

Living Church News

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More of Us Need To Be HEALED

Dear Brethren and Friends,

As I write, we are approaching the Passover season. Though you will not read this until *after* Passover, I want you to know that God seems to be impressing on my mind the vital importance of the *healing* aspect of God's ministry. I have given a couple of sermons on this recently, but want to put some of this into writing since many of you are not able to hear all of these sermons. The matter of divine healing is a *vital* part of our Christian lives and of doing the Work of God!

Back in the late 1940s and 1950s—when I first came to Ambassador College—Mr. Armstrong was more *personally* involved as a local pastor and one who did virtually all of the anointing. I noticed that *many* in the Pasadena congregation were regularly being healed—and many more were being healed at our Festival site.

Once we moved the Feast of Tabernacles to Big Sandy, Texas, we had *long lines* of people waiting for counseling and anointing. I remember vividly how we had chairs lined up out in the hallway in the old “tabernacle” in which we met at Big Sandy—long before the college there was established. People would move down the line as they came closer to the doors of the little counseling rooms. Perhaps Burk McNair and I would be in one room counseling and anointing; next door would be Herman Hoeh and Raymond McNair, next door would be Raymond Cole with Norman Smith. People were *inspired* and *encouraged*. For after we anointed them with olive oil as a symbol of God's Holy Spirit, many were *supernaturally healed* within hours or days. These were not “imaginary” healings; they were *divine interventions* that were obvious.

This attitude of looking to God continued to some extent even into the 1960s—though the approach of deep faith in God seemed to recede somewhat as we became more and more involved in the “administrative” aspects of the Work, and as we became more prosperous and involved in “other things.” In my memory, a *major* turning point in the Church—and in the aspect of healings—occurred after the death of Mrs. Herbert Armstrong. She was 75 years old at her death, so it was not some shocking event. But she normally would have lived longer—at least we all hoped. After his wife's death, Mr. Armstrong began to go on trips around the world. He was distracted from his local pastoral responsibilities, and the emphasis seemed to be more on the growth of the Work in general. A number of times, Mr. Armstrong himself mentioned that we ministers **must not** allow ourselves to

become so involved in the administrative aspects of things that we neglect our personal Bible study and prayer and faith in God. Nevertheless, this did happen to some extent as each year wore on.

Then, in the 1970s, some of the younger men were allowed to run the Work. Mr. Armstrong was absent from Pasadena even more—and more and more liberal ideas began to creep into every aspect of our doctrines and practices. Then, after his massive heart failure and recovery, Mr. Armstrong began to devote more time personally to getting the Church “back on the track.” God did bless his efforts wonderfully, the Church grew and a certain degree of faith was restored. But after his death in 1986, the spiritual malaise set in once again.

Brethren, we still have not recovered the childlike faith that used to exist during the early years of Ambassador College! Even now, in the Living Church of God—and certainly in the other Church of God fellowships—there is no record of regular, powerful divine interventions and healings! Many of our brethren acknowledge that they often think first of grabbing something out of the medicine chest or “going to the doctor” when they begin to come down with some sickness or ailment. They usually do this before it occurs to them to ask for anointing by Christ’s ministry.

Why?

Because this spiritual malaise is still continuing among God’s people. Often, I have noticed, the leading ministers and evangelists are rarely called on for anointing! We have very fine local elders who serve faithfully, yet it still seems a shame that the leading ministers are, in a sense, neglected in the matter of anointing. Yet, Jesus Christ personally and His twelve apostles personally did most of the anointing during their ministry! This is an extremely important point to consider.

But before continuing, let us remind ourselves that although we often should consult a physician or medical professional when we come down with something, we must not look to doctors as though they are some kind of infallible “god.” For they are very human—as their own literature acknowledges—and literally thousands of mistakes are made every month in hospitals and doctors’ offices all across the world. As I noted in my booklet, Does God Heal Today?, the New York Times for March 16, 2003 reported the statements of Dr. Lisa Sanders, a young physician who had recently graduated from medical school: “A decade ago, I stood alongside my 99 fellow freshmen as we were welcomed into the ranks of medicine in a ‘white coat ceremony.’ Here, on our first day of med school, we were presented with the short white coats that proclaimed us part of the mystery and the discipline of medicine. During that ceremony, the dean said something that was repeated throughout my education: half of what we teach you here is wrong—unfortunately, we don’t know which half. At the time it was hard to believe. Within those walls, in the anatomy lab, in the lecture hall, you feel that you are being shown the secrets of how the body is put together, how it lives, how it works, how it dies. It has the feel of authority and certainty. Like math, it has a feeling of inevitability. But now, as a practicing doctor and teacher of residents, I relive that dean’s aphorism daily. Medicine is, and

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Understanding the Milwaukee Tragedy

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

As we focus on the meaning of the tragedy in Brookfield, Wisconsin last March 12, when several of our beloved Milwaukee brethren were shot and killed, it is important to realize that we *do not* have complete understanding of the mind of God. It is easy to “play God” and assign one or two reasons for such tragedies. But, as I have said in a number of letters and “updates” to the Church since then, God often has *many* reasons why He may allow seemingly terrible events to happen. For He is *omniscient*. He knows *everything*. We do not.

Nevertheless, as the months go by, we should *never forget* that awful tragedy. We should *keep on praying* for the survivors—and for others, in and out of God’s Church, who may still be *mourning* and “hurting.” I vividly remember that after the death of my first wife, Margie, I continued to “hurt” for more than a year. At first, I was in a sort of daze. Gradually, the full realization set in that she was really “gone”—*never again* would I see her in this life!

We should realize that some of these feelings no doubt continue in the minds of the survivors of this recent tragedy. So we should beseech God to help and comfort these people, and to help *all* of us better understand and be able to

move ahead in His service. As Herbert W. Armstrong used to say: “God often turns lemons into lemonade!”

How will we Church members view this incident 30 years from now, when, I hope, most of us will be spirit beings in God’s Kingdom? It is helpful to meditate on this. We will probably look back on this with the realization that although our heavenly Father did not *cause* this tragic event, He *allowed* it to happen to teach *all* of us many lessons. I hope we will look back and realize that, after this tragedy, most of God’s people became even more humble and even more focused—and even more aware of the fragility of human life, and of how *precious* is the life of every human being! For we are all made in the image of God, with wonderful and awesome potential.

From this tragedy, dear brethren, we should all understand more fully the inspired words: “For what is your life? It is even a *vapor* that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (James 4:14). With that realization, each day should become more special: another day to *serve* God and fellow man, another day to *love* one another, another day to *grow* in “reflecting Jesus Christ in everything we think, say and do.”

Yet, a *special reason* for God calling us now is to have us *do our part* in preparing for the Kingdom of God. I would like to share with you part of an especially encouraging letter from Mr. Stuart

Wachowicz, our elder in Edmonton, Canada. He writes:

“Only in the past two weeks I have had several calls from people in ‘other’ groups, who have told me that after reading Living’s literature or hearing sermons on the web, or listening to the program on television, they recognized you are teaching the truth of the Bible, just as it was in the days of Mr. Armstrong. Many here are now seriously considering when they will make the switch to where God is really working. Some have also admitted to me that the defaming of yourself by some ministry in other groups had held them back, but now they are increasingly seeing through that deception.

The Living Church of God is preaching the Gospel, it is growing in all areas—it is doing the Work and God is blessing it. These are facts on the ground that the attackers carefully avoid in their comments. No wonder Satan is so desperate and brings these repeated attacks.

Please be assured that the brethren here, and I am sure around the world, are solidly behind you and the administration of God’s Church. We are very grateful for your courage and leadership, as well as the

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When Tragedy Strikes: *How Will You React?*

By Douglas S. Winnail

In recent years, terrible tragedies have again and again struck suddenly and without warning around the world. Terrorist attacks in the Middle East, the United States, Kenya and Tanzania, the Sumatra earthquake and tsunami, hurricanes in Florida and the Caribbean, earthquakes in Turkey, massacres and civil wars in Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East and Central Asia—all have killed or injured hundreds and thousands and have left trails of destruction. Shootings in public places—schoolyards, churches, quiet suburbs and noisy streets—have shocked and stunned communities and left many dazed with sorrow.

In the wake of these sudden and unexpected calamities, individuals have reacted in a variety of ways as they have struggled to cope, to rebuild their shattered lives and to understand *why* these events occurred. Some have seen these tragedies as simply “natural” disasters that happen from time to time, or as the regrettable actions of people driven by ideology or despair. Others have wondered why a loving God would let such things happen—*if such a God even exists*.

Sudden and unexpected tragedies pose a particular dilemma for believers, especially when the victims appear to be decent and righteous people. Severe trials and tragedies can cause some to question or even give up their faith, because tragic afflictions do not fit with their conception of God. Because religious people often equate tragic events with punishment from God, many search for reasons *why* God has allowed such terrible events to occur. Some look to shortcomings in their own lives, and see a need for renewed strength and faith. Others look for problems in the lives of those affected by the tragedy—seeking a place to put the blame. When this happens, diverse and often contradictory opinions begin to emerge, as individuals draw their own conclusions about why God allowed a particular tragedy to occur. Today, more than ever, the Internet lets anyone share their opinions and conclusions with the world—whether those opinions are correct or not.

When tragedy strikes, how *should* we react? More specifically, how should Christians react when suddenly faced with a calamitous event? Where can we go for guidance about what to do

and how to understand *why* tragedies occur? Thankfully, God has provided important guidelines and vital perspectives in the Bible to help us prepare for, understand and navigate through difficult and tragic situations.

Basic Guidelines

It has been said that the Bible is a “handbook” for learning how to function effectively in this human life. King David, who had to deal with many trials and tragedies in his life, understood this basic principle, and long ago wrote: “*Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path*” (Psalm 119:105). Jesus stated, during a severe trial: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*” (Matthew 4:4; see also Deuteronomy 8:1–3). The Apostle Paul, well-acquainted with trials, made a similar observation: “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*” (2 Timothy 3:16). He urged his listeners: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Paul also advised against becoming involved in endless discussions and vain speculations about why things happen; he reminded Christians instead to focus on what is *revealed* in the word of God (2 Timothy 2:16).

Although many in today’s world consider the Bible out of date and obsolete, Scripture reveals otherwise. Paul told the church at Corinth that “all these things [the biblical accounts of historic events in Israel’s past] happened to them *as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come*” (1 Corinthians 10:11). Paul encouraged his listeners to learn valuable lessons from these biblical accounts, and to remember, when trials and tragedies strike: “God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear, but with the temptation, will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). Scripture clearly reminds us

that no matter what happens, God is in charge and *there is hope* for believers who face trials and tragedies.

A Specific Example

But what do we find when we look into those scriptures that relate to the personal trials and tragedies we encounter? What can we learn from the Bible's ancient accounts? Does the Bible explain why bad things happen to good people? The book of Job provides instructive insights and helpful perspectives. Job was a wealthy and influential man, considered "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1). God had blessed and protected him. However, *in one day*, his flocks and herds were stolen by enemies, his herdsmen were murdered and the remaining livestock were killed by lightning. A sudden windstorm destroyed the home where his children had gathered, and took their lives (Job 1:13–22). Job then developed a painful, disfiguring disease.

In the midst of these sudden and devastating afflictions, Job's wife told him to "curse God and die"—basically telling Job that his faith was worthless (Job 2:9). Job's friends then took turns trying to explain *why* these trials had descended on Job. He had sinned (Job 4:7–8). He had forgotten God and needed to grow closer to Him (Job 8:1–13, 20). He had done evil and needed to repent (Job 11:14–15). Yet, through all the trials, Job's faith remained unshaken (13:15). He knew he was innocent of these false accusations, and he persistently proclaimed *his righteousness* (Job 27:5–6). During these severe trials, Job experienced a full range of human emotions. He sought relief and wondered why he was experiencing such trials (13:20–24). He rebuked his friends (16:1–2), blamed God (16:11–12), felt sorrow (16:16), became depressed (17:1) and even became nostalgic about a more pleasant past (29:2).

The Bible reveals that neither Job nor his friends really understood why these tragedies had occurred. Job did not see his own self-righteousness (32:1), and was wrong to conclude that God had afflicted him. His friends, however, were equally wrong in saying that Job's own sins and faults were responsible for his troubles. God had *allowed* Satan to afflict Job—to *test his faith and to help him learn important lessons* (1:12; 2:6; 36:10–12, 22). When Job learned vital lessons about himself and about God, God again blessed him (see Job 42).

One reason Job was able to endure these terrible trials was that he *knew* God was working with him and was molding something within him (Job 14:14–15).

All this may sound strange today; yet, the Bible reveals that the wish to lead a trouble-free existence ignores important dimensions in what God is doing in our lives. God is developing faith and molding character in those with

whom He has chosen to work in this age—and He uses trials as part of the "refining" process as He prepares individuals for the Kingdom of God (see Proverbs 17:3; Zechariah 13:7–9; Malachi 3:2–3). Daniel even prophesied that "some of those of understanding shall fall, *to refine them*, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end" (Daniel 11:35). Malachi calls those who are successfully molded by this challenging process God's "jewels" or "special treasures" (Malachi 3:16–18). This is why David adds: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes" (Psalm 119:65–72). Isaiah uses a different analogy to describe the same process: "But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand" (Isaiah 64:8).

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THE BIBLE IS A "HANDBOOK" FOR LEARNING HOW TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY IN THIS HUMAN LIFE. KING DAVID, WHO HAD TO DEAL WITH MANY TRIALS AND TRAGEDIES IN HIS LIFE, UNDERSTOOD THIS BASIC PRINCIPLE, AND LONG AGO WROTE: "YOUR WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET, AND A LIGHT TO MY PATH" (PSALM 119:105).

When trials come, and tragedies strike, it is normal—and often helpful—to look for corrections that can be made. But the Bible reveals that God also uses these same events to accomplish His overall purpose of creating more perfect faith and spiritual character in future members of His family. This is an important lesson we can learn from the book of Job.

Christ's Instructions

Like Job's friends, Christians often assume that if trials and tragedies erupt in our lives, we must be doing something wrong. However, Jesus Christ emphasized repeatedly to His followers that the way to eternal life is "narrow" and "difficult" and that *few* would find it (Matthew 7:14). Jesus plainly taught: "Blessed are those who are *persecuted for righteousness' sake*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). Christ said that truth of the gospel message would divide families, and would bring opposition; He asked each of his followers to "take his cross and follow after Me (Matthew 10:34–38). Christ warned his followers that they would face arrest, persecution, hatred, betrayal, and death—

even at the hands of friends and relatives—as a result of their religious beliefs. Yet He also emphasized that “he who endures to the end” will be saved (Matthew 10:22; 24:13). Speaking to the apostles on the night before He was crucified, Jesus said: “In the world *you will have tribulation*, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Scripture warns us that trials, tragedies and difficulties will be part of the Christian experience, which is why Jesus taught that we must “endure” to the end if we want to be in the Kingdom of God.

The New Testament account of early Church history not only reveals how Christ’s warnings and promises were actually fulfilled; it also provides a perspective on how God and His church viewed trials and tragedies. John the Baptist was called a “just and holy man” (Mark 6:20) whose mission was to prepare the way for Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:7–11; 17:10–13), yet Herod murdered him because he told the truth and angered Herod’s wife (Matthew 14:1–12). Jesus, the Son of God who was without sin, was arrested, beaten, paraded through the streets of Jerusalem and publicly crucified to please an angry mob incited by religious leaders who felt threatened by His ministry (Matthew 12:14)—yet endured all this to fulfill God’s plan for the salvation of humanity (Matthew 16:21). Jesus’ miraculous resurrection demonstrated the power of the real God; it focused attention on the apostles’ preaching, and was a major factor in the growth of the Church (Matthew 28:6–7; Acts 2:22–41). Peter and John were arrested, imprisoned repeatedly and beaten, merely for preaching the truth and working miracles (Acts 4–5)—yet their miraculous release and powerful preaching demonstrated God’s supernatural power (Acts 5:17–21), greatly increasing the number of believers (Acts 5:12–16).

Stephen was a man “full of faith and power... [who] did great wonders and signs among the people,” yet he was killed for preaching the gospel and publicly recounting Israel’s past transgressions (Acts 6–7). Before his conversion, Paul was a leader in fierce persecution of the church, “entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison” (Acts 8:3). Paul had persecuted these people merely for believing the gospel, yet in spite of such persecution the Church grew and many rejoiced as they learned the truth (Acts 8:4–8). During another government-driven persecution, James was killed and Peter was again imprisoned because of their preaching, yet the Bible records that “the word of God grew and multiplied” at that time (Acts 12:24).

God mightily used the Apostle Paul, who wrote 14 of the books in the New Testament. Yet Paul’s personal life

was filled with trials and tragedy. His ministry began after he was struck with temporary blindness (Acts 9:1–19) and because of his initial preaching he had to flee from Damascus by night to escape being murdered (Acts 9:23–26). He apparently suffered from a debilitating eye problem, and wrote of a “thorn in the flesh” that God did not heal (2 Corinthians 12:7–10; Galatians 4:13–15). During his ministry, Paul was imprisoned, beaten numerous times, stoned, shipwrecked several times and had to flee for his life (2 Corinthians 11:22–33). Yet Paul—even after being stoned by a mob and left to die—encouraged fellow Christians: “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Even on the eve of being martyred for his beliefs, Paul remained confident and focused on his promised reward (2 Timothy 4:6–8). These are just a sampling of the trials, tragedies and difficulties that struck the lives of those who chose to believe and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles, demonstrating remarkable examples of faith and trust in God.

Apostolic Advice

Against this background of early Church history, we can see deeper meaning in the apostles’ admonitions about how to respond to trials. Our modern secular world urges us to seek immediate physical comfort. The Bible’s perspective, however, differs significantly in its perspective on trials and tragedies. Paul explained to Christians in Rome that trials can help us grow, noting that “we glory [are thankful] in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Romans 5:3–4). Paul urges us to be “patient in tribulation” and reminds us to trust in God because “we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 12:12; 8:28). Paul told the Corinthians that he was able to remain joyful during his tribulations because he recognized God’s comforting actions (2 Corinthians 7:4–7). He told the Ephesians: “Do not lose heart at my tribulations” (Ephesians 3:13) as they are all part of God’s “eternal purpose” (v. 11). He reminded the church in Thessalonica that “no one should be shaken by these afflictions [Paul’s imprisonment]; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation” (1 Thessalonians 3:3). Paul also commended that same church “for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure” because “your

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I Love You!

By Donald Roach

Have you ever told God, “I love You?” You certainly express your love to your spouse, children and parents. But what do we do about the command that we are supposed to love God *even more than* our families (Luke 14:26, Matthew 10:37)? God says that He is a *jealous* God (Exodus 20:5). So, what about Him? Does God want to hear “I love You” from *you* and from *me*?

Peter professed love for Christ, yet denied Him not just once or twice, but three times (Matthew 26:69–75). Have you ever denied Christ? Perhaps, unlike Peter, you or I have not stood before other people and denied Christ with our words, cursing and swearing. But *when* we who profess to know God are *disobedient*, we deny Christ *by our works* (Titus 1:16).

One could understand how Christ could have been hurt and disappointed by Peter’s denial. But Christ had to teach Peter that something was lacking in his relationship with God. Peter loved God with his mind, intellect and might. But his love for God was lacking in *heart*—feeling and emotion. How was Christ going to reach Peter with this lesson?

An Emotional Encounter

John 21:15 states: “So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?’”

What a question for Christ to ask! Christ wanted to hear Peter

say: “I love You!” Yes, Christ knew that words can be cheap, and it is one’s actions that count (Luke 6:46). He knew that the love of God is that we *keep* His commandments (1 John 5:3). However, Christ also knew that our words *do* count! What we Christians tell God is like incense to Him—like music to His ears (Psalm 141:2; Revelation 5:8, 8:3–4).

Peter responded, saying: “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You” (John 21:15), and Christ told him, “Feed My lambs” (v. 15). But Christ wanted to hear Peter say it again, so He continued. “He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My sheep’” (v. 16).

Christ was not through yet. “He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep’” (v. 17).

Yes, Peter was grieved. All this talk of “love” may have made Peter very uncomfortable. But Christ was not going to let Peter off the hook. He had to *express* his love to God. He had to learn to *say* to God, “I love You.” God is not only after the intellect; He also wants *heart*—feeling and emotion.

Whenever we, who profess to know God, are disobedient, we also deny Christ *by our works* (Titus 1:16). And God is no

respector of persons (Acts 10:34), so what He wanted to hear from Peter, He wants to hear from *you* and from *me*. Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He still wants to hear the words: “I love You!” God and Christ are One (John 10:30; 17:11, 22; Mark 12:29), and God the Father also wants to hear: “I love You!”

Translations of Psalm 18:1

How did David talk to God? Did he tell God, “I love You”? Psalm 18:1 records his words: “I will love You, O LORD, my strength.” In fact, the word “will” is not in the Hebrew; the verse should properly read, “I love You, O LORD, my strength.” How have other translators rendered Psalm 18:1?

NEB and *RSV*: “I love thee, O LORD my strength.”

Revised English Bible: “I love you, LORD, my strength.”

NRSV and *NIV*: “I love you, O LORD, my strength.”

New International Reader’s Version: “I love you, LORD. You give me strength.”

Contemporary English Version: “I love you, LORD God, and you make me strong.”

Living Bible: “LORD, how I love you! For you have done such tremendous things for me.”

Amplified Bible: “I love You fervently and devotedly, O Lord, My Strength.”

Complete Jewish Bible: “I love you, ADONAI, my strength!”

Yes, King David told his God, “I love You” without hesi-

tation—without prompting or coercion. That is yet another reason why he is the only one in scripture to be called a man after God's own *heart* (Acts 13:22). But what does that have to do with you and me? God commands that we imitate His servants. Christ came to magnify the law—to make it more binding (Isaiah 42:21). The law now covers Genesis to Revelation. We must live by *every* word of God (Matthew 4:4). We are to follow the example of *these servants of God* (Philippians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:7–9; 1 Peter 5:1–3). We are *commanded to imitate* them (Hebrews 6:11–12).

God's Deep Feeling and Emotion

God has the deepest feeling and emotion in the universe! Christ was a thoroughly masculine man when He was in the flesh. He single-handedly cleared the temple of merchants, doves and animals (John 2:13–17). The Apostle John, too, was a real man (Luke 9:51–56; Mark 3:17). Yet that same Christ who had cleared the temple of the money-changers allowed John to lean intimately on His chest when asking a private question among His disciples (John 13:23–25). In today's society, of course, we do not normally lean on one another's chests; we follow our social customs where they do not conflict with God's laws (Romans 13:7, Acts 5:29). The point is that Christ was not—and is not—afraid to come close to those He loves.

God's love so permeates His entire Being that He is love (1 John 4:8, 16). One of the great expressions of His love is the sacrifice of Christ as the Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7; John 13:1). On the other hand, God feels such godly jealousy over us, His little

children, that His *name* is *Jealous* (Exodus 34:14)!

God has a wide range of feelings and emotions. As its Source, God possesses, in fullness, all the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). God laughs (Psalm 2:4; 37:13). In His presence is fullness of joy. At His right hand are pleasures for evermore (Psalm 16:11).

Can God cry? We all know that God in the flesh *cried* at the funeral of His friend Lazarus (John 11:35), and that He also sighed and *cried* over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). But Hebrews 5:7 also tells us: “Who, *in the days of His flesh*, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with *vehement cries and tears* to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear.” The verse does not say that He did this, “in the day of His passion,” or, “Facing His death.” But “*in the days of His flesh*,” that is, during His 33 1/2 long years. Christ *cried* perhaps *hundreds* of times, and His cries and tears were vehement (*NKJV*), strong (*KJV*), and loud (*RSV*)! Christ even called His heavenly Father “*Daddy*” (“*Abba*”) in Mark 14:36! Christ says that we will *not* be in His kingdom unless we become like *little* children (Matthew 18:3; 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16).

Christ knows sorrow and grief firsthand (Isaiah 53:3). God can also be provoked to anger, wrath, indignation and jealousy (Psalm 78:49, 58–59). God has the *very deepest* feelings and emotions.

God takes note when we shed tears (Ezekiel 9:4). Our tears are recorded in a book (Psalm 56:8). Of course, such tears are to be tears of deep personal feeling, most often shed privately—not some public spectacle meant to draw attention to ourselves. If we cry in front of oth-

ers, but not in front of God in prayer, we are certainly not following King David's example!

Be Genuine!

God cannot be conned! Words can be cheap, if they are not backed up by actions. God will not fall for flattery (Psalm 5:9; 78:36–37; Proverbs 20:19). We *must* show love to our brother (1 John 3:18, 4:20–21), and be commandment-keepers (Mark 7:6–9; 1 John 5:3).

The love of God is indeed obedience to God's law (John 14:15). But our desire to obey Him should bring a *response* from us. 1 John 3:22 reminds us: “And whatsoever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” God wants us to love Him with our *all*—which includes our words. If we fail to love God with our *all*, including our words, *we are actually breaking a great commandment* (Mark 12:29–30).

God is a Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4; Psalm 28:1). God is a Rock in His solid character—His dependability, reliability, trustworthiness and durability. He changes not (Malachi 3:6). But God is *not* a “rock” in His *feelings and emotions*! Rocks do not cry, but God cried *countless* times in the flesh. Rocks do not laugh, but God laughs. Rocks do not experience feelings of jealousy, but God is so jealous over us, His little children, that His *name* is *Jealous*!

We are *commanded* to love God (Psalm 31:23). The Apostle Peter and King David *literally* told God: “I love You!” Our beloved Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ—and God, our dear Father in heaven, our Abba-Father-Daddy (Romans 8:15)—yearn to hear *each of us*, God's dearly beloved (1 Peter 2:11; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Romans 12:19), say often to Him: “I love You!” ■

What Is Christ Doing Now?

By John H. Ogwyn

As Christians living near the end of the age, we often focus our attention on what Jesus Christ will be doing in a few years. With anticipation, we look toward the future reign of the Messiah from Jerusalem. Understanding that within a few years Christ will return to this earth as King of kings to establish His government over the nations, we eagerly await this turning point in history. It is exciting to think about this glorious time, and to look forward to our role in administering God's government under Jesus Christ.

In the same way, we often think back to the time of Jesus' first coming, and to the events described in the gospels. After all, God in the flesh was walking the earth as a human being. Jesus Christ was *Immanuel*, God with us, and He came with an important message—announcing the Kingdom of God and how we can actually inherit that Kingdom. When we read the gospel accounts of His earthly ministry, we may find ourselves thinking about how glorious and exciting it would have been to be present with Him, in the flesh. It would have been wonderful to hear His teachings and witness His miracles, and to talk personally and fellowship with Him, as so many were

able to do in His few years on the earth. Then we read of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, and we understand why He came as He did. He was, as John the Baptist explained, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

The Passover season points to Jesus Christ's role as our Redeemer and Deliverer. During that time, we reflect on the purpose of His first coming—and what it means to us and to the whole world. In the same way, at the fall festival season we generally turn our attention to Christ's imminent return and how important it will be for all humanity.

But do we reflect on what Jesus Christ is doing *right now*? After all, it has been nearly two millen-

nia since Christ's ascension into heaven, and His return is still a few years away. What has He been doing in the nearly 2,000 years since the disciples stood on the Mount of Olives and watched Him disappear into the clouds? Is the time between His first and second comings merely a "holding pattern"?

We need to understand the *vital* role that our Savior is currently playing, and what that role means to us personally. When we do understand, we will see that His role ties directly in with the Pentecost season, the time between the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles.

It Is Profitable That I Go Away

As Jesus looked around, He saw troubled expressions on His disciples' faces. It was the

We need to understand the *vital* role that our Savior is currently playing, and what that role means to us personally. When we do understand, we will see that His role ties directly in with the Pentecost season, the time between the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles.

evening of His final Passover with them, and He had begun to reveal His imminent return to the Father. As He began, He could see that they were unhappy and uncomfortable upon hearing this news. The unspoken thoughts in each of their minds must have been: "No, Lord, don't leave! We want you to stay right here with us."

Jesus, however, told them not to worry, and said that His departure would be profitable and beneficial to them. Jesus explained the benefit of His return to the Father, and helped them understand. But do you and I fully understand the benefit that Christ is making available to us, *right now*, as He is with the Father? Are we making maximum use of that benefit? Christ reminded His disciples that He

had come from the Father and was returning to the Father (John 16:5, 28). He told Peter: “Where I go you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterwards” (John 13:36). As Jesus anticipated His restoration to the glory that He had shared with the Father before the creation (John 17:5), He also understood what it would mean to His disciples.

Although His disciples were worried that He was abandoning them, Jesus did not intend that at all. Jesus emphasized that He would not leave them comfortless. Jesus understood that when He began to talk of leaving, His disciples were worried that He was leaving them alone. That, of course, was not at all what He intended. In fact, He emphasized to them that He would *not* leave them without a helper: “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18). The Greek word rendered “orphans” in the NKJV and “comfortless” in the KJV is *orphanos*, the word from which we get our English word “orphan.” The disciples feared that they would be orphaned at Christ’s departure, but He promised that **both** He and the Father would come and make their abode with them (John 14:23).

When Jesus Christ walked the earth as a human being, He could only be in one place at one time. In emptying Himself of the power and glory He had shared with the Father (Philippians 2:7), He had accepted the limitations of time and space. After returning to the Father in glory, He would no longer be bound by those limitations. Rather than encourage or be with just one person at a time, Jesus would be able to work with each and every true disciple **at the same time**.

Another clear reason why Jesus went away was to send the Holy Spirit, called in John’s account the *parakletos*. This word is translated “Comforter” in the KJV, but a more literal rendering would be “Helper” as in the NKJV. God’s Spirit is given to us as a helper in the Christian life. It is the means by which our minds are connected to God’s mind, and through which we receive the help of God’s divine power.

During this final Passover with the human Jesus, His disciples could not possibly imagine what a difference it would make to have the Holy Spirit actually *inside* them, uniting their minds with God. Until Pentecost, the disciples would have the Spirit with them, but not actually in them (John 14:17).

Jesus’ departure to heaven would not only make the gift of the Holy Spirit possible; it would also open the way for a close, intimate and personal relationship between the disciples and the Father. As long as Jesus was personally with His disciples, they naturally would make their requests to Him, asking Him to ask the Father on their behalf. However, both Christ and the Father

wanted the disciples to know the joys of an intimate relationship with the Father. Notice: “And in that day you shall ask Me nothing. Most assuredly I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:23–24).

When Jesus told the disciples that He would soon go away, He said that He was doing so to prepare a place for them (John 14:3). Many professing Christians have the misunderstanding that heaven is that place, and expect to go there to “roll around heaven all day” for the rest of eternity. But when Jesus talked of preparing a place for His disciples, he was *not* talking about such a “heaven.” Do *you* know what that place is, and when you will inherit it? It is important to understand this key scripture, to recognize what place Jesus is preparing.

First, we should note that Jesus did not say that His disciples would come to Him—or that place—right upon their deaths. Rather, He said that not only would He go away to prepare that place, but also that He would **return** for His disciples, *after which* they would *from then on* be with Him (John 14:3). Where will Jesus be after His return? Zechariah 14 declares that His feet shall again stand on the Mount of Olives, and that He will be King over all the earth. The reward that Jesus promised His disciples was rulership of the nations on the earth (Revelation 2:26–27).

What, then, is the place that Jesus is preparing?

Christ told His disciples that “in My Father’s house are many places of abode [mansions, NKJV]” (John 14:2). What is the Father’s house? Is it heaven? Actually, Jesus called *the temple* the Father’s house (John 2:16). Did you know that there were dwelling places in the temple? Note Jeremiah 35:4: “And I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door.” A number of chambers, or dwelling places, were connected to the temple structure (1 Kings 6:5). These chambers were assigned to those who held offices of responsibility at the temple. These temple chambers, or offices, represented the structure of God’s government. Jesus Christ was returning to the Father so that He might prepare a place or position for His true followers in His soon-coming Kingdom.

Christ thus taught His disciples that His return to the Father would be expedient or beneficial to them, as it would allow Him to prepare a place for them in His coming government. It would allow Him to be present with

each of them personally through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, sent to help and aid them in their Christian walk. It would also allow them to establish and enjoy a close, intimate relationship with the Father Himself.

The Priesthood of Melchizedek

Since His return to heaven, Jesus Christ has been functioning as our High Priest before the throne of God. He has been appointed a High Priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6). The earliest New Testament Christians were very familiar with the Jerusalem temple and the functioning of the temple priesthood. Growing up, they had been exposed to the various ceremonies that took place there.

6:20 that this reference to Melchizedek is a reference to Jesus Christ.

The temple, and its ceremonies, showed ancient Israel that one does not simply wander into the presence of God. We cannot just come as we are! Rather, humanity by itself is defiled and unclean and excluded from the presence of the holy and sovereign God. Only through the mediating office of the priest, and the resulting atonement, can mankind enter into fellowship with God. Those ancient temple ceremonies pointed to what Jesus Christ is doing right now!

Jesus Christ has an unchangeable priesthood, and is fully able to save those who come to the Father through Him. He is continually alive to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:24–25). “For such a High Priest was fitting

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The priesthood was, in essence, the intermediary between God and mankind. Human beings had to approach God through the office of the priest, because the priest was the only one authorized to present gifts and sacrifices on the altar (Leviticus 17:5–6). The priests also oversaw the cleansing of those who had become defiled; they “separated” the children of Israel from their uncleanness (Leviticus 15:31). Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies to make reconciliation and atonement for the people (Leviticus 16:15–16). The priesthood represented God to man, and represented man to God. All of the ceremonies carried out in the temple, year after year, pointed toward the current ministry of Jesus Christ. The earthly temple was patterned after a heavenly reality (Hebrews 8:5).

Centuries before Aaron was ordained as High Priest, there was One who functioned as High Priest, blessing Abraham and receiving tithes from him (Genesis 14:18–20). That One was Melchizedek. Who was that mysterious individual who appeared so suddenly on the scene in Genesis? Paul explained in Hebrews 7 that Melchizedek was no mere man: He was without father and mother, without beginning of days or end of life, and He abides a priest continually (Hebrews 7:3). King David described the Messiah, his Lord, sitting at the right hand of the Eternal, proclaimed a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4). Paul explains in Hebrews

for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself” (vv. 26–27).

We have a High Priest who is at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 8:1). He is our Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1), whose mediating role allows us to be forgiven of sin and cleansed from all unrighteousness. The temple ceremonies were not the ultimate reality—they merely *pointed* to it! Ceremonial defilement, contracted from touching something unclean, was not the real cause of separation from God. Rather, it pointed toward the spiritual defilement brought about by the thoughts and attitudes that separate us from God (Matthew 15:18–20). Christ is the One who makes possible our continual cleansing and restoration to fellowship with God.

How much do we value the role that Christ is exercising in our behalf? He is *not* a High Priest who cannot understand what it is like to be human. He was, after all, tested in every point as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He underwent all of the tests and temptations that are common to human beings, and is therefore able to have compassion and offer us help. He *emptied* Himself

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Child Rearing: The Legacy of Example

By Jeffrey Fall

As parents anticipate the birth of a child, rarely do they fully recognize that *their own living example* will be the most profound influence on the child's future moral character and spiritual development.

Parents' personal example is *crucial* if children are to see that God's way of life is a way of blessings and benefits. Parental example is actually a form of teaching, in which the lessons are taught by actions, rather than words. There is an old saying: "*Your actions speak so loud, I can't hear what you are saying.*" Children often forget verbal teaching far more quickly than they can forget the vivid example they see daily of their parents' actions and attitudes. Parental examples and attitudes are deeply implanted into a child's subconscious mind, and are later reflected in their children's behavior.

Certainly parents should make it their agenda to teach their children verbally all the principles of God. But if parents' *actions do not match their words*, the teaching will most certainly be invalidated. As children grow up, they become very gifted at comparing what they *hear* being taught with what they *see* in the living example. We must never forget that Jesus Christ taught a *way of life*, rather than an "ivory tower" philosophy. The moral values that parents exhibit through actions and attitudes in daily life will be the foundation of their children's attitudes, values and behavior.

Even if parents could be perfect in teaching and example, there would still be no guarantee that their children would ultimately choose to fol-

low their parents' God in this very difficult age. On the other hand, it can almost be guaranteed that children will reject their parents' value system if they experience parental hypocrisy. From time to time, I have the privilege of working with young people who were reared in the Church, yet after high school quickly went "headlong" into the world, leaving behind the principles by which they were reared. After perhaps five or ten years of leading a very worldly lifestyle, they have experienced some trauma or tragedy and decided that it is time to find God. Each time I have worked with such a person, I have at some point asked: "You grew up in the Truth, but why did you leave?" At least 75 percent of the time, their answer has been: "It was my parents. They did not live what they taught."

Certainly, not every young person who has left the Truth has experienced poor parental examples. Nor have those who stayed with God's way always experienced great parental examples. However, God expects parents to provide a solid example, which can be a tremendous benefit and asset to children, and a powerful influence in turning young hearts toward their parents' spiritual and moral values.

Child development experts recognize that small children look to their parents—who have from infancy been their provider, nurturer and teacher—almost as gods. Young children believe anything their parents tell them, and expect that parents can fix anything—from an injury to a toy to an injustice from a friend. God designed this early dependency and trust so that parents can guide and

train the young receptive mind in a wholesome and godly way. Young children form their perception of God primarily through their parents' example. Parents have little hope of rearing godly children if they are not genuinely godly examples themselves! If children see intolerance, self-centeredness, lying, greed, unfriendliness and frequent anger, they are unlikely to be attracted to their parents' belief system regardless of any long-winded lectures a parent may give.

Parents must have fully proven—and must be demonstrating in their present life experience—that God's way of life is of great value, and works for them. Children who do not see that God's way of life works for their parents are not likely to believe that God's way of life will work for them.

Reflecting God's Nature

It is vital that, in their dealings with their children, parents reflect God's nature. Children need to see in their parents' routine example a genuine love for God, His Church and His way of life. Children who see hypocrisy will eventually reject parental training. Children who see genuineness and sincerity, however, will much more readily accept the godly principles taught by their parents and the Church.

Parents have a great responsibility to stand in as *ambassadors* for God and Jesus Christ in their children's lives, by setting the right example so that their children will eventually transfer to God Himself the respect and trust they have first

developed for their parents. As children mature, they will subconsciously transfer to God the experience they have had with their parents. If parents have been critical and unforgiving, children will tend to see God that way. If parents have been suspicious and judgmental, children will have difficulty accepting Christ's mercy and forgiveness. If parents have been inconsistent in teaching obedience to rules, and respect for authority figures, children will not respect God, nor will they be concerned about breaking His rules.

In short, children must see some of God's very nature in their parents' lives. The Bible calls this nature the "fruit of God's Spirit." This "fruit" or "evidence" of God's Spirit is simply the way God thinks and acts, and is the key to a tremendous life for parents and children alike. As Paul wrote: "*the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*" (Galatians 5:22–23). The more that parents' thoughts, words and actions display these fruits of the Spirit, the more their children will be attracted to their parents' way of life. Obviously, no parent is a perfect example. But parents who really want their children to desire God's way of life will themselves seek God wholeheartedly.

Respect for God

Parents often shape dramatically their children's respect for the Church, and for the principles it teaches. If parents continually complain that it is difficult to live God's way of life, is it any wonder when their children grow up to reject "this difficult way of life"? Over the years, I have sometimes heard parents say: "It is so difficult for our teens to not be able to attend Friday night sports events or Saturday activities." When parents portray God's way of life as a burden, children will feel disadvan-

taged. On the other hand, when parents portray God's way of life as an awesome advantage and a blessing, children will value it.

Children who hear parents continually expressing their *thankfulness* for what God has done in their lives, no matter what their current health or financial situation, will benefit

front"—multiply the power of example. When children see their parents expressing love and appreciation for each other, with an occasional "I love you" accompanied by a hug, they naturally develop a greater sense of security. The children know they are loved, and they know that the two most important people in

Child development experts recognize that small children look to their parents—who have from infancy been their provider, nurturer and teacher—almost as gods. Young children believe anything their parents tell them, and expect that parents can fix anything—from an injury to a toy to an injustice from a friend.

tremendously as they begin to acquire the "big picture" from their parents. This life is a training ground for the future family of God and someday soon we will "graduate" to our *real career* at Christ's return! As children begin to realize what an awesome and very real future they are being trained for, they become more capable of thinking in the long term, as they begin anticipating and preparing for God's Kingdom.

On the other hand, if children hear their parents mumbling and grumbling concerning principles of God such as tithing and regular church attendance, or criticizing the church, ministry or brethren, they will begin to see these principles through their parents' eyes. In other words, God's way of life will be framed as a burden rather than the blessing that it is. Children quickly discern their parents' attitude, whether it is a "woe is me" attitude or, in contrast, the attitude of "God has done so much for us; we have so much to be thankful for."

Parents, who are working together—supporting each other as a team, working as a "united

their lives love each other. Their world is secure, and they readily desire to follow the pattern of love and security that their parents are demonstrating as the outcome of God's way of life.

On the other hand, children who continually see parents fighting, arguing and being disrespectful of each other will in time realize that their parents' "way of life" is not working for them, no matter what they preach. Marriage is a "living laboratory" that can demonstrate either the tremendous benefits of God's way of life, or the destructive effects of the world's way of life. It would be wonderful if all children could learn equally well from a poor parental example—learning what not to do—but the reality is that children can recognize where there is unhappiness, and naturally reject the parents' way of life that seems to have brought them such unhappiness.

Total Truthfulness

Children absolutely need to see in their parents an example of *total truthfulness*! Truth is the foundation of

God's way of life: "The entirety of your word is truth" (Psalm 119:160). If children see their parents lie or deceive (as is the standard in much popular entertainment today), they have no reason to accept the spiritual principles in which the parents say they believe! When children experience total truthfulness from their parents, this lends tremendous credibility to the concept that there are spiritual laws that must not be violated. When parents are quick with a "white lie" to escape an awkward situation, children quickly pick up on this example, and soon begin to play by the same rules. Even worse is when parents ask their children to lie for them—perhaps telling a child who answers the phone to say that the parent "is not here." If God's principles do not apply in these situations, how will children ever know when it is important to tell the truth? For children who experience parental lying, the whole concept of truth becomes relative to what seems best at the moment.

If lying is part of parents' character, their children will not be able to trust them. Similarly, God will not be able to trust parents who lie, and He says plainly that no liars will be in His Kingdom (Revelation 21:8). If parents *live* by the principle of truthfulness, and teach it diligently to their children from an early age, lying will become almost nonexistent. This then becomes the foundation of great trust between parents and children, which builds a very strong parent-child relationship.

True Values

Children also learn much by observing the standards their parents use in valuing other people. In today's society, it seems that the three principal false standards of value are power, money and appearance. Parents do their children a huge dis-

service when they shower extra attention and favor on others with more power, wealth or beauty—they are, in effect, telling their children that they are much more impressed by the world's values than by godly values and character.

God's value and standard of human worth is quite clear: "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature... For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD *looks at the heart*" (1 Samuel 16:7). Parents need to apply this principle to their children as well. Approval and acceptance of children should be based on unconditional love and on character. If young children are *frequently* told: "aren't you such a *beautiful* little girl" or "my, aren't you a *handsome* young man", they are receiving the wrong message of their value. Parents' compliments should primarily be focused on children's *character* and *good deeds*. Children should be praised and encouraged when they are honest, caring and sharing, when they show integrity, and when they regularly seek God through prayer and Bible study.

Parents who are unduly focused on enhancing their own attractiveness can also send the wrong message. Children pick up on their parents' values very quickly. Mothers whose dress is not modest—perhaps wearing revealing clothing such as tight pants, short skirts or low-cut or tight or clinging tops—are telling their children that such appearance is what is valued in a wife and mother, and that her principal value is her ability to attract the attention and lust of others. Given such an example, daughters will expect to dress in a more extreme and revealing way than their mothers, and sons will look for the same in a wife. God, however, set the standard for godly women when He inspired Paul to write: "I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and pro-

priety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but *with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God*" (1 Timothy 2:9–10, NIV).

This principle, of course, applies equally to fathers. When one's main sense of value and self-worth comes from appearance and clothing, children notice. Also, when children see that their father takes the most notice of a woman's clothing and her body, then this sends the wrong signal. Yes, wives need to know that their husbands find them attractive, but what children really need to hear is that their father deeply appreciates and values their mother's godly traits and character.

Time With God

Children should also be able to notice their parents' personal prayer and study time spent with God. It is fine, and not to be avoided, for children occasionally to wander into their parents' bedroom and find one or both parents on their knees praying. Such an example will be impressed on their children's minds for the rest of their lives as they recognize their parents' prayer routine as an essential priority in their lives.

My married daughter, when her sleep was interrupted while caring for her recent baby, would study and pray after her other children were awake. Leaving her bedroom door open, she often found her oldest child quietly slip in and kneel beside her, unobtrusively and quietly assuming the position and attitude of prayer. This child was not old enough to grasp fully an understanding of God, but she was *very* aware of the importance of His role in her mother's life, and was attempting to model the same!

When parents consistently pray over each meal, children learn that

no matter how hungry their parents may be, they respect God more than their hunger, and want first to thank Him and ask His blessing on their meal. Parents can even encourage their toddlers to keep quiet during mealtime prayer, by holding their hands throughout the prayer and showing them how to bow their heads. This way, they not only see the importance that their parents place on communication with the God who is so important in their lives—they also learn early how to model that same respect themselves.

Children also learn from the example of seeing their parents studying God's word daily. Although it is usually easier to study while children are asleep, parents may find it very helpful to vary their schedule occasionally, so children can see the example of parents who study God's word. It is a healthy part of a child's development to recognize that parents need to spend time with their Heavenly Father. Children also benefit from learning to entertain themselves quietly while parents are studying, supervised by a parent but knowing not to interrupt.

If children see that their parents study God's word *only* once a week on the Sabbath, they too will most likely adopt the same pattern. Through their parents' example, they will learn the lesson that studying is a duty and a chore to be "worked in" once a week. By contrast, children who see their parents happily studying God's word daily will in time expect to mimic their parents' pattern of making Bible study and prayer a valued daily link to the Great God, and a high priority for a successful life.

Children should also see occasional fasting as a crucial and normal part of their parents' lives. Parents who fast can explain to their children why fasting is such a blessing. Children will see that, through fasting, their parents set a high priority

on going to God before all major decisions, seeking His guidance regarding what is best for the family, and also regarding where change is necessary in their personal lives. As children mature—especially as they become young adults and face key decisions such as college, career, baptism and marriage—their parents' example of fasting will become increasingly ben-

they will begin to appreciate their parents' genuine desire to learn more about God and His way of life.

When our children were very young, my wife and I made sure that they understood that Church attendance was a priority we had anticipated—and for which we had prepared—all week. My wife told them that it was very important that they sit

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eficial. They will come to appreciate God's promise that, if they fast regularly for the right reasons: "The LORD will guide you continually" (Isaiah 58:11). Children who learn this lesson from their parents' example will have inherited a tremendous life-long legacy for success as they learn to turn to God in times of need, decision-making and even repentance.

Parents' example of Church attendance is another area that will have a crucial effect on their children. Young people who see their parents reluctantly drag themselves to Sabbath services, and see them miss frequently because "I'm tired" or "it's raining" or "we just didn't wake up in time"—or a thousand other excuses—will begin to see Church attendance as an option, or as an "obligation" that must occasionally be met to satisfy God or the minister. *What a horrendous mistake!* By contrast, if children see their parents *willingly* and *gladly* attending, with the rare exception of illness,

quietly at Sabbath services—not distracting us or anyone else—because this was an important time each week when she and Daddy were able to learn more about God, which would help us become better Christians, and a better Mommy and Daddy to them.

As the years go by, and they see their parents' example of valuing time spent in prayer, Bible study, Church attendance and occasional fasting, children will come to appreciate that their parents place the utmost importance on their relationship with God. While even the most genuinely outstanding parental example will not absolutely guarantee success in passing along to children the value of living God's way, a poor example will surely hinder a child's ability to appreciate their parents' way of life. Christian parents must make it obvious to their children, by the example of both words and deeds, that following the way of life exemplified by Jesus Christ is the true path to joy and happiness. ■

Feast of Tabernacles 2005

The 2005 Feast of Tabernacles will begin with an opening night service on Monday evening, October 17. The Last Great Day this year is on Tuesday, October 25.

In 2005, the Living Church of God will have eight Feast sites in the United States, three in Canada and two in Europe, as well as sites in Mexico, Central and South America, Australasia and Africa.

This year, the Festival Office has tried to improve on the site assignment procedure that was inaugurated last year. Instead of determining site assignments by state, assignments were made more or less on a congregational basis, without regard for state boundaries. We hope that this approach will more effectively serve the majority of the brethren. Transfer opportunities are, of course, available to all for whom this new procedure does not meet their needs.

In early May, the *Festival Planner 2005* was mailed to all Living Church of God member households in the United States and Canada. Along with that mailing, each household was sent a Festival Pre-Registration/Transfer Request form. The form lists the site to which the household has been assigned, and

provides an opportunity to request transfer to another site.

Even if you plan to attend your assigned site, it is vital that you return your form, as the Festival Office needs to know how much room there will be for brethren to transfer into your assigned site. Additionally, an accurate site attendance count will help each site coordinator do a better job of planning events during the Feast.

If you do not receive a form, or if members of your household plan to attend differing sites, you may request additional Pre-Registration/Transfer Request forms from your area pastor.

The Festival Office needs to receive your form *postmarked no later than July 15* in order to ensure prompt handling. Every effort will be made to honor transfer requests after that date. However, depending on the numbers of brethren attending the various sites, late transfers may be less likely to be approved.

For those who wish to volunteer for service at the Feast, a Volunteer Service Form is included on the back of the Pre-Registration/Transfer Request form. A copy of your form will be sent to the appropriate site coordinator, who will contact you

regarding service opportunities at your site of choice.

Online pre-registration is available for those wishing to attend a site in the United States or Canada. An online form is available at URL: <http://www.cogl.org/fotreg/>. To complete the online form, you will need your Personal Identification Number (the 11-digit number that appears above your name on Church mailings). If you use this pre-registration method, you will receive an e-mail confirming that your request was received. You will then receive, by postal mail (at the address to which your Church mailings are sent), notice as to whether your transfer request was approved. You may also use the online form to volunteer for service opportunities at the Feast.

If you would like to transfer to one of the more than two dozen sites outside the United States and Canada, you may request further information from Church Administration, by e-mail at cad@lcg.org or by telephone at (704) 844-1960, extension 220. We regret that Albé, the site in France, is already full, but many other sites are available for North American brethren who wish to travel overseas.

—Patrick Scarborough

Sites in the United States:

Lake Tahoe, California; Taos, New Mexico; Rapid City, South Dakota; Corpus Christi, Texas; Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri; Clearwater, Florida; Myrtle Beach, South Carolina; Saratoga Springs, New York

Sites in Canada:

Canmore, Alberta; Mont Orford, Quebec; Summerside, Prince Edward Island

Around the World:

Argentina, Australia, Barbados, Cameroon, Colombia, France, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Martinique, Mexico, Myanmar, New Zealand, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, Vanuatu, Venezuela

When Tragedy Strikes*(continued from page 6)*

faith grows exceedingly” (2 Thessalonians 1:3–4).

Peter urged his readers to focus on the “lively hope” available to us through the resurrection of Christ, and on the “sure inheritance” reserved for us in the future: “Though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested [refined] by fire, may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation [coming] of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6–7). Peter also warned Christians: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you... but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s suffering, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12–13). He went on to explain that Christians should not incur suffering as the result of breaking the laws of God, but that “if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this mat-

ter” (v. 16). He also revealed that “those who suffer *according to the will of God* commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator” (v. 19). David obviously understood the emotional pain of personal tragedies, yet he also knew: “*Precious* in the sight of the Lord, is the death of His saints” (Psalm 116:15). David’s words remind us to remain focused on the “Big Picture” and the purpose that God is working out on this earth—and in our lives!

The Apostle John records that various eras of the church “will have tribulation” (Revelation 2:10, 14, 22–23; 3:19), but that if we “persevere” in living God’s way and doing His work, God promises: “I also will keep [protect] you from the hour of trial [the great period of tribulation at the end of the age] which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (Revelation 3:10). John reveals that those who are “called, chosen, and faithful” will be with Christ when He returns to set up the Kingdom of God on this earth (Revelation 17:14; 11:15–18; Daniel 2:44–45; 7:27).

When trials and tragedies strike, it is natural to become dis-

traught and to focus inwardly on our personal pain, to look for something or someone else to blame or even to consider *giving up*. Yet the Bible reveals that we must *resist* these tendencies, and instead focus on God and what He has revealed in His word: His plan and purpose for human beings, His prophecies and His promises. When trials and tragedies erupt in our lives and in the world around us, we need to *review* and *hold on* to the basic instructions and vital perspectives that God has recorded in His word. Only in the Bible do we find a “Big Picture” that makes sense out of the chaotic and calamitous events that occur in this world. Scripture provides important insights as to why tragic events occur, and offers reasons for hope when things around us seem hopeless. The words of God were a source of strength for Job, David, Peter, Paul, James, John and countless others through the ages. When trials come and tragedy strikes, the Bible can also be a source of strength and understanding for us—if we will study and believe what God has revealed. ■

What Is Christ Doing Now?*(continued from page 11)*

and experienced humanity so that we might ultimately be *filled with all of the fullness of God* (Ephesians 3:19). He is currently fulfilling His role as our High Priest to equip us for our ultimate destiny!

Christ came to reveal the Father, and to introduce His disciples to the same kind of close, intimate relationship that He Himself had enjoyed from eternity. We are brought into an actual **family** relationship with the Creator of the universe. In fact, we are told that we can approach the throne of God with **boldness and confidence** (Hebrews 4:16). We can come seeking help in our times of need.

In the days of Christ’s earthly ministry, the priests drew lots to determine what parts they would perform in the temple worship (cf. Luke 1:9). The privilege of entering the holy place, bearing incense to burn before God,

was a rare opportunity—one that many priests received just once in a lifetime. Even then, *they were still separated* from the Holy of Holies by a heavy veil. But what are we told as Christians today? “Therefore, brethren, **having boldness to enter the Holiest** by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:19–22).

Brethren, let us be deeply aware of the role that Jesus Christ, our Savior, is fulfilling for us right now. He came to earth as our Redeemer and Savior, He is **right now** serving as our High Priest and Intercessor and He will return in a few short years as King of kings and Lord of lords! How thankful we should be to Him for *each* of these vital roles! ■

Understanding the Milwaukee Tragedy (continued from page 3)

loyal and zealous leadership of those around you, and the fine leadership and encouragement we have been receiving from Mr. Weston here in Canada.

We do pray for you regularly. There will undoubtedly be difficult times ahead. Despite the challenges and inevitable attempts by Satan to thwart the Work, please know that with God's help we in God's Church will echo through our actions the words of Winston Churchill, spoken in an hour of great dan-

unseen forces of Satan and his demons will certainly try to hurl themselves against the true people of God—*especially* those who are actively preparing for the government that will soon replace *Satan's* government! So we, as God's little children, must fervently **cry out** to God for the help and deliverance that can only come from Him. Remember the example of our Savior, Jesus, "who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with **vehement cries and tears** to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet

ize how weak we are and how great *He is*—and not ever become "great" or "exalted" in our own eyes. We must constantly *help* one another with this, *pray* for one another and "walk with God" every moment of every day. Then, with Christ at our side, we can confidently *walk right over* into the Kingdom of God with Him! As the Apostle John wrote: "And now, little children, **abide in Him**, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28).

Dear brethren, as events impact more and more upon us, and upon the world around us, we realize that

Yes, it is a fine line to walk. We must have the understanding and faith to realize that God *is* using us, *will* use us as we continue to yield to Him, and *will* bless us immeasurably if we serve faithfully to the end.

ger and trial, when no one gave England a chance:

"We shall not fail or falter; we shall not weaken or tire. Neither the sudden shock of battle nor the long-drawn trials of vigilance and exertion will wear us down."

So let us be encouraged by these thoughts, dear brethren, and move ahead to do everything we can to prepare for Jesus' return as King of kings. We *know* that time is short. We know that Satan is **enraged** that we are now on the verge of having greater impact in the Work of God than we have ever had before—for *his time* is short. As God's Word tells us: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and sea! For the devil has come down to you, having *great wrath*, because he knows that he has a short time" (Revelation 12:12).

We must always be aware that we are in a "spiritual war." The

He learned *obedience* by the things which He *suffered*" (Hebrews 5:7–8).

As the promised trials and tests come our way, we must always try to see the "Big Picture" and realize *who we are* and **why** Satan may be especially enraged against us. Yet, in all of this, we must **not** be vain or haughty. For that would **absolutely be our undoing!** As God's Word tells us: "But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and *he who humbles himself will be exalted*" (Matthew 23:11–12).

Yes, it is a fine line to walk. We must have the understanding and faith to realize that God *is* using us, *will* use us as we continue to yield to Him, and *will* **bless us** immeasurably if we serve faithfully to the end. Yet all the credit and all the glory belong to *Him!* So we must maintain that perspective and real-

the world *desperately needs* what we have to give! Life is certainly fleeting. However, **not** because of our goodness, but through God's mercy, we have the Truth. We must preach that Truth *persistently* and **boldly** to the entire world as a "witness." We must *never* be ashamed. We must *never* give up and quit through fear, frustration or simple human selfishness. We must always hold up the "banner" of Jesus Christ and the **Truth** that has been given us through Him and through His inspired word. That is the *only* answer to the complete confusion and frustration more and more besetting this mixed-up world.

God grant each of you this vision of the future, and the *understanding*, faith and courage to move ahead and *honor* the God who has given life and breath to all of us—and has specially **called** us into His service now! ■

More of Us Need To Be HEALED*(continued from page 2)*

always has been, an evolving discipline. And this necessarily means that what we know about medicine is constantly changing; that medicine is forever putting forth, and simultaneously upending, assumptions. This is particularly true at this moment. Virtually all of our medical therapeutic options are being questioned, evaluated and re-evaluated by researchers across the globe.”

In reference to Dr. Sanders’ comment, since some of the top professors in medical school acknowledge that “half” of what they teach may be **wrong**, in which “half” will you put your faith?

Think!

Additionally, note carefully the following facts cited in the *Public Citizen Newsletter* of July, 2002:

“70 percent of doctors treating Medicare patients flunked an exam on their knowledge of prescribing the older adults.

The majority of physicians who were asked to take the exam refused, often giving as their reason that they had a ‘lack of interest in the subject.’

48 percent of patients taking three or more drugs were given drugs with one or more harmful interactions with other drugs.

Every minute, two people are hospitalized for adverse drug reactions (1,500,000 a year) and there’s a death every five minutes and 15 seconds (100,000 a year). Every three and one quarter minutes, someone suffers drug-induced or drug-worsened memory loss (163,000 a year). It is fortunately reversible if you know which drug was the cause.”

With the above facts in mind, it is important that we strive to *get our balance* in the matter of God’s healing versus going to doctors! Certainly, as we have taught for years, God does **not** condemn being checked by a physician or even *being treated* by a physician when necessary! Jesus Christ Himself stated: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick” (Mark 2:17). In this and other statements, Jesus and the apostles certainly did *not condemn* going to physicians. Yet we read about the woman who “spent all that she had” on physicians and grew worse rather than better. And we know that God certainly **can** heal—and in most cases **will** heal—if we come to Him and look to Him in genuine **faith**. And we are aware that the closer we come to God individually, and as a Church, *the more healings* will undoubtedly occur. For again, brethren, divine healing is a **vital part** of the gospel of Jesus Christ—and of the **Work**

God has always done through His Church. Let me quote again from our booklet on healing:

“Looking carefully at the ministry of Jesus Christ and the Apostles, it is clear that divine healing was a vital part of the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel of Matthew tells us how Jesus began His ministry: ‘And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and *healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people*’ (Matthew 4:23).

“You will notice that Jesus constantly did *three things* in His ministry. He:

- (1) Preached the Gospel
- (2) Healed the sick
- (3) Cast out demons

“An incident in Peter’s home shows us more about the background of divine healing: ‘When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and *healed all who were sick*, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “*He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses*” (Matthew 8:16–17). Here, Matthew explains that Jesus’ healings were to fulfill the scripture, in Isaiah, which shows that Jesus—the Messiah—‘bore our sicknesses.’ Matthew was quoting the famous passage in Isaiah 53 that clearly describes the role of the coming Messiah. The Messiah was to be ‘despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief’ (v. 3). The inspired Isaiah also tells us: ‘*Surely our diseases He did bear, and our pains he carried; whereas we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded because of our transgressions, He was crushed because of our iniquities: the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his stripes we were healed*’ (Isaiah 53:4–5; *The Holy Scriptures*).

“The Jewish scholars who performed the above translation *do* know how to translate the Hebrew Bible! They correctly indicate that Jesus bore ‘our *diseases*.’ The vast majority of scholars also acknowledge this, as can be seen in footnotes in the *New King James Version*, the *Revised Standard Version* and other translations of the Bible. The *New International Version* renders as ‘infirmities’ the word that the *KJV* renders as ‘griefs.’ Scholars *know* that the word translated as ‘griefs’ literally means ‘sicknesses’ in Isaiah’s original Hebrew.

“In Matthew 10, we find that Jesus gave His twelve leading disciples authority to heal and to cast out demons: ‘And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to *heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds*

of disease' (v. 1). But, many will say: 'Wasn't this just for the twelve original Apostles and *not* for us today?'

"No! In Luke 10:1–9, we read that Jesus gave 'seventy others' this same authority to heal! Notice: 'Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. *And heal the sick* there, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you."' (vv. 8–9). And at the very **end** of His human life, Jesus gave a basic instruction for *all* of His faithful servants down through time. He commanded: 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.... And these **signs** will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; *they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover*' (Mark 16:15, 17–18)....

"One of the 'signs' of the *true* Church of God is divine healing! This was manifested throughout the ministry of Jesus and the original Apostles and the 'seventy others.' Later, we find that the Apostle Paul, called to take the gospel to the gentiles, frequently healed people. Acts 14 recounts an incident in which Paul, seeing that a crippled man 'had **faith** to be healed, said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked' (v. 9–10).

"In Acts 8:1–7, we read that God's Church was scattered from Jerusalem, and that the disciples traveled throughout Palestine preaching and teaching Christ's message. One of them, Philip, had only recently been ordained as a *deacon* (Acts 6:5). No doubt because he had a great deal of **faith**—as did his fellow deacon, Stephen (v. 8)—Philip was used to **heal** the sick, *cast out demons* and perform *miracles*. Notice: 'And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were **healed**' (Acts 8:6–7).

"The above is very clear biblical **proof** that others—*not just the Apostles*—were used to heal the sick and cast out demons. Of course, it was through the power of Jesus Christ and in His 'name'—*His authority*—that these miracles were performed. God's Word tells us: 'Jesus Christ is the **same** yesterday, today and forever' (Hebrews 13:8). That power to heal is available to God's *faithful ministers* today just as it was to **all** of the Apostles, the 'seventy others' and the other faithful servants of God all during the Apostolic Age and ever since, for those who have **faith** in the Word of God!"

Brethren, *many* have been healed through my personal prayers, and through the prayers of many of the Church's ministers. We *know*, and **know** that we know, that God is our Healer. Hundreds or perhaps thousands of *you* have experienced this! Nevertheless, we also know that the *percentage* of people being healed after prayer is much less than it should be. We know that as the entire society turns further away from God, this *does* have an effect upon us, upon our children and upon our new members who themselves *never had* the experience of seeing people healed to the degree some of us older members have. So I ask all of you to "gird up your loins," begin to *pray fervently* about the matter of healing and ask God to grant us the "gifts of healings" (1 Corinthians 12:9) to a much greater degree. If we, as a Church, begin to *beseech* God and literally **cry out** to Him about this matter, I am sure that He **will** answer!

How *wonderful* it would be for us, and for potential new brethren whom God is calling, to begin to see the **power** of God at work in this way! I encourage *all* of you to go back and reread and *study* my booklet on healing, *Does God Heal Today?* I think you will find it very informative, inspiring and encouraging. As we see the end of this age approach, we know that there will be more and more *false prophets* and false ministers appearing—some of them even working **miracles**! Jesus said, regarding the **end-time**: "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For **false christs** and **false prophets** will rise and show great **signs** and **wonders** to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:23–24).

We all know that whenever God *allowed* Satan and his servants to perform miracles, God's *true* servants would perform even **greater** miracles, as did Moses and Aaron! Several examples like this are in the Bible. However, much depends on *how close* we are to God. So let us emphasize this matter of healing more in our study, our thoughts and our prayers. I am sure that all of you will want to join me in doing this, and in praying fervently that our Father in heaven will pour out this gift of healing upon His ministry and upon His Church to a **much** greater degree!

How *encouraging* and *inspiring* this will be—and how *important* this will be for those outside the Church not only to hear the Truth of God spoken, but to "see" the "signs" that God granted the early apostles as they went out to preach the Truth all over the Roman Empire. Let us always remember how this is described in the last verse of the book of Mark: "And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and *confirming the word through the accompanying signs*. Amen" (Mark 16:20).



Ordinations

Mr. Melicio Chico was ordained as an elder by Pastors Rod King and Gideon Benitez on March 8 during the Philippines Ministerial Conference. Mr. Chico will continue to serve the brethren in Sindangan, Zamboanga.

On the Sabbath of March 26, *Mr. Sioeli (Joel) Fotu* was ordained as the Living Church of God's first deacon in New Zealand. The ordination was performed by visiting Regional Director Mr. Bruce Tyler and New Zealand pastor Kinnear Penman. Mr. Fotu was born in Tonga, and is related to the Tongan royal family; he received his name from the King of Tonga in 1970. His full name—Fuofua Fakataha 'a Tupouto'a Sioeli Fotu—tells a story. At the time of Mr. Fotu's birth, the young Crown Prince of Tonga had just held his first official meeting with dignitaries. Tonga's king gave Mr. Fotu a name that recalls this event; the first four words in his name mean: "The first official meeting of Tupou the Mighty." Mr. Fotu has lived in New Zealand for most of his life; he and his wife Emma have three children: Spencer, Lucy and Samson.

Mr. Robert Yetka of the Los Angeles congregation was ordained as a deacon on the Sabbath of February 26. Dr. Jeff Fall performed the ordination. Mr. Yetka will serve the brethren in the Los Angeles area.

Jury Duty Excuse Forms

Living Church of God adherents who are summoned for jury duty may wish to make use of the forms and documentation provided by the Church's Risk/Legal Department. Your area pastor should be able to give you copies of the forms, which include legal precedents as well as a ministerial affirmation that you adhere to the doctrines of the Living Church of God regarding jury service. If a court denies your request for excusal, please contact the Risk/Legal Department by phone at (704) 844-1960, x228, or by e-mail at legal@lcg.org, to determine whether additional help may be available.

Ice Fishing in Wisconsin!



On January 9, brethren from Minnesota and Wisconsin gathered on Fireside Lake in northern Wisconsin for the First Annual Ice Fishing Activity. The day started off with a hearty breakfast at the home of Pete and Debbie Elertson. Then, 24 enthusiastic anglers headed to the lake, where 80 holes were drilled and "tip-ups" put in place. A luncheon of chili and hamburgers was made and served right out on the ice by cook extraordinaire Mr. Jon Elertson. Believe it or not, a rousing game of football was played while waiting for the fish to bite. A bounty of pan and game fish was caught, including the prize-winning 27-inch Northern Pike caught by 7-year-old Casey Monson. His brother Jake ended up

with the most catches of the day. Although the temperatures were well below freezing, the fellowship and warm spirits of the brethren made this wintertime outing a wonderful one!

— Joette Monson

Births

Jeremy and Desiree Hooks, of Colorado Springs, Colorado (very recently of the Albuquerque, New Mexico congregation) are delighted to announce the arrival of their first child, *Aubrey Nichole Hooks*. Aubrey arrived weighing 6 pounds,

10 ounces and was 19 inches long. Mr. & Mrs. Hooks now attend the Denver, Colorado, congregation.

Ellah Grace Cuizon was born on April 2. She weighed 8.5 pounds. Her parents, Mr. & Mrs. Federico

Cuizon, and two brothers are doing fine. Her overjoyed grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Renato Cuizon, are long-time members of the Church of God and members of the LCG video group in Bani, Pangasinan, Philippines.

Marriages

Edward Gontar and *Joanne Chowace* were united in marriage on March 26 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Family, brethren and friends witnessed the ceremony conducted by Mr. Stuart Wachowicz. The couple will reside in Calgary.

Gary Jones II and *Gwen Blanchard* were married on August 15, 2004 in Bates City, Missouri. The outdoor wedding was performed by Gerald Weston; vows were exchanged in a gazebo. Mr. & Mrs. Jones reside in Independence, Missouri and attend the Kansas City congregation.



New Booklet!

Mr. Meredith's latest booklet, *Where Is God's True Church Today?*, will be offered in his upcoming "semi-annual letter" to *Tomorrow's World* subscribers, which will be mailed in late May and early June.

Church members need not send in a card or otherwise request the booklet; it will automatically be sent to all Living Church of God member households.

Upcoming *Tomorrow's World* Telecasts

WGN: Sunday, 6:00 AM ET

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

May 1	Time Is Running Out!
May 8	What's Wrong With the Ten Commandments?
May 15	Was Darwin Wrong?
May 22	Can You Prove God Exists?
May 29	The Promises of God
June 5	Why Were You Really Born?
June 12	Power in Prayer
June 19	What Is Sin?
June 26	Fear, Frustration or Faith?

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

In Loving Memory

Gloria Critari, of Cudahy, Wisconsin, died on March 12. She was 55 years old. Baptized in 1968, she is survived by her husband, Fred, her daughter Lisa Ling, and her grandchildren Lindsay and Phillip Maughmer. A memorial service was conducted on March 18 by Mr. Rand Millich.

Harold Diekmeier, of Delafield, Wisconsin, died on March 12. He was 74 years old. A member of God's Church since 1973, he is survived by his children Glenn Diekmeier and Gail Hoffman. He was predeceased by the former Irene Simko, his wife of 44 years, and by his second wife, the former Lillian I. Greider, who died in 2001. A memorial service was conducted on March 17 by Messrs. Charles Bryce and Rand Millich.

James Gregory, of Gurnee, Illinois, died on March 12. He was 16 years old. He is survived by his mother Marjean and his brother Jonathan. A memorial service was conducted on March 17 by Messrs. Charles Bryce and Rand Millich.

Randy Gregory, of Gurnee, Illinois, died on March 12. He was 51 years old. Born in Muleshoe, Texas, he was baptized in 1972 and graduated from Ambassador College in Big Sandy. Ordained as an elder in 1992, he was working at IBM in Austin, Texas, when the Living Church of God hired him into the full-time ministry in 1999, to serve congregations in Illinois and Wisconsin. He was ordained as a pastor in 2000. He is survived by his wife Marjean and by his son Jonathan. A memorial service was conducted on March 17 by Messrs. Charles Bryce and Rand Millich.

Merry "Margie" Spurgeon Heaton of the Palm Springs, California LCG congregation, died of a stroke on November 16, 2004, at age 88. A member of God's Church since 1969, she was preceded in death by her husband Warren, who had served in the Worldwide Church of God ministry. Mrs. Heaton is survived by her son David H.

Spurgeon (Janice) of Cathedral City, California, her daughter Blaine Lindquist (Dennis) of Arvada, Colorado, her stepdaughter Elaine (Kenneth) Mattson of Tallahassee, Florida and Warren J. Heaton, III (Marti) of Louisville, Kentucky. She is also survived by seven grandchildren, four step-grandchildren and many step-great-grandchildren.

Rebecca Jones, a member of God's Church since 1964, died on February 22 after a battle with cancer. A deaconess who served the brethren in New York City, New York, she will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Gerald A. Miller, of Erin, Wisconsin, died on March 12. He was 44 years old. Baptized in 2001, he is survived by his parents Gerald and Lillian Miller, by brothers Jeff and Dan, and by sister Nancy Morton.

Bart Oliver, of Waukesha, Wisconsin, died on March 12. He was 15 years old. A joyful, exuberant and affectionate young man, who liked to make other people happy, Bart was also known for his polite and thoughtful nature. He is survived by his parents Ronald and Loni Oliver, and by his brothers Mark and Nick. A memorial service was conducted on March 18 by Mr. Glen Gilchrist.

Terence Ratzmann, of New Berlin, Wisconsin, died on March 12. He was 44 years old. Baptized in 1985, he is survived by his mother Shirley Ratzmann, and by two sisters and one brother. A memorial service was conducted on March 18 by Mr. Glen Gilchrist.

Richard Reeves, of Cudahy, Wisconsin, died on March 12. He was 58 years old. Baptized in 1972, he is survived by his wife Lena, and by his sons David, Joel and James. A memorial service was conducted on March 17 by Mr. Rand Millich.

Commentary

The Bible: Foundation of Knowledge

By Rand Millich

A Gallup poll conducted May 5–7, 2003, revealed that a majority of Americans now recognize divorce, gambling, sex between an unmarried man and woman and having a baby outside of marriage as morally acceptable. These attitudes, along with these kinds of behaviors, have taken a terrible toll on people's lives—emotionally, financially, physically and spiritually.

In his book, *Our Dance Has Turned to Death*, author Carl Wilson identified seven stages through which societies progress as they break down. Notice the last stage: “Finally, unbelief in God became more complete. Parental authority diminished and ethical and moral principles disappeared affecting the economy and government thus by internal weaknesses and fragmentation, the societies came apart.”

Rabbi Daniel Lapin, a prominent conservative social critic, put it this way: “The story of America during the past 35 years is likewise a story of an airplane running out of fuel. What will transpire when it does is entirely natural and predictable. The good news is that for those who wish it, the fuel tanks can be replenished. But what is the fuel? What has kept America airborne for so long? I believe it is loyalty to the basic principles that God laid out in the Bible for the safe and durable operation of the machine we call human society.”

As we should have known, the foundation of knowledge, the word of God, was way ahead of the researchers and historians. In Deuteronomy 28:1–4, we read: “Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings will overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD

your God: Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.”

God also warned that curses would come upon the nations if His commandments were not followed. In Exodus 20:1–17, God gave the Ten Commandments as an underpinning of His royal law of love. These include: not having any other gods before Him, not making, serving or bowing down to any graven image, not taking God's name in vain, keeping the Sabbath holy, honoring father and mother, not murdering, not committing adultery, not stealing, not bearing false witness and not coveting.

Did you realize that there are *other* laws and principles in the Word of God? There are laws that govern and protect the marriage relationship. There are laws that identify which sexual relationships are destructive. There are laws revealing how employers ought to treat their workers. There are laws that show the obligations of employees. There are laws showing how to judge rightly and wisely. There are health laws. There are agricultural laws. There are financial laws. There are environmental laws. There are laws showing proper behavior toward foreigners. There are laws concerning how to care for the poor, the widow and the physically challenged. There are laws governing building safety. All of these laws are based on wisdom, outgoing concern and righteousness. They all lead to building up and sustaining individuals, families and nations.

“For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

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