing** from God’s direction! That individual has truly “crucified” the old self with its vanities, lusts, misdirected “hurt feelings” and general foolishness. We all need to ask ourselves: “Have I, *personally*, been truly **conquered** by God?”

Are there “hidden corners” in some of our lives that we definitely would not want others to know about? If we are truly “conquered” by God, this would **not** be the case!

Brethren, we **all** need to grow *much closer* to God than we have ever been in the past. Our goal should not be just to **get back** to where we may have been before Mr. Armstrong’s death, but to grow *closer to God* than we have **ever** been! For we all are supposed to keep **growing** throughout our *entire* Christian lives. So we must truly *devote* ourselves to a type of deep and earnest Bible **study**, continuous and fervent **prayer**, profound **meditation**, regular **fasting** and an *entire way of life* that is based upon genuinely “walking” with God! *This* will help us achieve the above objectives.

Even beyond this, I sincerely feel that God Himself will help us as He begins to **shake** the nations, the society around us and even **all** of the people in the various Church of God fellowships. In His wisdom and mercy, He will no doubt deeply **humble** every one of us and bring us to our knees and to a profound “awareness” of His intervention and His power in a way that we have never before experienced! If our attitude is right, we should begin to “see” God in the circumstances around us as He starts to intervene even more powerfully in human affairs at the end of this age. *This*, also, should help us truly “get with it” and **grow** spiritually beyond what we have ever done before.

Even after Jesus’ death, His Apostles were not fully converted. For the Holy Spirit did not come until the day of Pentecost. So during the 40 days after Jesus’ death, Peter and the other Apostles showed a number of weaknesses that would not have been manifested had they been fully converted. On one occasion Peter said: “I am going fishing” (John 21:3). From every indication, this was not merely a *casual* fishing outing. Rather, as a number of these men had been *professional* fishermen in the past, this would probably have been the beginning of something far more serious if Jesus had not dealt with the situation. “But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus” (v. 4). In what may have been an overcast early morning, Jesus asked them if they had caught anything. He then commanded them: “Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some. So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish” (v. 6).

The “disciple whom Jesus loved”—the Apostle John—was

more spiritually sensitive and perceptive. Although Christ used Peter as the leader among the Apostles, and the book of Acts shows that he took the lead in most situations, John was obviously stronger in a certain spiritual “closeness” and sensitivity to the will of God. So it was in this situation. “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’” (v. 7).

Often, we fail to recognize how God is in overall charge of events

In our present “me” generation, it is difficult for us to fully comprehend what it means to “deny” oneself or to “take up one’s cross” and follow Christ. But we need to focus on these verses more than ever.

that are happening in the world—and even in our lives. Certainly, He *allows* many events to happen to the world that He may not directly cause. He is, as we know, *allowing* terrible storms, earthquakes and other events to humble people—and is *allowing* human beings to go their own way for the present 6,000-year age until Christ returns.

As we come ever closer to the final events of this age, we need to be very sensitive to God’s *direct intervention* in world affairs—and in our own lives. We need to be ever-mindful that, as Jesus said: “Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:29–31).

Our Father in heaven is in **total charge** of this universe, and He intervenes in any situation He chooses! As we are His own begotten children, He knows *everything* about us—even the thoughts of our minds

and hearts! It is important that we develop a deep sensitivity and awareness to that fact! It is vital that we truly “commune” with God on a regular basis—**far more** profoundly than most of us have been doing. It is vital that we constantly ask ourselves: “What would Jesus *really* do in this situation?”

Jesus Christ said to His disciples—and to us: “If anyone desires to come after Me, *let him deny himself*, and take up his cross, and fol-

low Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 16:24–25).

In our present “me” generation, it is difficult for us to fully comprehend what it means to “deny” oneself or to “take up one’s cross” and follow Christ. But we need to focus on these verses more than ever. For some of us will be called upon to *leave everything*—perhaps even our own lives—during the next several years!

You and I normally desire to “save” our lives, in the sense that we want a continuing stream of “good things,” pleasures, friends and a nice “comfortable” lifestyle. But Jesus calls us to grow to a **higher level**—and to a profound spiritual awareness that we *really are* “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” as God’s *true* saints have always been (Hebrews 11:13).

Therefore, we must develop a genuine “fellowship” with Christ and with the Father (1 John 1:3). We must soberly heed John’s statement: “This is the message which we have

heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth” (vv. 5–6).

Many of us allow areas of “darkness” to enter our lives all too frequently. We allow a “watering down” process to enter our thinking, and often manage to reason our way around the **total commitment** we should have to our great God! I say this as one weak human being who experiences *my own* weaknesses, brethren! I have to *fight myself* every minute of every hour of every day as, I am sure, all of you do. It is *so easy* to allow our human minds to make “excuses” for the lower level of love and obedience that we often display in our walk with God.

However, as this world continues to suffer all kinds of convulsions, terrorist activities, disease epidemics, drought, famine and earthquakes, it is vital that we *see* that God is truly intervening in **exactly** the way He prophesied, and that it is truly time to *put our house in order*! May God help every one of us do this! And we must fully realize that it is **only** through Jesus Christ living in us that this may be possible. We must *always* remember Jesus’ statement: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; *for without Me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5). Only through *His* strength may we truly overcome and grow spiritually to the **high spiritual level** that God wants—“to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). We all need to experience this *true overcoming and growth*, which will only come as you “**seek** the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you **seek Him** with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul” (Deuteronomy 4:29). ☐

Our Future Leaders*(continued from page 2)*

understood God's inspired Word and had genuine **faith** in the God of Israel. For Paul told Timothy in his second letter: "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14–15).

Who helped Timothy develop the *outstanding faith* to which the Apostle Paul referred? In Timothy's case, it was **not** his father but his mother and grandmother! For the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about calling to remembrance "the genuine **faith** that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also" (2 Timothy 1:5).

So, "from childhood," the Evangelist Timothy had been **taught** the Holy Scriptures by his faithful mother and grandmother! These capable and dedicated women imparted to this young man a deep awareness of His Creator and of the Holy Scriptures, and enabled him to have the capacity to later serve alongside one of the most outstanding Apostles in human history!

In addition to being outstanding examples of dedication and service in their own right, as were Deborah, Ruth, and many other women, many ladies in God's Church have a unique opportunity to *spend time at home* with their sons and daughters and thoroughly *teach them* the ways of God—hour after hour—in a way that the working fathers may not always be able to do. Certainly this was the case with Timothy. And certainly it *can be* in the lives of our ladies—and especially mothers—in God's Church today.

Faithful mothers can, through their children, have an *awesome* impact upon the lives of *millions* of other human beings—as we know from the stories of the impact of the mothers of Abraham Lincoln, Dwight Eisenhower and many others.

In my own case, I can honestly say that my own mother and grandmother—as was the case with Timothy—had a remarkable influence upon my life and upon my later relationship with God. For I can remember spending time with my grandmother—on literally *dozens* of occasions—when she would read to me from the Bible, talk to me about God and impart to me a deep awareness of the Creator and a heartfelt feeling regarding His inspired word. My mother interested me deeply in reading, and in *understanding* the purpose of life. She inspired me to develop a degree of character, persistence and drive that has served me well in later life. I owe both of these dear ladies a tremendous debt of gratitude, and will be able to *thank them* in a special way when they rise in the second resurrection!

The remarkable *motherly influence* upon Timothy—and, no doubt, that of Mary upon *Jesus Christ Himself*—no doubt played a significant part in their effect on others' lives. The impact that *all parents* have upon their children can never be underestimated. For having their own parents or grandparents talk sensibly and faithfully about the Creator can certainly deeply impact and encourage young men and women—even in later life—to have an awareness of God and of the importance of genuine spirituality. As in my case, Timothy no doubt often recalled his mother and grandmother personally *teaching him* about the meaning of life—and he later displayed the wonderful "fruit" of that early relationship.

Timothy really *believed God*, and constantly *acted* on that faith! He dedicated his life to serving God and his fellow believers. He was obviously very conscientious in truly *serving* his fellow man. The Apostle Paul *relied on* Timothy to teach the Word of God correctly, and to help and encourage the brethren in a completely **un-selfish** way. Paul wrote movingly of Timothy: "For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel" (Philippians 2:20–22).

Having visited our own Living Youth Camp a number of times, and having talked with our ministers in many areas, I am pleased to see that we have quite a number of young people who are beginning to exemplify the kind of dedication, service and character development that Paul ascribed to Timothy. In many areas, we are *on our way!* But we need to do even more. So, in the future, other programs may be suggested and put into action.

As the end of this age approaches, brethren, we all need to *genuinely* try to *restore Apostolic Christianity* in every single phase and facet of God's Church. We *all* need to have Christ directing our relations with Him, with God, with one another—and *with our young people!* They will undoubtedly provide an energy and youthful perspective to help us complete this Work over the next several years in a way that we might not be able to do otherwise. They will help reach out to the broader community in a way that many of us cannot—especially reaching other *young people* around the world. Some of them may also live right on over—in the human flesh—into Tomorrow's World. With their special background and training, they may easily become outstanding *leaders*—under the guidance of God's Family—in directing the way of life of *this entire earth!* Our youth are truly precious to God, and should be to us.



Local Church News



New Living Church of God Bible Hymnal!

The new *Living Church of God Bible Hymnal* arrived from the printer during the third week of March. Copies are being shipped to every Living Church of God congregation. Individual copies may be available for purchase in the future, but not until Headquarters knows that the needs of all the congregations around the world have been met. An announcement will be made if copies of the new *Bible Hymnal* become available for purchase; until then, please use the hymnals that are being sent to your local congregation.



Matching Gifts

Many companies are able to match donations made by employees (and retirees) and their spouses. You may wish to check with your employer's personnel office to determine whether your gift qualifies. Your employer may significantly increase or even double your giving to the Living Church of God.

Marriage

Debbie Penman and *Craig Hill* of the Perth, Western Australia congregation were joined in marriage on January 9. The ceremony was performed by the bride's father, and took place at her parents' home in Auckland, New Zealand. The couple will continue to live in Perth.

Upcoming **Tomorrow's World** Telecasts

WGN: Sunday, 6:00 AM ET

VISION (Canada): Sunday, 5:30 PM ET & Monday–Friday, 3:00 AM ET

March 6	Prophetic Milestones Ahead
March 13	What Is True Christianity Really Like?
March 20	Vital Keys to Happiness
March 27	Should You Observe Easter?
April 3	Can America Police the World?
April 10	Who Is the Beast?
April 17	Why Were You Really Born?
April 24	Is There Life After Death?

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

Births

Elizabeth Ester Brown was born on February 15, weighing 9 pounds, 14 ounces. She is the second child of Eric and Cammie Brown of the LCG congregation in Cambridge, Ohio.

Michael and Shana Jewsbury of Bellevue, Washington, are happy to announce the birth of their first child, daughter *Hannah Elynor*

Jewsbury, on December 25, 2004. She weighed 7 pounds, 11 ounces, and was 21 inches long.

Ryan and Roxanna Bird, of Canada's Calgary, Alberta congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their first child, *Hannah Janae Bird*. She was born on December 4, 2004, weighing 8 pounds, 2 ounces, and was 21

inches long. Grandparents Bruce and Donna Bird are pleased to welcome their first grandchild into the family.

Alan and Wanda Croyle gratefully announce the arrival of *John Ezra Croyle* on December 28, 2004, joining his two brothers and six sisters. He weighed 8 pounds, 8 ounces at birth.

In Loving Memory

Alma Aman of the LCG congregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota, died on February 22. A longtime member of God's Church, she was 84 years old. She is survived by her husband of 58 years, Henry Aman, age 92, and also by her sons Wayne and Jerry and her daughter Zelda. Mr. Sheldon Monson conducted the funeral service on February 25 in Edina, Minnesota.

Charlene Brazeal died of pancreatic cancer on February 3, at the age of 76. She was baptized in 1967 and had attended faithfully with the congregations in Terre Haute and Indianapolis, Indiana. She was preceded in death by her husband Arlow, who was also an LCG member. She is survived by four children, seven grandchildren, and several nephews and nieces. A memorial service was conducted in Lafayette, Indiana, at which Mr. George Dellinger, elder in Indianapolis, spoke briefly, followed by a number of friends and relatives.

Nellie G. Evans, age 82, of Searcy, Arkansas died suddenly on October 22, 2004. She was a longtime member of God's Church—the first in her family to be called. She loved being a part of God's Church. Even when she did not feel well, she would express her fervent desire to attend Sabbath services. She seldom missed a Bible Study. She is survived by her sister, Jonnie Monroe, sons Wayne, Richard and David Evans, daughter Rose Creekmore (an LCG member in Cincinnati, Ohio), 11 grandchildren

(three of whom attend God's Church) and 17 great-grandchildren. Mr. Charles Ogwyn, pastor of the Little Rock congregation, conducted her funeral service.

Irma Jean Pine, of the Columbia, Missouri LCG congregation, died on December 17, 2004 at age 76. Despite suffering from several ailments in the past few years, she attended almost every Sabbath service. She began listening to Mr. Armstrong on the radio many years ago, and received the *Plain Truth* and *Bible Correspondence Course* in the 1960s; she was baptized in 1984. She is survived by Joseph R. Pine, Sr., her husband of 52 years. Other survivors include daughter Cindy Miller of Fulton; son Joseph Pine Jr. of Auxvasse; brothers Delmar Hawkins of Mexico, Charles Hawkins of Bellflower, and James Hawkins of New Florence; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren and several nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by a son, a brother and a sister. Mr. Rand Millich conducted her memorial service in Fulton, Missouri.

John Vaikia, a deacon serving the Living Church of God brethren in Myanmar, died on January 9. He was 57 years old. Baptized in 1975, he was ordained as a deacon in 1993. He is survived by his wife of 38 years, by one brother, three sons, three daughters and four grandchildren. Mr. Thomas Tial Hoe conducted the funeral service on January 10.

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

Commentary

The Mythology of Divorce

By Jeffrey Fall

The average American would love to have a happy marriage to the right person. Most people who divorce come to the conclusion that they were simply terribly unlucky in getting stuck with the wrong mate. There is much to be said about being wise and choosing to commit one's life to the right person.

But is a quick divorce likely to be the answer for future happiness? If so, one would expect the divorce rate for second marriages to be much lower. Surely one seeking to remarry after a difficult marriage and divorce would tend to be a little more cautious and choosy. Amazingly, statistics do not support this hypothesis; divorce rates for second marriages are significantly higher, not lower, than for first marriages.

The Institute for American Values published a very interesting study in July 2002, titled: "Does Divorce Make People Happy?" Researchers studied 645 individuals who reported unhappy marriages. When these unhappy people were surveyed five years later, those who remained married reported a far greater degree of happiness than those who had divorced. In fact, 66 percent of those who had stayed together reported that they were happy five years later—compared to a 19 percent rate of happiness among those who had divorced or separated.

A *Psychology Today* review of this study reported: "In fact, the most miserable marriages had the most dramatic turnarounds. Seventy-eight percent of people who stayed in *very unhappy* marriages said that the marriages were *currently happy* five years later" ("Don't Divorce, Be Happy," November-December 2002).

Granted, there are valid reasons for divorce, including physical abuse, drug addiction and rampant sexual immorality. But for most typical unhappy marriages, statistics clearly demonstrate that someone who is unhappy in marriage is more than three times more

likely to be happy five years later if he or she stays married, rather than seeks a divorce.

Some are beginning to question the appropriateness of no-fault divorces. Maggie Gallagher, author of *The Abolition of Marriage*, wrote: "Imposing a five- to seven-year waiting period for contested no-fault divorces—as do many European jurisdictions—would serve the ends of both justice and prudence, raising the number of marriages that ultimately succeed."

Divorce tends to undermine happiness for many reasons, not the least of which is its effect on children. When parents decide they are unhappy, and decide to divorce, it is not just the death of the marriage relationship; it is the death of the family relationship. Finances are another reason that unhappy couples who split still find themselves unhappy 81 percent of the time five years later. According to Lenore Weitzman, author of *The Divorce Revolution*: "One year after divorce, women's standard of living decreases by 73 percent."

God Himself, the Creator of marriage, emphatically stated: "The LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce" (Malachi 2:16). God understands human nature far better than we do. Most unhappiness in marriage is caused by the violation of spiritual principles that God has designed for marital happiness. More often than not, when two self-centered human beings divorce, they carry the pattern of failure from the previous marriage into their single life or their second marriage. This is why most unhappy couples who stick it out, and gradually change and adapt, are happier five years later. This is why those who refuse to change—who choose to divorce and to carry the same patterns of self-centeredness into their next marriages—tend to be unhappy five years later. In most cases, for one seeking happiness, divorce should be the last choice, not the first choice.

—The above is an adaptation of one of the many commentaries available at the www.lcg.org and www.tomorrowworld.org Web sites on vital topics facing our world.