

Living Church News

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Are You Responding to Christ?

Dear Brethren and Friends,

The Feast is coming soon! As prophetic events continue to speed up—and as the *end-time* trials and tests of God's people also increase—it is important that we all step back from time to time and try to understand what *God* has in mind in all of this.

We all know that the Feast of Trumpets pictures the dramatic events at the very end of this present age. It pictures the “alarm of war” that the blowing of trumpets in ancient Israel signified. And this Feast of Trumpets certainly reminds us of the *almost inconceivable agony* that a rebellious world will experience as a result of the “trumpet plagues” that God describes (Revelation 8:6–13; 9:1–21). People will have become so *totally* deceived and hardened that, even after the absolutely awesome and traumatic punishments from their Creator, most who manage to survive will *still be defiant!* “But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk” (Revelation 9:20–21).

Astonishing!

Even *if* our expected time-frame of end-time events is off by several years, these inspired verses remind us how totally awful circumstances will become within a comparatively few years from now! Even as I write, the radio news is describing the *recent terrorist attacks* in London; yet we in God's Church know that these events are *only the beginning*. It is not going to be a Sunday afternoon picnic. The world around us will *change* enormously over the next several years. We have to become used to the idea that we are, indeed, “pilgrims” (Hebrews 11:13) living in a world that has totally cut itself off from God. As “ambassadors” representing the Kingdom of God in this confused society, we must constantly remember *who we are*. Some of our dearly beloved brethren have died, and others will yet die, but we must realize that our physical lives, too, are only *temporary*—whether we live on until Christ's Second Coming, or whether we die and “sleep in Jesus” along with the rest of the saints. Certainly, this realization of *how precious* our time here is—and of the awesome *meaning* of our lives as God's servants and ambassadors—ought to inspire us to serve our Creator more faithfully, thoughtfully and zealously in the years just ahead.

Dear brethren, as we think and pray about *why* God has allowed some of the recent trials to come upon us, it is encouraging and it is *realistic* to

remember that the big events that God's Church, and God's Church alone, has prophesied, either have occurred, are occurring or soon will occur. We should all be stirred by these awesome future events, even though the world may not believe us and may, in fact, literally laugh in our faces if we tell them what is about to happen. But the prophecies of God's Word will inexorably move forward to their foretold conclusion!

There Is Good News Ahead

Let us never forget that, even in the "darkest hour," these end-time events spell good news for all of us in God's Church! For, as Jesus said: "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (Luke 21:28). Indeed, our "redemption" certainly is coming near. The continuing terrorist attacks, the worsening drought over much of the western United States (and vast portions of Australia and elsewhere) and the building danger of disease epidemics and earthquakes, all plainly indicate that Christ's coming is soon. May God help every one of us to grasp this Big Picture. May we be encouraged and inspired by what the living Jesus Christ is doing in preparing the way for His return. And may all of us be inspired to do all we can, personally, to help prepare the way.

In this Work of Christ, we have recently been blessed in going on more television stations and going through more "doors" for preaching the Gospel than ever before in the history of this Work! Recently we have been blessed by going on fine television stations in Memphis, TN; New Orleans, LA; Dallas, TX and Houston, TX. In addition, the hundreds of millions of potential viewers of the satellite broadcasts that we are on through the Inspiration Network are certainly inspiring to think about! We are already receiving an increasing number of letters, phone calls and e-mails responding to that broadcast from the British Isles, Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. Also, the "Nine Network" in Australia has a potential audience surpassing anything we have previously reached in Australia.

Even right now, as you are reading this, 4.5 million subscribers to the Reader's Digest "Mature Edition" have received in their August 2005 issue our full-page message advertisement, briefly describing some of the world's problems and advertising Mr. John Ogwyn's fine booklet entitled Revelation: The Mystery Unveiled! We hope that many thousands of people will respond to this advertisement, receive this booklet and be added to the subscription list of Tomorrow's World magazine.

So we see that, in spite of the trials and tests which God is allowing us to undergo—no doubt to humble us and strengthen us in many ways—God's Work is certainly surging ahead with more power than ever before! It is vital that we do, in fact, "step back" and try always to see the Big Picture of what God is doing in the world, of what God is doing in the Work and of what He is doing

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Christian Meditation

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

Today, more than ever, it is vital that we read the Bible regularly and drink in deeply of its great truth.

But to really profit from Bible reading, or even from diligent Bible study, we must deeply understand how to apply the Bible's words to *ourselves personally, in our own lives*. We must make it part of us. We can only *truly* do this by harnessing the power of meditation.

Many of us do not understand meditation's great benefits. That is one reason why many of us lack depth and stability in our Christian lives.

Societal demands today restrict us from giving deep thought to God, His purpose, and what this means in our own lives. Television, for instance, is always there, waiting and tempting, with programming that is absolutely damnable—murder, violence, implicit (and sometimes explicit) fornication, filth and rottenness of every possible description. Most people cannot or do not control it. It *runs* our minds and it *ruins* our minds. Of course, movies do the same thing, as do video games and the Internet.

Even the telephone, a seemingly harmless apparatus, seems to ring every time you are about to do something important. It rings so much at our home that I remember praying one time with my family around the dinner table. I had been so distracted all day that as I bowed my head I said, "Hello."

In spite of these modern distractions, we need greater concentration and spiritual depth in order to be like King David, whom God called a man after His own heart. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the coun-

sel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful," David said. "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1–2).

David Meditated

David took time to meditate on the law of the Great God. He thought about it deeply, in great detail, over and over. Under the stars at night as a shepherd, on the royal balcony as a king, or out on the battlefield as a soldier—and at many other times—David thought on God's law.

"O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavens! Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger [showing how God uses those who, of themselves, might be weak]. When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man...?" (Psalm 8:1–4).

I have sat quietly at the top of Mt. Whitney, which rises 14,496 feet from its base—the tallest mountain in the continental United States. From there I could see way out across the Sierras, clear to Death Valley. Up there, with no one else around, you feel kind of small. It is easier to realize, in that vast expanse of mountains and valleys and canyons and whistling winds, just how tiny we are.

"What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him

to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet" (vv. 4–6).

Eventually, the entire universe could be placed in our power. If our attitudes are right; if we are meditating on God's law, asking Him to fashion us and mold us and work with us and make us like He is—sincerely from the heart—we will have that power. God wants it that way.

Why is it so important to meditate on God's laws? David again gives us the answer: "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether" (Psalm 19:7–9).

David knew that God's judgments were more desirable than fine gold. We need to fix our minds on those laws in order to really become zealous in serving and obeying the Great God. To understand those laws as David did, and as Jesus did, we need to learn the art of real meditation.

Godly Vs. Ungodly Meditation

This world under the influence of Satan has many childish concepts about meditation. "Transcendental Meditation" and other Eastern-type meditation techniques, simply letting the mind go blank or conjuring up a certain feeling or mood where Satan or a demon can grab the mind, is not godly meditation at all. That kind of meditation is dangerous.

The right kind of meditation is described in Philippians 4:8:

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Guard Your Health Religiously!

By Douglas S. Winnail

For many people today, the pursuit of perfect health is like a religion—with daily rituals involving vitamin pills, herbal potions, special diets, exercise routines and mental mantras for stress reduction. These rituals are followed religiously, yet many devotees are not particularly religious. For the “religiously inclined,” however, physical health is often not a high priority—their focus is on *spiritual* things.

There are, however, *biblical guidelines* that relate to health. When we carefully consider the life of Jesus Christ, we find that He understood and lived by biblical principles that promote health and prevent disease. If we are determined to *follow in His footsteps*, we too will strive to live by those same biblical principles of health, because we understand that they are part of *true biblical religion*. There are important reasons why God gave us health instructions in Scripture—instructions that can benefit everyone today, not just those who call themselves Christians.

The Bible and Health

In the New Testament, the Apostle John greets an elder named Gaius with the salutation: “I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health” (3 John 2). This was not just an idle comment. Jesus Christ and His apostles consistently spoke of Christianity as “a way of life” (see John 14:6; Acts 16:17; 18:26; 1 Corinthians 12:31; 2 Peter 2:15, 21). The Bible plainly states that if we follow the *way of life* outlined in Scripture, good health will be one of the benefits, but that if we disobey God’s instructions, sickness and disease will follow (see Deuteronomy 28). God provided instructions about health in the Bible so that His chosen people could be *an example* for other nations to follow to achieve good health and avoid the curse of disease (Deuteronomy 4:1–10). The Israelites were told *not to forget* these divine laws, and to teach them to their children from generation to generation. These laws were not to be viewed as a burden, but as a *blessing* (Deuteronomy 4:40). As we will see, the biblical laws and instructions about health were clearly included in Jesus’ statement that we are to live “by *every word* that proceeds from the mouth of God” (compare Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3). Jesus obeyed the biblical health laws, and He told His disciples to “follow Me” (Matthew 4:18–20). The Apostle Paul instructed New Testament Christians: “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). But *what are* the biblical laws and instructions that relate to health, and *why* should we follow them today?

Dietary Instructions

Many have heard of biblical laws that prohibit the consumption of unclean foods—pork, shellfish, and certain other creatures (see Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14)—but few understand the reasons behind these divinely revealed laws. Animals that the Bible labels “unclean” often carry parasites that can be transmitted to people who eat the flesh of these creatures. Pigs, bears, rabbits and squirrels can transmit trichinosis, and pork tapeworms can infect not only human intestines, but also the human brain. Snails, clams, oysters and crayfish also carry and transmit parasitic diseases. One reason meat (and fish) should be cooked is to kill any parasites that might infect human beings. The laws about unclean meats were not given to the Israelites just to keep them separate from their neighbors—those laws have *definite health benefits*, and the benefits did not disappear after Jesus was crucified! Ignoring these laws still has consequences today, including the increased risk of contracting parasitic diseases. Eating sushi (raw fish) may be a trendy fad today, but it also carries a risk of infection. Some wrongly cite certain New Testament passages—Matthew 15, Mark 7 and Acts 10—as if they abolished the dietary laws regarding meats, but in fact these passages do not even address the subject of unclean meats. Unclean foods that spread diseases in ancient times *still cause the same diseases today*—even for those who believe that the biblical dietary laws are no longer relevant!

However, instructions about clean and unclean meats are not the only biblical guidelines that relate to diet. The Bible also states that we should not eat *fat* or *blood* (Leviticus 3:16; 7:23–27). Meat should be trimmed of excess fat before it is consumed, and fatty cuts of meat—such as bacon and various types of processed packaged meats, which are often high in fat—should be avoided. One key benefit of these prohibitions is that *high-fat diets* have been found to contribute to heart disease, strokes and several types of cancer (colon, breast and uterine). Diets that are high in fat are also *high in calories*, and contribute to obesity. Obesity among adults and children is a growing scourge in our modern world. Oils and many salad dressings can also be a major source of fat and calories, and thus should be used in moderation, following the biblical principle of not consuming fat. Meat products such as blood (black) sausage, and cultural practices of mixing blood and milk ought to be avoided because blood can carry various pathological organisms (bacteria, viruses and parasites). The biblical

prohibitions against consuming fat and blood are relevant today, just as they were 4,000 years ago—they have not ceased to have a protective value. They still promote health and prevent disease.

The Bible also provides instructions about the consumption of carbohydrates, such as fruits, vegetables, grains, bread and sugars. Regarding sugar-containing foods, the Bible states: “Have you found honey? Eat only as much as you need, lest you be filled with it and vomit. . . . It is not good to eat much honey” (Proverbs 25:16, 27). Honey and other simple sugars are quickly absorbed into the bloodstream, where they elevate blood sugar levels, causing the pancreas to release insulin to bring blood sugar levels back to normal. Diets that are high in sugars put stress on the pancreas, and over time can lead to diabetes and other medical complications. Eating foods made with much sugar results in consuming many excess calories, which leads to obesity. Obesity is increasing today all over the world, as processed, sweetened foods are replacing fruits, vegetables and whole grains. There *are consequences* for ignoring these simple, yet basic biblical guidelines.

A biblical recipe for bread provides another glimpse into how practical and up-to-date the Bible instructions about health actually are. Ezekiel was instructed to make a loaf of bread out of wheat, barley, beans, lentils and spelt (Ezekiel 4:9). This was a *multigrain bread* that contained several types of fiber. Fiber is contained in *complex carbohydrates*. Modern research has shown that high-fiber diets—diets high in complex carbohydrates—reduce blood cholesterol and help eliminate noxious chemical substances from the body. High fiber diets are *lower in calories*, and help prevent overweight and obesity, thus reducing the risk of heart disease, stroke and various types of cancer. Natural fruits, whole grains and most vegetables contain significant amounts of fiber. Many do not realize that French-fried potatoes and potato chips absorb large amounts of fat when they are manufactured, rendering these products much less healthful than raw or cooked potatoes. Here again, there is nothing old-fashioned or outdated about biblical guidelines regarding the consumption of carbohydrates. We should eat fewer simple (refined and pre-packaged) sugars and more complex carbohydrates (fiber-containing whole foods). If we ignore these guidelines, we will experience negative consequences that contribute to disease.

It has long been said that “we are what we eat.” Today, many people are digging their own graves with their forks and spoons. God gave human beings biblical guidelines for the purpose of *preventing disease and promoting health*. The biblical instructions about health promote *a way of life*—not a search for some secret ingredient or magic cure. Those who truly believe that they should walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, and really live by every word

of God, will strive to follow these fundamental biblical guidelines about diet.

No Longer Drink Only Water...

Many people in the world fall to one of two extremes when the subject of alcohol is raised. Some recognize the evils of drunkenness and debauchery, and believe that alcohol should be shunned. Others, however, see that the Bible encourages the use of alcohol, but then use it—and abuse it—to excess.

In fact, while the Bible *condemns* the *abuse* of alcohol (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:19–21), it actually *recommends* the use of alcohol in moderation. Paul advised that Timothy “no longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and for your frequent infirmities” (1 Timothy 5:23). Modern research has shown that elderly people who consume a glass of wine with their meals are able to digest their food better, because the wine helps create an acid environment in the stomach, which aids digestive enzymes. Other studies have shown that moderate consumption of alcohol—a glass of wine a day—also helps reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes, and may even help prevent Alzheimer’s disease and other types of dementia, possibly because of the blood-thinning and cholesterol-lowering properties of alcohol. Properly used, alcohol can for most people be a helpful aid to health.

However, alcohol is no substitute for water—a nutrient the body needs. The Bible is full of positive references to water (Genesis 2:10; John 7:38; Revelation 22:1). Most people need 6–8 glasses of water a day to replace what is lost through perspiration and elimination. Water performs many important functions in the body—it is used in the digestion of foods, the transport of nutrients and the elimination of waste products. Failing to ingest adequate amounts of water leads to weakness, headaches and dehydration—and can even be fatal. Controversies exist as to whether one should drink distilled or mineralized water. While water can contain pollutants that we should try to avoid, the Bible does not indicate that drinking water must come from a distilled source. The Bible reveals that drinking water was obtained from wells and rivers—and from cisterns, which were made of pottery or carved out of rock (Proverbs 5:15; John 4:6–7). This water would contain minerals. There is no indication in the Bible that distilled water is the perfect drink for human beings.

Exercise and Stress Management

Some wrongly assume that concerns about physical health are not important to the Christian life, because Paul told Timothy that “bodily exercise profits a little, but god-

liness is profitable for all things” (1 Timothy 4:8). In fact, in this verse, Paul stated a truth about two different issues. Modern science has shown that exercise and physical activity are absolutely essential for maintaining a healthy body, yet these benefits are only *temporary*. Spiritual issues are, of course, of the *ultimate* importance—but this does not minimize the importance of engaging in enough physical activity to stay healthy. Exercise burns off calories, and is important in maintaining normal weight. Regular exercise is important in order for the muscular, skeletal and lymphatic systems of the body to function properly. Exercise also produces endorphins, which are like natural tranquilizers that aid relaxation.

Jesus understood the value of physical activity. He chose to come to this earth as a carpenter. Carpentry in the days before power tools was a physically strenuous profession. Jesus also traveled from Nazareth to Jerusalem at least three times a year to attend the festivals (see Luke 2:41; John 7:1–10). The distance from Nazareth to Jerusalem is more than 75 miles. Just to observe the Holy Days, Jesus would have traveled about 500 miles each year—which averages out to more than a mile a day. Jesus walked regularly and lived a physically active lifestyle. Consider that Jesus said to His disciples: “Follow Me.” If we *literally follow* Christ’s example, we will be physically active, and our health will also improve.

Some may assume that stress is exclusively a product of modern civilization. However, the Bible thousands of years ago addressed the subject of managing stress. Stress can cause tension, headaches and loss of sleep. It can depress our immune systems, spawn various diseases and lead to depression. Jesus took this into consideration when He instructed His disciples: “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31). He gave this advice after they had returned from a strenuous preaching mission and learned that John the Baptist had been beheaded. Jesus gave practical advice to help relieve the effects of stress. David also seems to have understood the soothing effects that come from contact with nature. He wrote: “The LORD... makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul” (Psalm 23:1–3). Modern research has confirmed that hospitalized patients recover sooner if they can have a view of water, flowers and trees instead of looking at four walls or concrete buildings. God made us so that we would benefit from contact with His creation—the natural world. The Bible and modern research reveal that there is a *restorative power* in our contact with God’s creation, which can help us deal with the stress of modern life. If we are serious about walking in the footsteps of Christ, we must learn to use these same biblical principles to manage stress in our lives—because stress can be fatal.

High Risk Behaviors

Today, increasing numbers of people who claim to be Christians also feel that it is permissible to have sex outside of marriage—or even to co-habit with someone with whom they are “in love.” Many consider biblical prohibitions against adultery and fornication old-fashioned and outdated, as they limit one’s personal freedom. However, the Bible condemns pre-marital and extra-marital sex in very strong terms (see Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 22:13–22; 1 Corinthians 6:9–10). Not only do fornication and adultery destroy marriages and cause mental anguish and suffering in families, but sexually active lifestyles also put a person at risk for contracting sexually transmissible diseases—including HIV/AIDS. Two thousand years ago, the Corinthians lived in an extremely promiscuous society, where prostitution was part of the city’s pagan religion. Paul advised Christians in Corinth: “Flee sexual immorality... he [or she] who commits sexual immorality sins against his [or her] own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18). Solomon’s writings echo Paul’s advice, warning that one who commits fornication or adultery “lacks understanding” of the consequences that lie ahead, which will cause the sinner to “mourn at last, when your flesh and body are consumed” by disease (see Proverbs 5, 6 and 7). Many people today have been duped into believing that they can ignore these biblical instructions and can take risks, yet can avoid unpleasant—and often horrible—consequences. Choosing a sexually active lifestyle, or choosing to experiment with drugs, is like playing Russian roulette with a fully loaded gun—*there will be consequences!* Those consequences can be avoided if we follow basic and timeless biblical instructions.

Religion and Health

But what do these biblical guidelines about health have to do with Christianity? If we are “under grace” and our ultimate goals are spiritual, why do we need to worry about obeying physical laws of health? Simply put, the Bible states that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, KJV). The Bible also reveals that sickness is one of the consequences of sin, and that health is the product of obeying the physical and spiritual laws of God (Luke 5:18–20; Deuteronomy 28). The Apostle Paul made another important connection between physical and spiritual laws. He wrote that Christians are to “glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Paul meant that our bodies do not belong to us. They belong to God, and we are to use them properly. True Christians who take these

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How Deeply Are You Committed?

By John H. Ogwyn

Commitment runs very shallow in our modern Western world.

Most people seek convenience and ease in their lives—even in their religion. What does Jesus Christ expect of those who would be His disciples? How much commitment is really necessary?

Christ warned His disciples that a time would come when many who claim to be Christian would be offended, and would hate and betray one another (Matthew 24:10). Clearly, such individuals would lack deep enough commitment to their Savior and His Way.

History is replete with stories of “sunshine patriots”—those who lacked the commitment to weather personal hurts, slights or hard times that came their way. Perhaps the most infamous name in early American history was that of Benedict Arnold. His name has been paired with Judas Iscariot as synonymous with “traitor.”

Benedict Arnold did not start out as a traitor, of course. He was, in fact, the youngest American general in the Revolutionary War, and was a hero of some of its early engagements. Like many others, he professed devotion to the cause of American independence. He was highly respected for putting his life on the line, and for being in the forefront of action with his troops. Yet Arnold’s commitment to the ideal of an independent United States had definite limits, shaped by his personal ambition.

Arnold had become increasingly angry at the actions of his superior officer, General Horatio Gates, whom he felt took credit for all of Arnold’s good ideas, and who was receiving praise and recognition to which Arnold felt entitled. Soon, Arnold’s resentment extended to General George Washington, whom Arnold

blamed for not seeing through Gates. Eventually, Arnold grew to resent and oppose the entire American cause. Embittered, he made a bargain with the British to betray his colleagues and the American position at West Point, New York—and Arnold’s name became synonymous with “traitor.”

Obviously, Benedict Arnold’s commitment was shallow. He cared more about his perception of “unfair” treatment than about the cause to which he had once pledged himself.

In Matthew 24, as elsewhere, Jesus Christ made it plain that many Christians will become spiritual “Benedict Arnolds.” What about you? How deep do your commitments run?

God’s Commitment To Us

We sometimes reflect on our commitment to God and to His way of life, but do we think about His commitment to us? Perhaps we do not often enough consider it this way, but God has shown *to* each of us the deepest of commitment. In return, of course, He requires total commitment *from* us.

God gave His friend Abraham a test of obedience quite unlike any that had come before. God told Abraham to take his son Isaac to Mount Moriah, and offer him as a sacrifice. Isaac, Abraham’s son by Sarah in their old age, was the son for whom they had waited for decades. Yet as much as Abraham loved his son Isaac, he loved God more. Abraham did not yet understand why God had given this command, but because he trusted his Creator, he took young Isaac to Mount Moriah along with the items needed for the sacrifice. Of course, as we know, God intervened at the last possible moment and stopped Abraham from carrying out the sacrifice. God had seen that Abraham’s commitment to Him knew no bounds.

This was not some arbitrary test that God imposed on Abraham. It foreshadowed what God Himself would do, nearly 20 centuries later, when the Father gave His Son, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice to pay for the sins of every human being who would ever live. God’s love for us—and His commitment to our salvation—knew no bounds! For our sake, He made the supreme sacrifice! And Jesus Christ—who had from the beginning been with the Father, possessing eternal power and glory—voluntarily emptied Himself and became a mortal man, born as a helpless human baby who grew to adulthood in the ancient Roman provinces of Galilee and Judea. When He began to teach authoritatively about God’s way of life, and worked miracles to heal and help others, He came into conflict with the religious establishment of His day, which hated, resented and feared His popularity with the masses of ordinary people. Ultimately, His enemies collaborated to have Him arrested and turned over to the Roman government for execution by crucifixion—one of the cruelest tortures ever devised by human beings.

Consider the commitment that God the Father and Jesus Christ made to each of us personally. Paul wrote in Romans 8:32 that God is so deeply concerned about each of us that He did not even spare His own Son in order to bring about our salvation. So how can we doubt that the Father, and the resurrected Christ at His right hand, will freely give us all the help we need in order to enter the Kingdom of God? God’s commitment to us is so deep and so powerful that it staggers the imagination.

But what about our commitment to Him? What kind of commitment does He expect of us? Jesus told His disciples that in order to be His fol-

lowers, they would need to do three things: deny themselves, take up their cross daily and come after Him (Luke 9:23). What did Jesus mean by this? Understanding what Christ meant is the key to understanding the level of commitment that Christ and the Father require of us. Make no mistake about it—there will be no “fair weather” disciples or “sunshine patriots” in the Kingdom of God!

Deny Yourself

Christ demanded self-denial of those who would follow Him. This, of course, “goes against the grain” of our modern Western world, where most everyone is seeking self-fulfillment, not self-denial. People are frantically trying to “find themselves”—not to lose themselves!

Popular teachings and therapies today promise to help people “feel good about themselves.” Many today do not consider themselves “happy” unless they can do whatever they wish. As a result, they reason that since God is love (which He is), He must certainly want people to be “happy”—and that God would therefore approve of whatever actions increase their “happiness.” If personal happiness means violating a biblical injunction or compromising a clear biblical standard, then so be it! Far better to deny the Bible than to deny the self—or so they think.

However, simply put, obedience to God involves denial of self. When we tithe, or keep the Sabbath, or avoid meats that God deems unclean, or give up our comforts to help another person, we are demonstrating that our appetites and physical comforts are not the ruling forces in our lives.

Helping, serving or giving to others generally involves self-denial. It often means putting off something else we had wanted to do, or inconveniencing ourselves in order to meet others’ needs. Yet it is not enough to help, give or serve

while resenting the “inconvenience” we are experiencing. We must help, give and serve with a willing heart. When Paul told the Corinthians that a special offering was being collected to feed the poor brethren in Judea, he reminded them that God “loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). God cares not only about what we do, but about the attitude with which we do it.

What motivated God the Father and Jesus Christ to deny the self on our behalf? Why did they offer such an amazing sacrifice? Their motive was *love*—outgoing concern toward us as potential future members of the Family of God. Love is at the basis of God’s character—and with it the willingness to deny self in order to help those whom He loves. Christ said that if we are to come after Him, we too must be willing to deny the self. To live as Christians, we must understand and practice this vital concept!

God’s law is for our good. It points the way to eternal life and joy forever. Yet it often goes against the grain of our human nature. We do not find it natural to love our enemies, to bless those who curse us, or to pray for those who seek to spitefully use us. In doing so, we deny the natural human instincts and urges common to us all. However, just as God loves us with a sacrificial love, we as future members of His family must learn the way of love that is prepared to say “no” to self.

King Saul’s son Jonathan is an outstanding example of someone who denied the self and exemplified true love. In 1 Samuel, we read about Jonathan’s close friendship with David, the future king of Israel. David became a national hero after killing Goliath, and he went on to achieve other notable victories over Israel’s enemies. Seeing David’s popularity, Jonathan’s father King Saul was soon consumed with jealousy. Jonathan and David, however, became very close friends.

As Saul’s jealousy grew, he began to formulate plans to kill David.

Knowing that his son was David’s friend, Saul sought to stir jealousy within Jonathan’s heart and mind. “You will never be established in your kingdom,” Saul warned Jonathan, “as long as David is alive.” Jonathan came to understand that David, not he, would become king—yet he always sought to help and protect his friend, thus denying the self and showing real love.

Are we like Jonathan? Or are our minds open to jealousy and resentment of others? Do we have the kind of love that is prepared to deny the self?

Take Up Your Cross Daily

What did Jesus of Nazareth mean when He told His disciples that they must be prepared to take up their cross daily? What is our cross, and how do we take it up daily?

The stake that Jesus took up at the end of His life, as he walked from the Governor’s Palace to His place of execution, symbolized the purpose for which He had entered human flesh and come into the world. It was indeed the instrument of Christ’s execution. However, it was by His death and shed blood that He paid the penalty for sin and made possible our reconciliation to God. Additionally, He triumphed over Satan and all his works, ensuring the ultimate victory of all those who would follow Him.

For Jesus, taking up His cross represented the shouldering of responsibility, no matter how personally distasteful. Every fiber of His being cried out for some alternate way; nevertheless, He surrendered Himself completely to the Father’s perfect will (Matthew 26:39). In asking His disciples to make such a sacrifice daily, Christ showed that our responsibilities are not just one-time events, but

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Child-Rearing: CREATING A GOD-CENTERED FAMILY CULTURE

By Jeffrey Fall

If our *ultimate goal* as parents is to rear children “in God’s image,” it will become our guiding light and central theme for everything we do in our family. Our real desire then, becomes the creation of a *culture of God* within our home. One definition of culture that especially applies is “a particular stage of advancement in civilization” (*Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*). In this case, it is the “advancement in civilization” of the future Family of God.

All too often, the tendency is for parents to compartmentalize God in their family life. We view the Christian walk as composed of certain Christ-like behavior patterns, Church services, and perhaps occasional family Bible studies. In truth, this is a good start, but there is *far more* to creating a *culture of God* within our homes. If we visualize our entire family life as a pie chart, most would view the spiritual aspect of child-rearing as a small percentage of the whole: simply a small piece of the pie. In contrast, if we truly do want to rear children “in God’s image,” then the spiritual focus must encompass the *entire pie*.

What does this mean? Simply that *every* decision we make as parents should revolve around the question: “Will this *increase* or *decrease* the likelihood that my child will grow up ‘in God’s image?’” Perhaps a father is considering a second part-time job, which would help the family afford a vacation cabin. Certainly the family would value the cabin—but the second job would cause him to spend much less time with his children. So, what would more likely turn the children toward God when they are older: the pleasure of a cabin in the woods, or the presence of a *devoted father* spending more time each day with his children?

When a family’s child-rearing is guided by this type of priority-setting, a much more stable foundation is being laid, which will dramatically increase the likelihood that children will walk in their parents’ spiritual footsteps. Years ago, we hung a plaque on a wall in our home, with a scripture that summarizes this principle: “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).

Yes, this is easier said than done, but with God’s guidance there is real hope. If we maintain the guiding principle of rearing children “in God’s image,” we will have all the resources of the Creator God to draw on.

What, then, are some of the significant principles that will help us guide our family decisions in this way, creating a God-centered family culture? This article will discuss five vital principles.

Principle #1: Go to the source of true godly culture—God Himself

In and of themselves, parents almost inevitably lack sufficient *wisdom* and *understanding* to guide their children’s young minds in a godly direction. Adults’ primary model for child-rearing, of course, comes from their own parents. All parents enter the child-rearing years influenced by whatever flaws were present in their own upbringing. No matter how much we appreciate our parents—most of whom did the best they knew how—the fact is that none of us have grown up with flawless examples by which we can pattern our own parenting. For that matter, none of our parents grew up with ideal examples, either—a pattern that extends all the way back to the first human parents, Adam and Eve.

Yet, if we have not laid a godly foundation for our children when they are small, it becomes all the more difficult to establish that foundation when they mature into their teen years. Thankfully, we can turn to the perfect parent, God Himself, and seek His help when we lack what it takes. God tells us in His word that if a parent “*does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever*” (1 Timothy 5:8). God, as our parent, lives by this same principle and is ever willing to give us all the help we need, if we are willing to go to the source.

Parents all too often realize that they lack the necessary wisdom to handle so many of the difficult and frustrating circumstances they encounter in rearing children. In my own family’s history, there have been many situations in which my wife or I realized that we were “in over our head.” But God has given us—His spiritual children—a promise: “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally*” (James 1:5).

When a family situation is particularly difficult, it is time to focus even more fervently on seeking God’s help, wisdom and direction. Once, when Jesus’ disciples were frustrated by their inability to cast out a demon from a

young man, Jesus told them: “*This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting*” (Mark 9:29). And so it is with so many difficult problems in life, including child-rearing—some problems are overcome “*by nothing but prayer and fasting.*” In fasting, we move closer to our God, admitting our weaknesses and our total need for his guidance, wisdom and insight. God promises that when we take this approach of seeking God aggressively through fasting: “*The LORD will guide you continually*” (Isaiah 58:11). We must be willing to *ask*, in order to receive!

Principle #2: Be willing to put children ahead of self

Our human nature—and the world around us—teach a very contrary principle: “*Find yourself, discover yourself, and take care of ‘number one’ because no one else will.*” But what comes about when we follow the world’s advice and make ourselves “number one”? If we do so, and neglect our responsibilities in child-rearing, we will leave a void in our children’s lives—a void that *will* be filled, by society and by Satan’s mindset! Remember, *we* may neglect our children’s upbringing, but Satan will *never* neglect to do what he can to influence them!

Paul’s admonition to the Philippians applies especially to parents. “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:4–5). Most parents—especially mothers—can remember the countless times that they were awakened in the middle of the night by the cries of a newborn baby. It would be a rare parent, indeed, who would simply ignore a newborn’s cry with the thought: “I need my sleep; I have to take care of myself.” Most parents find that it comes fairly naturally to put the physical needs of their children ahead of their own—but it is rare indeed for a parent to put their children’s long-range spiritual needs at the forefront of the family’s priorities. Parents need to ask themselves, from time to time: “Have I put the needs of ‘self’ ahead of the need to rear my children ‘in God’s image’?” It takes an investment of time to put our children’s spiritual needs first, but God wants parents to take advantage of every opportunity to teach their children godly principles. “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:7).

Principle #3: Make a godly mindset the chief influence on your children

It is a high calling for human beings to be given the responsibility of molding young minds in the image of

God. We cannot accomplish this by wishful thinking or simply by desiring it. It requires a huge investment of time and effort, and careful attention to the roles God has given to parents. God wants husbands to be fully supportive of their wives as “*keepers at home*” (Titus 2:5, KJV). When a wife and mother is able to spend her hours as a full-time “keeper at home,” she can create a warm and nurturing environment while serving as the chief influence in forming her young children’s character. Sending young preschool children to a daycare center during their formative years dramatically changes the dynamics of rearing children “in God’s image.” Day after day, children in such situations quickly have their view of life shaped by other children and adults around them. The significant question for a parent becomes: “Do I want my little child’s mind formed by our family, or by the world?”

Many parents will say: “Yes, we know that having a full-time Mom at home is ideal, but we simply can’t afford it.” Sadly, it is often true that a mother must work so that a family can make ends meet. But we should not overlook another vital dimension of help and support: God Himself. He is not limited in resources, nor is He limited in the capacity to provide for His own children. If we turn our desire over to God in frequent prayer, reminding God that we *really want* our children to grow up loving Him and living His way of life, God will hear! Ask God to show you *how* to economize or do your part in lowering expenses or increasing income. Often, the seemingly impossible is possible with God, if we fully trust Him, and ask according to His will: “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

God’s word also tells us: “Those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing” (Psalm 34:10). If God knows the value of mothers being “keepers at home,” should we not expect Him to provide so that this is possible? Yes, to accomplish this a family may have to reduce its physical standard of living. But if one’s primary goal in child-rearing is that children grow up “in God’s image,” God assures us that with His help it is possible! Parents need to pour out their hearts to God, knowing that rearing godly children is His priority—and is also ours as parents! If parents maintain their patience and persistence, God will in time provide a way!

Many couples discover that when a mother quits working, the family is not nearly as “behind” financially as they had feared. When a working mother gives up her paycheck, she also gives up many extra costs that go with being a working mother: perhaps a second car payment, extra insurance, gasoline, clothes for the workplace, dry cleaning bills, more restaurant meals and packaged foods for the family, and so on. Often,

the loss in income is not nearly as great as it might first appear.

When a mother is able to stay at home full-time, young children's sponge-like minds will be guided and shaped primarily by a devoted mother and father, rather than primarily by the world. Though family circumstances vary, it is generally true that the longer a mother can be a full-time Mom at home, the better for the children. Both inside and outside God's Church, an increasing

world is not something that we should be ashamed of; it is something that we should be *thankful* for and *strive for*! God's people are certainly unique in many ways, and we are even called "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9, KJV).

Being *peculiar*—unique—does *not* mean that we are odd, strange or weird! It *does* mean that we have a different set of standards—God's laws—and a different order of priorities in life: seeking "first the Kingdom of

Single parents have a unique burden in child-rearing, which can only be lightened by a *very close* relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. Successful single parents do all they can to seek God's guidance, asking Him to give them added help and extra ability to fulfill the spiritual needs of a young child.

number of parents who have the resources and ability are choosing to "home school" their children, because of concerns about the quality and environment of schools in today's society. In our family, we made it a priority for my wife to be a "keeper of the home" through our four children's high school years—and later through their college years. Some might argue that this was unnecessary—and even that it was "overkill"—but our children certainly do not agree. The benefit they experienced, having counsel and direction instantly available in their young adult years—when so many life-changing decisions are made—was incalculable.

Yes, there are cases where a mother must work, and cannot provide an "ideal" environment for her children. This is not an ideal world, and we *do* have to make the best of circumstances that are beyond our control. Single parents have a unique burden in child-rearing, which can only be lightened by a *very close* relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. Successful single parents do all they can to seek God's guidance, asking Him to give them added help and extra ability to fulfill the spiritual needs of a young child. God Himself takes a special interest in widows or single parents who are struggling to rear their children "in God's image." God says that He is a "father of the fatherless, a defender of widows" (Psalm 68:5).

Principle #4: Cultivate the concept that "we are different from the world"

Being different from the world does not mean that we are "better" or "superior" in a self-righteous way. It does mean that we recognize that we have a different set of standards and a different calling, which we should work at transmitting to our children. Being different from the

God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). If our children perceive that we *fear* or are *embarrassed by* being different from the world, we will plant in their minds the wrong standard: that what people in the world think of us is more important than what God thinks of us.

We can help our children value being different—help them value God's ways—by continually emphasizing to them the *benefits* of God's way of life, as opposed to the natural *penalties* of following the world. Yes, this does take a huge investment of time and energy, but the reward is immeasurable!

Principle #5: Guard children's minds from the influences of Satan's world

It is *so* crucial that we *protect* our children from Satan's influence and propaganda onslaught, but we also do not want to bring them up naïve and ignorant of the world, vulnerable to Satan's devices. Jesus Christ expressed similar sentiments when He prayed that God would protect His followers: "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15).

Some parents, when seeking a neighborhood where they will buy a house or rent an apartment, make a priority of finding a neighborhood where there are many other children with whom their children can play. This is an excellent priority if you want to rear children who spend most of their free time absorbing the mindset of the world's children. When our family has looked for places to live, we have actually been delighted to find an older neighborhood with few children. Does this mean we wanted to isolate our children? Not at all! Our goal has been to let our children mix with other children in regu-

lated, supervised activities—not in unregulated and unsupervised “free time.”

When our children were pre-teens (and later teens), we involved them extensively in community athletic leagues. Our two sons and two daughters were involved in such supervised activities as tee ball, baseball, softball, soccer, gymnastics, ballet, tap dance and swimming. They actively mixed with children from all backgrounds, but that mixing was “purpose-driven.” Our children were

from the Kingdom of God and toward the things of Satan’s world.

If we encourage our children, and our teens, to fully intermingle with the world—through neighborhood sleepovers, close neighborhood friends, school dances and dating in the world—we are slowly but surely inviting them to accept the world’s influence and mindset. Time spent together is certainly a factor of friendship with the world, and God warns all of us: “Do you not

There are many “good” people in society who are doing the best they know how in living moral lives. But if our goal in child-rearing is to rear the next generation “in God’s image,” we will increase the likelihood of doing so *if* we encourage our children to form their *real* friendships with those walking the same path to God’s Kingdom.

participating in activities where coaching and teamwork were central.

What we sought to avoid were the unsupervised activities with neighborhood children—in the alley, or out in the woods, or at the local hangout or at the movies. We did not want to give our children a “green light” to mix freely with the world’s mindset, which is characterized as having “walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons [children] of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). This is *not* to say that we wanted to separate our children totally from the world; we simply wanted to expose them to the world in a *structured* and *controlled* way.

At the same time, we made it a priority to see that our children had every possible opportunity to be involved with other children and teenagers in God’s Church. Driving long distances was often a normal part of our attempt to keep our children active with others in the Church. Church camps in the summer can be a significant expense, but they are certainly an outstanding way to keep our children connected with their Church family of their own age. Similarly valuable are the various regional youth activities, pre-teen and teen Bible studies—and, indeed, *all* local Church activities.

Though we *do* have friendly acquaintances in the world, God’s people should be our *true* friends, and we should emphasize and teach our children God’s key directive that we be “not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14). This does not *at all* mean that we think we are better than others, but it *does* mean that we take God’s word and His principles seriously! If we saturate our minds with close friendships in the world, this will, in time, tend to shift our focus away

know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). Close friendships in the world inevitably become an increasing link to this world’s society, and to a value system alien to God’s people.

This is *not* to say that all those “of the world” are to be shunned and avoided at all costs. There are many “good” people in society who are doing the best they know how in living moral lives. But if our goal in child-rearing is to rear the next generation “in God’s image,” we will increase the likelihood of doing so *if* we encourage our children to form their *real* friendships with those walking the same path to God’s Kingdom. Remember, every aspect of our child-rearing should revolve around the question: “Will this *increase* or *decrease* the likelihood that my child will grow up ‘in God’s image?’”

The experience of child-rearing can be the most challenging and difficult task in a parent’s life, yet it has the potential of being the most fulfilling and richest experience in life. Frustrations, concerns and worries may abound, yet nothing is more satisfying to parents than seeing their children *fully* enjoy living God’s way of life. We understand that not every child reared in God’s Church will “catch the vision” and develop “in God’s image,” but it is a given that *our efforts are never wasted!* Even if they venture out into the world, our children who have been taught God’s way of life in their childhood will have a foundation on which they can rely, whether in this life or in God’s Kingdom.

“Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them” (Psalm 127:3–5). LCN

God's Names and the Jewish Reading Tradition

By John Wheeler

Those who insist that *Yeshua* should be used exclusively to represent our Savior's name often insist that God the Father must be called by God's personal name in Hebrew Scripture (the *Tetragrammaton*). Some even insist that *Yahshua*, not *Yeshua*, is the correct pronunciation of our Savior's name. They fail to reckon with something the early Church respected: the Jewish *reading tradition* that accompanied Hebrew Scripture.

The Jewish Circumlocutions for YHWH

The Greek New Testament preserves (in translation) the current Jewish circumlocutions for the Tetragrammaton [in Hebrew, *Yhwh* or יהוה]. By Jesus' day, the Jews already considered the name *Yhwh* too sacred to be pronounced outside the Temple. Wherever *Yhwh* was written in a Hebrew text, the reader substituted another divine name in its place. Usually the divine name used was *Adonay* [אֲדֹנָי or "Lord"]. *Elohim* [אֱלֹהִים or "God"] was used when *Adonay* actually preceded *Yhwh* in writing. All "mainstream" Greek Septuagint manuscripts, other Hellenistic Jewish texts, and the Greek New Testament translate *Yhwh* and *Elohim* as *Kyrios* [Κύριος] and *Theos* [Θεός] which likewise mean "Lord" and "God."

Thus when Jesus read Isaiah 61:1–2 in the synagogue of Nazareth, He read *Adonay Elohim* (not *Adonay Yhwh*) in verse 1 and *Adonay* (not *Yhwh*) in verse 2. Luke (citing the Septuagint) translated Jesus' reading of *Adonay* in both cases as *Kyrios* (Luke 4:16–22). Had

Jesus not followed this convention, He would immediately have been accused of blasphemy under Jewish law. Likewise, when Jesus cited Hebrew Scripture publicly, and when the apostles cited it in preaching and writing, they always used circumlocutions for *Yhwh*—never *Yhwh* itself. Again, the New Testament accurately records this fact. Had the apostles (including Paul) not done so, they would have aroused tremendous controversy among the Jews and Christ's disciples alike. The New Testament is *silent* about any such controversy. This matter was simply a non-issue in the original Church.

Why was this so? Because in following the Jewish convention, Jesus and the apostles were breaking no law of God. Here Jewish law was extending biblical precedent, in which Abraham (Genesis 18:27, 30, 31–32), Moses (Exodus 4:10, 13), Daniel (Daniel 9:7–8, 15, 17, 19), and others used *Adonay* or *Elohim* as if it were *Yhwh* (that is, as a substitute out of respect for God's personal name). These precedents were not inserted by early scribes so that God's name might not be profaned, as the medieval Talmudists and Masoretes thought. Had the early scribes sought to do so, they should also have made similar changes in many other places (quite frequently in the same contexts where the alleged changes were made). The Jewish law, then, was not arbitrary—but was based on genuine biblical example.

Far from *breaking* the intent of the Third Commandment, as some charge, this *judgment on God's Law* (cf. Matthew 23:1–2) was meant to

help the common people *keep* it. This worked as long as the Second Temple was still standing, because the original pronunciation of *Yhwh* was repeated in the Temple service every year on the Day of Atonement. It was only *after* the fall of the Second Temple in Jerusalem that the exact pronunciation of *Yhwh* was lost. Even the Hebrew Masoretic Text, while it preserves the ancient circumlocutions used for *Yhwh*, does not openly state the original pronunciation of *Yhwh*. The meaning of *Yhwh* was never lost, however (cf. Genesis 21:33; Exodus 3:14; Revelation 4:8).

Some few fragments of the Greek Septuagint insert *Yhwh* in archaic Hebrew characters among the Greek words. For that matter, many of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Hebrew use the "square script" still used today, but spell out *Yhwh* in archaic Hebrew characters. In both cases, *Yhwh* is obviously being given special attention. But this does *not* prove that the readers of these texts pronounced *Yhwh* aloud. On the contrary, specialists concur that *Yhwh* was so written to *mark the name as holy* while reminding the reader *not to pronounce it*. The conventions of the Masoretic Text serve a similar function. *Yhwh* is written out in the normal square script, but most of the vowel-points for *Adonay* or *Elohim* are attached to it. These remind the reader not to try to pronounce *Yhwh* as written, but rather as *Adonay* or *Elohim*—just as in Jesus' day and long before.

The point is that, even if one could prove that the New Testament (in Hebrew, Aramaic or even Greek) originally spelled out *Yhwh* in

Hebrew characters, this would *not* prove that the early Christians pronounced *Yhwh*—in fact, quite the contrary. Rather, when the Greek New Testament translates *Yhwh* as *Kyrios* (or *Theos*), it *accurately reflects* the reading tradition that Jesus and the apostles respected. So, not only is there nothing wrong with substituting *Adonay* (or *Elohim*) for *Yhwh* in Hebrew, but there is nothing wrong with then translating *Adonay* and *Elohim* as *Kyrios* and *Theos* in Greek (or as “Lord” and “God” in whatever other language).

How Was YHWH Pronounced?

There is another matter to consider. Apart from a system of *vowel-points* (such as the Masoretic Text uses), or else an *exact knowledge* of how *Yhwh* is derived and accented, there is *no way of knowing* the exact pronunciation of the name. All four letters in *Yhwh* are semi-consonants, each of which may be used either as a consonant or as the place-marker of a vowel (depending upon its position in a word). One therefore cannot decide between possible pronunciations from the letters alone.

Modern scholars (working largely on extra-biblical evidence) generally accept *Yahweh* (or something close to it) as the original pronunciation. According to the *Oxford Bible*, “Christian writers between A.D. 150 and A. D. 450 have *Yaoua*... in Greek characters [*laoua*], and early magical texts have *Yhbyh* (*Yahveh*) [sic] in Aramaic characters, all pointing to *Yahweh* as the original pronunciation.” Likewise the *Revised Standard Version* argues that “it is almost quite certain that the name was originally pronounced ‘*Yahweh*’.” The *Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon* also favors *Yahweh* (with *Yahaweh* given as an alterna-

tion), citing as part of its evidence the Greek transliteration *Iabe* given by the early Catholic commentators Theodoret and Epiphanius. (*Iaue* is also known from early Greek sources).

Extra-biblical Aramaic and Greek texts, however, cannot completely settle this question. In the Aramaic letters from Elephantine (5th century BC), the normal spelling is *Yhwh* or even *Yhw*. Not even *Yhbyh* (with *b* substituting for *w* as a consonant and the second *y* marking the presence of a vowel), as found in magical texts where the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton was part of the charm, can absolutely prove how *Yhwh* was pronounced in Hebrew. This is because the first *h* in *Yhwh* may mark either a consonant or a vowel. Even given that the name is active rather than reflexive in its verb stem, *Yhwh* in Hebrew may be pronounced in at least three ways: *Yahweh*, *Yahaweh* or even *Yehawweh* (as proposed by Abraham S. Halkin in his out-of-print *201 Hebrew Verbs*). The Aramaic *Yhw*, *Yhwh* and *Yhbyh*, and the Greek *Iabe* and *Iaue*, could have come from any one of these pronunciations. (*Iaoua* may be explained as an independent attempt to pronounce *Yhwh* as *Yahwah* or *Yahuah*).

Only *Yehawweh* seems to fit all the current biblical and extra-biblical evidence. This includes the derivation of *Yhwh* from the root *hayah*, “to be” (Exodus 3:14–15), the explanations of its actual meaning (Genesis 21:33; Revelation 4:8; etc.), its use as the prefixes *Yeho-*, *Yo-* and *Ye-* and the suffixes *-yah* and *-yahu* in compound personal names, its common “short form” *Yah*, and the received grammar of Masoretic Hebrew. The latter includes not only the vowel-points, but the accent notation, which indicates the primary and secondary stresses and the number and kind of syllables used in

a word (e.g., Psalm 96:10, which demands that *Yhwh* have three, not two syllables).

Beyond this evidence, however, there is simply *no authoritative record* as to how *Yhwh* was pronounced. God has allowed this because He wants us to focus on the *meaning* of *Yhwh*—not on the *sounds* that represent that meaning.

The Pronunciation of the Savior’s Name

What, then, of Jesus’ original name in Hebrew and Aramaic? The claim that it was *Yahshua* rather than *Yeshua* is based largely on the work of Anson Rainey, a linguist in Israel. Dr. Rainey claims that the Masoretic Hebrew spellings *Yhwshw* [יהושׁוּעַ] and *Yhwsh* [יְהוֹשֻׁעַ]—both pointed as *Yehoshua*—reflect latter-day usage, when the *w* after the *h* was added to help reinforce the pronunciation of *h*. In his view, originally the *h* simply marked the present of the vowel *a*, and therefore the following *w* would not have been present. *Yeshua* would then be simply a Masoretic mispronunciation of an even shorter form [יֵשׁוּעַ], likewise pronounced *Yahshua* originally. But this theory does not explain why, in the Masoretic Text, *Yehoshua* is found only in books (or citations of those books) dating from *before* the Babylonian Exile, why *Yeshua* is found only in books dating from *after* the Exile—nor does it explain why *both* names were translated as *Iesous* in Greek. (*Iesous* certainly does not derive from *Zeus* as some gratuitously claim).

Here again, we must look to the Jewish reading tradition for answers. The Masorete Moshe ben Asher (ca. 895AD) made clear that he and his fellow scribes did not *invent* the vowel-points and musical accents they transcribed;

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By Gerald Weston

Living Youth Camp Michigan 2005 was another huge success for the youth of the Living Church of God. Some 190 campers, high school staff, young adult staff, ministers, older adult volunteers and faculty children enjoyed fun, fellowship and instruction for twelve days on the beautiful grounds of Northwoods Christian Camp near Pickford, Michigan.

Each year, LYC sticks with a tried and proven program. Some elements never change, because they have proven themselves over a long period of time. At the same time, we are always looking for ways to improve the experience, so there is a gradual development of the program.

A Typical Day

The day began around 6 a.m. for most. Though some slept in a little later, all campers had to be in the chapel by 7:45 a.m. for Morning Motivation. At Morning Motivation, campers had the opportunity to wake up (if their showers did not do the job) and tell through a corny song a story of anything unusual that happened the day before. The previous day's Media class prepared a news report to be shown during each Morning Motivation, with each dorm having its turn to report major news stories, sports, weather and a scripture for the day. Campers then went to breakfast, while a counselor from each dorm met with the camp director and his assistant to review the previous day, go over any problems that needed to be addressed, review what was coming up that day and give instruction on how better to perform the job of counselor.

The staff ate after the campers, and a daily staff briefing was held to make any relevant announcements and cover anything that came up in the counselor's meeting. Mr. Jonathan McNair closed out the briefing each morning with a short presentation on how to be successful at one's duties. Meanwhile, the campers cleaned up and prepared for the day's activities.

The Christian Living class began soon after the staff briefing. This year, the theme was "Building a Culture of

Purity." To make class sizes smaller, the campers were divided into five small groups, each of which was led by a minister who gave his group the lesson for the day. The first class began by pointing out that few if any teens would walk around with a t-shirt proclaiming, "Building a Culture of Purity." It would not be the "cool" thing to do, even though we want the water we drink to be "pure," and we will not drink water contaminated by "just a little bit" of pollution. Using as props two bottles of water—one pure and the other polluted—this point about purity was illustrated, and the remainder of the class discussed the need for a pure culture among the youth of the Living Church of God.



Subsequent Christian Living classes explained that pollution both comes into and goes out of us. We discussed the pollution of wrong entertainment, wrong music, improper verbal language and improper body language and improper conduct in relationships. The Bible must be the *test* by which we determine whether something is pure or polluted, and we must *filter* out pollution by what we allow into our hearts and minds through the five senses.

After Christian Living, one more class period was held before lunch. For some this meant archery, canoeing, or ultimate Frisbee. For others it meant flag football, media or speech. Those looking forward to dance class had to wait until after lunch. Dr. Scott Winnail, whose degree and university teaching experience is in public health, conducted three "Life Skills" classes on how to maintain good health. A new class this year was called "Life Roles." In it, girls were taught how to use a sewing machine, and they practiced their new skill by making pajama bottoms. Boys learned how to solve plumbing problems. Both classes were very popular!

After this second class of the morning, it was time for lunch. Campers ate first, and then had 45 minutes for fellowship—and for a visit to the camp store if they wished. Some campers also used this time to phone home. Mr. McNair met with the department heads every day at

lunch. Mr. Weston sat in on some of these meetings, but on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays he met with Camp Council, consisting of one camper from each dorm. This gave him an opportunity to tune into how things were



going from the campers' perspective.

Three classes were held each afternoon, except for

Fridays when there were only two. Dinner was served after the last class of each day, and was followed by other activities. Evening activities included "Dessert and Dance"—where campers from two dorms dressed up for a more cultural occasion. One camper from each dorm gave a short speech during the dessert portion of the evening. This was followed by an hour-long dance. The other six dorms either participated in athletic activities or met with a minister for a get-together and chat.

Campers and staff came together in the chapel at 8:45 p.m. for Evening Reflection. Mr. McNair led in the singing of several hymns, and Mr. Weston presented a meaningful story or historical speech, or simply told a story about his teen years. Campers then returned to their dorms to get ready for bed, while most of the staff retired to the Leaning Elephant (a tent appropriately decorated with mosquito-repelling candles, lights and Tiki lamps). Light refreshments and drinks were served. Some played table games, while others participated in organized games and contests. It was all a lot of good clean fun in a wholesome atmosphere, and the Leaning Elephant was hugely popular among the staff.

"Lights out" was at 10:30 p.m. for campers and 11:15 p.m. for staff. Since most stay in a dorm environment with little privacy, camp has a no-talking rule after lights out, which allows any who wish to do so to get down on their knees, in or beside their beds, and pray. No one is coerced into prayer, but we make it acceptable for those who want this private time. We want to set an example that LYC is a camp that believes in God, and we are not ashamed of that. We began encouraging this two years ago, and have found that in addition to the spiritual benefit, everyone gets to sleep a lot earlier.

On Tuesday, July 26, after the Christian Living class, all the campers and staff boarded four buses and two vans to travel 45 minutes to St. Ignace. From there, we boarded a ferryboat for the 15-minute trip to Mackinaw Island, which is famous for having no automobiles. Everyone travels on foot, horseback, horse-drawn carriages or bicycles. Campers were divided into groups of five to seven, with a counselor and a second staff member assigned to each group. All were given enough money to rent a bike—either single or tandem—for a ride around the outer perimeter of the island. There was also time to visit Fort Mackinaw, shop for souvenirs, buy fudge, or just take a relaxing walk among the beautiful homes and grounds of the island.

Was it An Angel?

Mr. Bill Raynard, who serves as president of the Northwoods board, has been a prominent figure at Northwoods for the last 30 years. One day during camp, Jerry Ruddlesden and I took Mr. Raynard to lunch, and he told us a remarkable story. "I really shouldn't be here right now," he said. Not long before, he and a friend were in the


back of a pickup truck, taking a tour of a farm in Florida. After one of the stops, the driver took off too quick-



ly, causing Bill and his friend to lose balance and fall out of the pickup over the tailgate. His friend was killed—crushed under a twin-axle trailer loaded with other tourists—but something caught Mr. Raynard's foot and held him until the vehicle stopped, at which time it let him down slowly to the ground. Only afterward did he realize that there was nothing in the pickup that could have caught his foot that way. "My guardian angel was watching over me," he said. Not that we in the Church believe in the exact concept that we each have a "guardian angel," but I do not doubt there was truth in what he said. After all, here is a man who has shown the Church great favor, and who has been key to keeping the camp going. Under such circumstances, surely God would have sent an angel to save his life.

The property on which Northwoods Christian Camp resides has recently been put up for sale. Thankfully, the

owners have given Northwoods the first option to purchase the camp for \$800,000. To date, nearly \$500,000 has been put in escrow or pledged, but an additional \$300,000 must be raised by early October. Living Youth

Camp obviously benefits greatly from having such a fine camp facility available through the Northwoods Christian Camp. Please pray that Northwoods remains available to LYC in the years to come. 

LYC Tetons

On Tuesday, August 2, 17 campers and six staff arrived in Teton Village, Wyoming, about to embark on one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of their lifetimes. The next morning, after a hearty breakfast, the hikers prepared their backpacks in order to make room for the additional 440 pounds of gear, food and supplies that would be hauled on their backs for the six-day trek into the mountains. After the weigh-in, some of the ladies had packs weighing as much as 45 pounds, while the men's packs weighed as much as 60 pounds. Everyone was tested on this adventure, and each day brought its own challenges—from hiking the steep inclines of the mountains to finding a suitable camping spot with fresh water. Teamwork was imperative. Each day, the hikers were responsible for setting up and breaking down camp and making it look as though they had never been there.

On Wednesday, August 3, the group left Teton Village and took the aerial tram to the top of Rendezvous Mountain. It was from this point that the hike really began. We traversed thousands of feet in elevation, up and down, for seven miles, to our first campsite above the tree line at an elevation of more than 10,000 feet. After a refreshing sleep on the rocks, we had our first Bible Study the next morning, in the

midst of some of the most beautiful scenery in the land. It was breathtaking to be able to experience God's wonderful creation firsthand.

Over the next few days, we hiked in and out of the Teton National Park, making our way to the Basin Lakes where we spent the Sabbath. For Sabbath services, the rock podium and beautiful "stage flowers" were provided by God. Mr. Dan Contardi served as songleader, Mr. Mike Kreyer gave



the sermonette, and Mr. Sheldon Monson gave a sermon on "The Pursuit of Excellence." Sharon Rowbal and Jen Bowman treated us to a unique version of "El Shaddai" for some truly special music. Everyone agreed that it was truly an inspiring and rejuvenating Sabbath.

On our last morning of camping, we woke up early and broke camp shortly after 6:00 a.m. to climb up the one-mile slope back to Skyline Trail at the base of the Tetons. As we arrived at the crest, the sun popped out from behind the three peaks of the Teton Mountains, and we were treated

to a sunrise that few people ever see. This was our last day, and no one wanted it to end. But, alas, we had twelve more miles to go to reach our destination, Jenny Lake. We started that morning above the tree line, and descended into the Teton Valley, skirting the peaks as we watched small streams turn into beautiful creeks and rivers of living waters. Flowers, blueberries and raspberries were in abundance. We saw two bears and several moose. It was a beautiful day.

On Monday evening, after we checked into our cabins in Jackson, Wyoming, Ann and "Shorty" Burns treated us to a rib-eye steak dinner. Once dinner was served, there was not a lot of talking! The next morning, after brunch and

Bible Study, we enjoyed a little shopping in town before heading over to Lewis and Clark River Expeditions for a whitewater rafting trip down the Snake River. The staff served us a salmon and steak dinner on the shore.

Weather reports showed rain in the forecast. We had nothing but sunshine. A bear ripped through one tent the day before we reached Basin Lakes, but we never saw him. Lightning caused two wildfires in the area, but they did not come near us. We were blessed, and God was with us. It was an adventure we will never forget.

—Sheldon Monson

The Good “Old” Days

By Dibar K. Apartian

Do you want to be loved and understood? Of course you do! Everybody does. But many people live and die without ever having felt truly loved and understood. Why? What is the reason for this paradox?

According to statistics, a great number of those over 55 years of age do not participate in any of the activities of their community. They virtually have no social life. They are, for various reasons, social outcasts!

Why should it be so? Does life stop at 55? Is seclusion from society a natural consequence of growing old? Why should old age spell loneliness? A person does not only die when his heart stops beating; he also dies when he has nothing to live for. Growing old, for many people, means recalling with nostalgia pleasant moments of the past, complaining about the present and worrying about the future.

A few decades ago, it was said that old age was when you had gold in your mouth, silver in your hands and lead in your feet. In these inflationary times, this is no longer the case. Old age, for too many, is when they only have lead in their feet.

When you shed tears over the good old days, you actually shed tears over your inability to cope with the present. But it does not help. Pitying yourself will not solve your problems. It cannot change anything. Although life is a struggle for everyone, particularly for those who are handicapped or aged, life always smiles at those who smile at it, courageously. As the saying goes: “A smile warms the heart of the one who gets it and doesn’t cost a penny to the one who gives it.”

Life is meant to be shared. True success is measured with the measure of help we give one another, the genuine interest we show each other, the

love we express for our neighbor—no matter what the circumstances.

To know how to grow old is to know how to live!

Life Is To Be Loved

I once heard a man say: “After all, death doesn’t really scare me, because life doesn’t interest me anymore!” What a tragic statement. The man did not understand what life is all about; neither did he know what happens after death.

Nevertheless, in his ignorance, he wished to die. No wonder he was terribly fed up with everything, unhappy and ungrateful toward the Creator who had given him life.

Life carries in itself a hope of fulfillment. So long as you are alive, you can hope to learn, to improve, to change, to accomplish your projects, even some of your wildest dreams. But death puts an end to everything in this human life—including your hopes.

Solomon wrote: “For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

Before God opened your eyes to the truth, you neither knew what life was all about, nor did you understand the meaning of death. But *now* you do.

Think of it! As a member of God’s Church, you are called for a purpose. You are a begotten child of God, with the promise of inheriting eternal life. Consequently, you ought to love life, *here and now*—enjoy every moment of it in a way that will glorify God. The more you contribute to the well-being and happiness of others, the happier you yourself will be.

Do you know what actually makes you lose interest in life? It is

your vanity, your feelings of greed, jealousy and prejudice, and your complexes and fears. The sooner you get rid of them, the sooner you begin to live. As the French writer Jean de La Bruyere once said: “Most people spend the first half of their life making the second half miserable!”

“All this is fine!” you may say. “But just how do we overcome the fear of aging? What is this thing called the art of loving?”

First of all, you must *trust* God implicitly. Remind yourself that, whatever the circumstances, whatever your age, He is truly interested in you—and He loves you. He wants you in His Kingdom and has a job for you. You are *important* to Him!

But the time to prepare for that job is here and now. Start working by using your talents, however small, in a constructive way—the “give” way—of which Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong often spoke. Be positive! There is always something you can do for others; always something you can give them.

The Apostle Paul instructed “that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed” (Titus 2:2–5).

This is the “give” way that makes life worthwhile, interesting and most exciting. It prevents you from wanting to isolate yourself from your community, which not only needs your participation, but may also show its

own appreciation of you in times and ways you least expect.

When he was more than 90 years old, the famous pianist Arthur Rubenstein told an interviewer: “Happiness only surrenders itself to those who court it.”

Are you *really* old? If so, be happy, because your community needs your experience and wisdom. The Church of God also has need of you. But remember that you, in turn, need your community and the Church. Your love of life depends upon your participation in the activities of both your community and the Church. An active life pre-

not mean another life or continuation of life; it is the cessation of life.

“For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 3:19).

Man is a mortal being, made out of the dust of the earth. He became a living creature when God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Genesis 2:7). This breath of life does not remain in us when we die. There is neither memory, nor knowledge, nor consciousness in death.

control your thoughts and desires, discipline yourself—in short, each day come a little closer to God. This is how you are being judged *today*.

Surely you recognize that your calling is an important enough reason for you to want to *live and learn and grow*—regardless of your age!

The Christian Hope

The Apostle Paul wrote: “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ

One of the most important lessons we all must learn is to *live the present* and not the past. Perhaps the greatest service older people can render younger ones is to show them by their own example and positive attitude that one can be happy at any age.

cludes boredom; it engenders hope, faith and love. Isolation, seclusion or exclusion engender fear. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18).

One of the most important lessons we all must learn is to *live the present* and not the past. Perhaps the greatest service older people can render younger ones is to show them by their own example and positive attitude that one can be happy at any age.

You—of all the people on the face of the earth—should be the least worried about your age.

What Death Is

Before you came into the truth, you probably believed, as most people do in the world, that your soul continued on after death somewhere in this vast universe. But now, you know better. To die is *not to live*. Death does

We were born to *develop character*, which in itself is a lifelong process. Age has no power to stop it.

“But how can we develop character if we no longer have the strength, the means or the ability to be useful?” you may ask. “Isn’t it a bit too late for us to grow spiritually or to develop character? Life is already behind us.”

You are mistaken! Life is not—and it *cannot* be—behind you. Life is *now*. It is never too late for anyone at any age to grow spiritually.

As a baptized member of God’s Church—as one whom He is calling—your relentless efforts to grow spiritually, until you draw your last breath, are your first step toward salvation. *Today* is your day of salvation—not yesterday. *Today* is the day of your judgment (1 Peter 4:17).

If you are unable to undo the past, you nevertheless have full dominion over the present. You can straighten out your life, change your attitude, improve your outlook, con-

is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty... For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:12–14, 16–19).

Surely you believe this, though Satan wants you to forget it. He will do anything to make you doubt God’s Word. Do not let him make you think that you are too old to learn or have nothing to live for anymore. Just remember that you have the promise of *eternal life* to live for!

When God put the first man in the Garden of Eden, He told him to “tend and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). This command also applies to the care of our character. We must develop our character and cultivate it until the end. Age is not an obstacle. God is ageless. His Spirit in you

will help you keep your mind active, jovial and in good health. It provides you the strength you need to endure your trials and difficulties. God knows that you can make it. That is why He has called you at this end time. Do not lose your crown by giving up, or thinking that you are too old to be useful. “The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness” (Proverbs 16:31).

We all reap in life what we sow. No one has ever been—or ever can be—too old to sow the good seeds of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, perseverance and faith. Put God to the test. Sow daily those seeds, and you will reap the fruits, regardless of your age.

Death is your enemy, not your friend. Do not wish for it. It is the last enemy you will conquer with the power of God, provided that you sow the seeds of the fruit of the Spirit.

“Behold, I tell you a mystery,” Paul wrote under God’s inspiration. “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this

corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’” (1 Corinthians 15:51–55).

Be Hard at Work

When you diligently read and study God’s Word, can you see why you must be hard at work growing in grace and knowledge, and in helping others to appreciate life, grateful to be alive? You will not be able to fulfill your tasks by keeping others at arm’s length or by isolating yourself. Love is sharing and giving, and you, a begotten child of God, have much to share and to give.


You are “the light of the world,” said Christ. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14, 16).

You are “the salt of the earth,” He also stated. Of what value is the salt if it loses its savor? It is your duty to let people around you know what it

means to be truly Christian. The help you give to those around you—your encouraging example, your cheerful words, your contagious smiles, your confident attitude, your prayers and your faith—all this is *well within your means*. You are never too old to sow these good seeds.

You have an important part to play in this world of confusion and darkness. Not too many people know why they were born or why they will die. But you do, and you have the opportunity to show them the way to live. Not too many have the ultimate goal you have. Is this a good enough reason for you to want to share it with others? It should be.

You soon will be living in a different world—“Tomorrow’s World”—where all people from all walks of life will be able to receive God’s Spirit. At that time, they too will know what true happiness is. They will experience the peace of mind and the joy that come from the Spirit of God.

Today, they do not understand this or believe it. But you do! For you, “Tomorrow’s World” has already started here and now. Live it in your home, in your community and in the Church of God *today!* 


God’s Names and the Jewish Reading Tradition

(continued from page 14)

they received them—ultimately from a family of Second Temple priests called the Elders or Sons of Bathyra (Suzanne Haik-Vantoura, *The Music of the Bible Revealed*, pp. 105–107, 499–502, 519). Taken at face value, this testimony means that the Masoretes preserved the *official pronunciation and melodic rendition* of biblical Hebrew current in Second Temple times. Moreover, we know from inscriptions that [יֵשׁוּעַ] was the Hebrew and Aramaic spelling current in Jesus’ day. We also know that this name was almost always translated into Greek as *Iesous* [Ἰησοῦς]. We may therefore affirm that the Masoretic pronunciation of [יֵשׁוּעַ]—*Yeshua*—is reliable.

“The Lord Jesus Christ”

Jesus’ “full name” in Greek—*ho Kyrios Iesous Christos* (“the Lord Jesus Christ”)—ultimately springs from Hebraic roots. In Masoretic Hebrew, that “full name” would be *ha-Adon Yeshua ha-Mashiach*. It is so rendered in all modern Hebrew New Testament versions. (At least one early version shortens *Yeshua* to *Yeshu*. The meaning is the same).

One day, every knee will bow at the name of Jesus, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10–11). Apart from the Jewish reading tradition, we would not know precisely how His name would have sounded in Hebrew. But its *meaning*—not its *sound*—is what will matter on the Day of Judgment! It is that *meaning* that the Greek New Testament conveys word-for-word and thought-for-thought. 

Guard Your Health*(continued from page 6)*

biblical instructions seriously will not pursue dietary habits that violate biblical instructions; they will avoid eating large amounts of high-fat, high-calorie foods, drinking excessive amounts of alcohol or running their bodies into the ground. They will not engage in promiscuous sexual activity—nor will they smoke, take drugs or participate in other high-risk activities—because they are determined not to sin against their own bodies. They will strive to

care for their bodies, and will guard their health in order to glorify God. Such Christians will learn to eat sensibly, exercise regularly and manage stress so they can live healthy and productive lives and be a positive example to others. True Christianity involves taking care of the body that God has given us.

True Christians understand that they have been called to learn to live “by every word of God,” and that if they grow in the knowledge of God and His way of life (2 Peter 3:18), they will have the opportunity in the com-

ing Kingdom of God to teach others how to live a truly godly way of life (Isaiah 30:20–21). This is a *vital* reason for learning how to follow the biblical instructions about health. We have been called now to prepare to rule with Christ in the Kingdom of God. We will be dealing with physical people who will need to be taught how to live. We will have the opportunity to show the peoples of this world the way to a better, healthier and more rewarding way of life. We should practice that way *now*—and guard our health *religiously!* LCN

How Deeply Are You Committed?*(continued from page 8)*

are obligations that we must shoulder day by day. We face many distasteful and difficult matters in our lives, and we must carry them day by day, one day at a time.

What was Jesus’ attitude toward His sacrifice? In Luke’s account, we learn that a large crowd followed Him when He began the trek to Calvary, including many women who began to wail and lament loudly at what was happening to Him. Christ turned to them, and told them that they should instead weep for themselves and their children because of the terrible calamities that were going to come upon them and their nation (Luke 23:27–31). Christ’s attitude, even while facing immense personal difficulty, was of outgoing concern for others. He shouldered His personal burden, but not with an attitude of self-pity! Do we approach our duties and obligations with that kind of attitude?

Christ’s example on the way to Calvary teaches us another important point about taking up our cross; we have not failed if we find that we need some help along the way! Even Jesus received help. Because of the terrible beating He had suffered, and His subsequent loss of blood, His steps faltered and He could not carry His burden all the way to the top of Golgotha by Himself. Simon of Cyrene was pressed into service, to help by carrying it the rest of the way. The lesson for us is that if we willingly shoulder our burdens and start on the way, God will arrange the necessary help so that we can make it to the journey’s end.

Follow Me

Christ not only told us the way; He showed us the way! The essence of being a Christian is being one who follows Christ. He set us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21).

After Christ’s resurrection, He appeared to the Apostles on several occasions over the next 40 days. His third appearance took place on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The disciples, at Peter’s suggestion, had gone fishing. Christ appeared and ate a meal with them. After the meal, Christ strolled along the seashore with Simon Peter, and began to discuss the martyr’s death that Peter would eventually face. Peter’s response illustrates the way we all so often respond.

Peter looked back and saw John, the beloved disciple, standing in the distance, then interrupted Christ to ask Him what would happen to John. Christ’s response to Peter is instructive for us: “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me” (John 21:20–22).

So often, like Peter, we become worried that others will fare better than we will. We focus our attention on them, and wonder why their future may be different from ours. Christ’s response to each of us is the same as it was to Peter. He tells us not to worry about what He has in store for others, or how their lives may be used for His glory. Rather, He tells us, we must simply concentrate on putting one foot in front of the other to follow Him! Step by step, and day by day, we must follow Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

About a week before the glorious miracle of the transfiguration, Jesus Christ told His disciples that if they made preserving and protecting themselves their first priority, they would ultimately lose the very life they sought to protect. However, if they were willing to forfeit physical life for His sake, they would be rewarded with life eternal (Matthew 16:25–26).

The commitment that God the Father and our Savior Jesus Christ extended toward each of us was absolute and without reservation. The commitment that we extend in return must also be without reservation or equivocation. We give our utmost for His highest reward. We can do no more than that, and God will accept no less! LCN

Christian Meditation

(continued from page 3)

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

Do you appreciate what this means? *Think* on these things! Turn them over and over in your mind. Examine their various facets. Paul continued: “The things which you learned and received and heard and

saw in me, these do, *and the God of peace will be with you*” (v. 9).

A Definition

Some people like a definition, so here it is: Meditation is the private devotion to deep, continuous, purposeful reflection of the mind on a single theme. In other words, when you meditate, your mind becomes focused on one theme or problem, examining and analyzing its causes and effects. *Why was this good? Why was that part of it bad? How can it be better next time?*

Through Moses, God spoke about meditation to ancient Israel:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:4–7). Yes, we should *continually* talk about the words of God.

Most of you reading this realize that in the previous chapter (Deuteronomy 5), we also find the Deuteronomy version of the Ten

Five Ways to Meditate

“Examine yourselves [that is, meditate] as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

1. Think through all the applications of God’s law and teachings as they apply to your life and to today’s society. Remember Deuteronomy 6:6–7: “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”
2. When things go wrong, ponder on what laws or principles of God were violated by you or by others, *but start with yourself*. We know that whatever we ask of Him we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things or follow those ways that are pleasing in His sight (1 John 3:22; 5:14)—not just the Ten Commandments, but all the ways of God, involving the kind of food we eat, the way we dance, the kind of music we listen to, the way we present ourselves to others and the kind of companionship we seek. In all those areas we ought to meditate on and practice the ways of God.
3. As you read of Abraham’s obedience to the command to sacrifice his own son because of God’s test, or to leave Ur of the Chaldees, or of Israel’s going out into a desert place, not knowing what they were going to eat and how God was going to take care of them, or as you read of David’s loyalty to Saul, even under difficult circumstances, think through how you can learn from these lessons and apply them to your life. Think about what you would do, and then what you ought to do through the mind of Christ. As you meditate, literally plan steps right then to improve your future performance.
4. When a big decision looms or long-range planning is needed in your life, meditate. Younger people especially need this in planning for their future—career, marriage and everything. Carefully think through the spiritual pros and cons, in the light of the instruction of the Bible. Do not act without sufficient reason, just on the basis of an untried thought or idea, or on impulse.
5. Weekly—perhaps, best of all, on the weekly Sabbath—take spiritual inventory of the growth that you have experienced. How have you used your time? What problems have you experienced? Why did you have the problems? How can you overcome the problems? How can you do better next week?

Commandments. “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:8–9). Why? To help and encourage the Israelites to think about and meditate on God’s laws.

Meditate on God

We should constantly meditate on God, His laws and His ways. When you watch television or play a video game, your mind begins to pick up the attitude it displays—often saucy, sassy carnality and rebellion, sexual lust, hate and violence. You begin to meditate on those things. Television, movies, and video games are a kind of visual meditation, pouring their images and attitudes into your mind and your heart. And much, if not most, of what they pour is bad.

Paul wrote: “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!” (1 Corinthians 6:15). And yet, as you watch many of today’s television shows or movies, or play the latest video games, they make illicit sex seem humorous and fun. It is a horrible thing.

“Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two,’ He says, ‘shall become one flesh’” (v. 16). God intended sex and marriage to picture the very relationship of love between Christ and the Church. He was willing to give His very life for the Church, and the Church is to give herself in total submission to Him. But, brethren, if you drag anything through a sewer, it is going to stink. And the vile display of sexual immorality splashed all over this

world’s entertainment is a stench in the nostrils of God.

God says: “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body” (v. 18). One who commits sexual sin is sinning against his own body in that he is using his body, his emotions and his nervous reactions in a way for which they were not designed, as a vital instrument in sin.

“For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit...” (v. 20)—in the spirit in man and the very attitude and thoughts of your mind.

Proverbs 6:32 says: “Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding.” What it really says in the original Hebrew is that the adulterer lacks *mind*. Because of a lack of the right kind of meditation, a man who commits adultery does not understand that his partner was not intended as just a sex object, but was intended to be a wife and the mother of a man’s children—a sweetheart and companion to share a man’s plans, hopes and dreams—with their bond in this physical life a representation of the relationship between Christ and His Church.

Get your mind cleaned up by meditation on right and good and clean things. Then, when a problem arises, you will have already thought through in advance what you are going to do, and it will not be some strange situation that will catch you off guard.

A Right Example

Let me give you a right example of meditation. Back in the early 1950s, Herbert Armstrong began to say to us: “Fellows, I’ve begun to realize how the Creator God is and how God says that everything repro-

duces after its kind. And the physical was created as a type of the spiritual. We all reproduce after our kind, so would not God reproduce after His kind? And if my sons are human like I’m human, why would not God’s sons be God like God is God?”

“But,” he said, “I don’t know. This concept comes into my mind. It’s almost like God put it there. But I’m sort of afraid of it because it sounds blasphemous. We’ve never believed that man is to become God. Let’s keep thinking about it and discussing it from time to time.”

So, that is how we came to understand that doctrine. Through a process of meditation, Mr. Armstrong simply fastened his mind on the subject, devoting himself to deep, private, continuous, purposeful reflection on this single theme.

Meditating on God’s character, purpose and plan is a fantastic experience, considering all the ramifications of what it means to become God. It is something you could spend the rest of your life on, and in one sense you probably *should* because the whole topic is concerned with your goal as a Christian and your future in the Kingdom of God.

When to Meditate

One can meditate almost anytime. But there are times where it will be more beneficial and productive, such as while studying. For instance, as you are reading the story of Abraham, you might picture yourself and what you would do if God said to you: “Get up and get out of your home and your land, away from your family and all you’ve ever known, and go out into a strange distant place.” Live the story in your mind and your heart. Visualize it and think about it. Turn it over in your mind, and then apply it to your life today.

Prayer is another time for meditation. Ask God to help you to think

things through as you are there on your knees, and talk over with Him all the phases and facets of a particular situation.

Another time to meditate could be walking in the woods or out under the stars at night.

One other valuable time is in the “night watches”—to use a biblical phrase—when you wake up and cannot get back to sleep. Notice how King David did this: “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water [a world cut off from the knowledge of our Creator]. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise

You... When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches” (Psalm 63:1–6). Like King David, we should learn to meditate at various times throughout the day.

Notice: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice [instruction] is not heard. Their line [rule or direction] has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Psalm 19:1–4).

David meditated on all those matters. He took time to think calmly and deeply about God, His power and His laws.

I also suggest setting aside a particular time each weekend for

meditation—preferably on God’s Sabbath day, because this is part of its purpose—so that it becomes a habit. Spend some time, on Friday evening or Sabbath morning, thinking through the events of the past week. Ask yourself: How far have I come this week? How have I grown? Have I prayed and studied as I should? What mistakes have I made? Where did I fall short? How can I do better next week? The Sabbath is a wonderful day to conduct a weekly reexamination and reorientation.

Make meditation a major, vital part of your life. And pray to God always, as David did: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer” (Psalm 19:14). LCN

Are You Responding to Christ?

(continued from page 2)

in our lives. Brethren, let us *always* try to have “the mind of Christ” in all these areas, and to humbly appreciate that He has called us *now* in order to help proclaim His message to increasing millions of people all over the world. He is also preparing us to be His *full sons* in His Kingdom, and empowering us through His Spirit to properly assist Christ in ruling the entire world and in bringing a depth of joy and peace beyond anything the world has ever experienced. We can all say, “*Thank God for His magnificent Plan!*”

As Jesus Christ tells us, in His own words: “And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels”—as I also have received from My Father” (Revelation 2:26–27). Many other scriptures say essentially the same (see Revelation 1:6–7; 5:9–10; 20:6). Some extremely meaningful instruction on this topic is found in 1 Corinthians 6:1–7. Please *study* these verses carefully! God inspired the Apostle Paul to instruct us that we must learn—in *this life*—to “judge” matters of personal upsets, insults and injuries *within the Church*. For—as I have stated so often—we are now “in training” to be the *kings*, the *judges* and the *priests* in Tomorrow’s World under Jesus Christ! Therefore, we should all ask

ourselves: “How am I learning to *righteously* judge matters and also to *righteously* respond to *Christ’s leadership* on these matters within the Church?” The Apostle Paul tells us that God “put all things under His [Christ’s] feet, and gave Him to be *head* over all things to the *church*, which is *His body*, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22–23).

We Must Trust in Christ

Are you, personally, really learning to *trust* Christ deeply to do His job as the living Head over the Church? In spite of minor mistakes that He allows *all* of us—you and me—to make, can you learn to *trust Christ* to lead His Church and to guide those in authority to make the vital decisions that need to be made in leading the Church, carrying out the Great Commission and *preventing division* in the Church so that it can move forward in peace and order? Or, looking too much to *yourself*, are you constantly “second guessing” Christ’s leadership? Are you listening to others who would like to *undermine* the leadership that Christ has placed in those who are actually *doing* the Work, preaching the full Truth and directing the Church under Christ’s leadership?

These are questions we *all* need to ask ourselves! I had to ask myself these questions a number of times when Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was the human leader, under Christ, over the Church. For he sent my wife and me

away from my classes and from my local pastorate in San Diego to a *much smaller* church responsibility in London in the winter of 1956–57. Our first daughter, Elizabeth, had to be born overseas. And I was *cut off* from the much larger job that I had at the time, preaching in San Diego and teaching a number of Bible classes. Yet I realized that Christ was in charge, and that Mr. Armstrong at that time wanted me to help establish London as the overseas Headquarters of the Work.

Later, when my family and I had been back home a couple of years, and actually had purchased a lovely little home on a hill in La Cañada, Mr. Armstrong again asked me to go to England, with my wife who was pregnant at the time. He asked me to conduct a series of *twelve solid weeks* of evangelistic campaigns over there to help get the Work going, and then to stay over for “two or three years or more” in England. We had to sell our home and go overseas in faith that this was the right thing to do, and my wife Margie had to give birth to our third child overseas.

In 1973, I was sent overseas once again. As Mr. Armstrong acknowledged, it was to *get me away* from another person—a person who was “afraid” of me and what I knew, and whom Mr. Armstrong wanted to see succeed. Understanding what appeared to be a *wrong reason* for having to leave our beautiful home and all our friends, my wife and children were crying, and I was certainly not *pleased* with the decision. Nevertheless, I realized that **Christ** was in charge, and that He would work it out for good. For I **constantly** tried to remind myself of God’s promise: “**All things** work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Indeed, each of these moves I have just described gave me a broader experience in God’s Work and in international affairs. In the later years they even helped my children have a broader perspective of the world than if they had just stayed at Headquarters in Pasadena all the time. So these experiences no doubt helped *prepare me* for what I am doing now! But, way back in the 50s, 60s and early 70s, when these decisions were made, I could not even begin to realize how God would use these circumstances down through the years. Looking back, I am grateful that I was willing to *trust Christ* as the living Head of the Church to guide these things for good! And I certainly do not want to give the impression that I have been alone in this, for **many** of our faithful ministers have had to move here and there, often to the inconvenience and even sorrow of their wives and families, in order to *better serve* God’s people and His Work—even since the death of Mr. John

Ogwyn, which left a “chasm” to fill. Most have shown themselves *very faithful* and very willing to do whatever is needed. For they are not looking to me—which I deeply understand! Their **trust** is in *Jesus Christ*, as it should be!

Christ is watching each one of us—including **you and me**—to see how we will *respond* to His leadership—in His Church, of which **He** is the living Head. Individually, we must each learn to truly *study* God’s Word, to develop the “mind of Christ” on all these matters and to “judge righteously” the matters that Christ delegates to *us* to judge. At the same time, we must *trust Him* to guide those over us in the Lord to make the right decisions in regard to the Work as a whole. As Christ tells us in the book of Hebrews: “Remember those who **rule** over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct” (Hebrews 13:7). We are also instructed in this chapter: “*Obey* those who **rule** over you, and be *submissive*, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (v. 17).

Brethren, in the months and years ahead, Christ will continue to guide and lead His Church. We will be given opportunities to reach this world **far** more powerfully if we continue to respond to His leadership and to move ahead in a **unified** fashion! But if we are always “looking out for number one”—*not* willing to respond to Christ’s leadership, not willing to take a different office or responsibility if that is indicated, **not** willing to humble ourselves and **trust** Christ—then the Work may have to be given to others, and we will find ourselves on the sidelines. Those who fail to respond to Jesus Christ and His leadership will either *not be there at all*, or will find themselves with a **greatly diminished reward**! Please remember His inspired words: “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My **reward** is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (Revelation 22:12).

We have been given a truly *magnificent* opportunity—here at the *very end* of this present age—to *work together* as a “team” under Christ’s leadership in preparing for His return. Let us **never** “take our eyes off the ball.” Let us **never** forget to look to Christ’s leadership and to **trust** that He will—in the end—cause *all things* to work together for good!



Local Church News

Upcoming *Tomorrow's World* Telecasts

WGN: Sunday, 6:00 AM ET

Inspiration: Friday, 10:00 PM PT

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

September 4	Vital Keys to Happiness
September 11	2005 and Prophecy
September 18	America's Coming Catastrophe
September 25	How You Can Be Spared!
October 2	The New Roman Empire
October 9	Prophetic Milestones Ahead
October 16	Peace of Mind Through Prayer
October 23	Time Is Running Out!
October 30	A Tale of Two Churches

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

Anniversary

James and Peggy (Knight) McNaughton celebrated their golden anniversary on August 20. She was 17 years old, having just finished high school, when they were married; he was 19 years old. After living for a while in his hometown of Kershaw, North Carolina, they moved to Lancaster, North Carolina, and they have lived in that area ever since. Mr. McNaughton was employed in the textile industry for most of his working life. Mrs. McNaughton worked at Belk's department stores for 21 years, then for a local Chrysler dealer. Mr. McNaughton came into the Church in 1972; Mrs. McNaughton was baptized in 1997. They attend the Headquarters congregation, where they are known for their friendly demeanor, and Mrs. McNaughton is known for her wonderful desserts. The McNaughtons have two children, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Ordinations

On the Sabbath of June 11, Regional Pastor Mr. Rand Millich ordained *Mr. Ted Carper*, of the Omaha, Nebraska congregation, as a deacon.

Regional Pastor Lambert Greer, and Elder George Dellinger, ordained *Mr. James Henderson* and *Mr. Floyd Spencer* as deacons on the Sabbath of June 11. Mr. Henderson serves the brethren of the Indianapolis, Indiana congregation; Mr. Spencer serves the brethren of the Terre Haute, Indiana congregation.

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

In Loving Memory

David D. Burson, a Pastor in the Living Church of God, died on August 19. He was 54 years old. Mr. Burson was ordained as an Elder in May 1991, and as a Pastor in June 1999. He served the brethren for more than 14 years as a minister of congregations in Mississippi, Missouri, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Texas. He had served as Associate Pastor of the Dallas, Texas congregation, and as the interim pastor for congregations in eastern and north central Texas, as well as in northwestern Louisiana. Mr. Burson, a 1975 graduate from Ambassador College, also completed an MBA from Mississippi State University. He is survived by Patty—his wife of 34 years—and also by his son Douglas (Faith) Burson and daughter Heather (Daral) Millich. Mr. Rand Millich conducted his funeral on August 24. Mr. Burson's perseverance, positive outlook and example of service will be dearly missed by all who knew him and loved him.

Jesse Cole Burkes, an LCG member in Jackson, Mississippi, died on May 7. He was 62 years old. All who knew Mr. Burkes will remember him for his dedication to the Church and his example of faith. He is survived by his wife Lillie, daughter Sandra Arender, son Cecil, sisters Mary Hollie and Judy Russ, as well as 15 grandchildren. Mr. Dan Hall conducted his funeral service on May 10.

Mary A. Climer, an LCG member in Biloxi, Mississippi, died on July 16. She was 84 years old. She is survived by six of her nine children, by 19 grandchildren and by 17 great-grandchildren. Baptized into God's Church in 1973, her faith has been an inspiration to her children Mary K. Mansker, Virginia Peristeras and Steve Climer (who serves as a deacon in Biloxi), and grandchildren Maria and Sophia (Overstreet) Peristeras. Early in her life, her Sabbath-keeping grandmother taught her the wonderful ways of God's commandments, as well as her favorite saying: "Except by the grace of God, there goeth I." Mrs. Climer was a warm and loving person who will be missed dearly by her family, friends, and fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Mr. Daniel Hall conducted her memorial service on July 19.

Cora Dagma Edwards, an LCG member in Laurel, Mississippi, died on July 21. She was 85 years old. A

longtime member of God's Church, she had come into the truth along with her late husband Hughy during the days of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. Mrs. Edwards always seemed to radiate joy and love wherever she went. She is survived by her son Jerry Edwards, her daughter Patricia Eavenson, sisters Margie Polk and Audrey Eddie, brothers Lester, Ben, Webber and Marvin Tisdale, as well as five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Mr. Dan Hall conducted her funeral service on July 24.

Dorothea Schoolfield, an LCG member in Omaha, Nebraska, died on July 27. A member of God's Church since the mid-1960s, she died as she had lived—with dignity, grace and faith. Born in Rewey, Wisconsin, she is survived by William Schoolfield, her husband of 52 years. She is also survived by daughters Sue Ann Pomicter, Lisa Wilkes, Mary Keefe, Janet Brendis and Lori Mapes, their husbands, and grandchildren. Brian Pomicter, her son-in-law, conducted her funeral service on July 29.

Norm Silsbee, an LCG member in Pensacola, Florida, died on June 30. He was 79 years old. Baptized in 1969, he was ordained as a deacon in 1997, and served the brethren in Atlanta, Georgia, for many years before his recent move to Pensacola. His positive attitude, encouraging words and colorful stories will long be remembered. He is survived by Betty Silsbee, his wife of 59 years. He is also survived by six children, 16 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. Mr. Dan Hall conducted his memorial service on July 2, at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Doug (Donna) Silsbee.

Carroll B. "CB" Short, an Elder in the Living Church of God, died on July 24 after a long battle with cancer. He was 75 years old. Mr. Short was baptized in 1962 and ordained as an Elder in 1977. He served the brethren in Corpus Christi, Texas, for many years along with his dedicated wife of 53 years, Leona Short, who survives him. He is also survived by daughters Carolyn, Lawra and Mary; son James; and ten grandchildren. Mr. Short will be remembered for his outgoing personality, and his joy for life and the Church brethren. He will be greatly missed.

Festival

Your Best Feast Ever?

By J. Davy Crockett, III

For some of our brethren this year, the Feast of Tabernacles will be a new experience. Others will have been keeping the Feast for many decades. But for all of God's people it is the highlight of the year—a time of great blessings, both physically and spiritually.

However, great Feasts do not “just happen.” Without proper planning and preparation, some may find that the Feast is less than it should be. So, as we look forward to the Feast, let us consider some points that will help us have the “best Feast ever,” no matter which site we may attend.

Feast sites change from year to year. The Church Administration Department has worked hard on site selection—arranging for meeting halls, compiling the speaking schedule and taking care of many details that make each site run as smoothly as possible for the enjoyment of all. The Festival Office staff recognizes that not every site is ideal for every Feastgoer, and encourages you to share your input regarding site selection and other matters that may improve Feast planning. Please feel free to write the Festival Office a letter, or send e-mail to festival@lcg.org.

No matter how others have prepared for the Feast, the quality of your Feast experience will depend largely on the plans you make, individually, now. Have you been faithfully saving your Festival tithes (Deuteronomy 12:17)? It is important to plan carefully for the financial needs you will have during the Feast. It is not wise to count on others to meet your needs if you run out of funds during the Festival, even if emergency funds may be available to meet unforeseen contingencies.

If you are traveling by automobile, it would be wise to plan your trip by taking into consideration the unusually high gasoline prices that we are experiencing this year. Plan also for unforeseen changes in the weather, which may particularly affect those traveling in the northern latitudes and at higher elevations.

Be sure to allow extra time for travel, both to allow sufficient rest time and to accommodate high traffic volume and road construction. By doing so, your trip can be much more relaxed and enjoyable.

It is enjoyable to be together with God's people for eight days, yet to do this requires much planning and organization at each site. Most of us have experienced firsthand that serving others, and helping out in any way that you are able, will greatly add to your enjoyment of the Feast. Do not hold back; do what you can to serve others.

Another key to having a great Feast is to participate in the scheduled activities—whether for families, for singles or for youth. These activities present an opportunity to make new friends in a godly setting. Much planning has gone into these activities, and without your support they cannot be truly successful.

As we come and go from our temporary dwellings, we should remember that we are all ambassadors of Jesus Christ. Our behavior and demeanor should be a shining example to everyone we meet. There may be tests of our patience and good attitudes, but we should rise to the occasion and serve as a good example, even when things do not turn out as we had hoped.

Your experience at services will be enhanced if you come prepared, with Bible, note paper and pen (or pencil) in hand, eager to hear what is being said. Remember, too, to get sufficient sleep and enjoy good food and drink in moderation. Finally, keeping up with Bible study and prayer will help us stay focused on the primary purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles—to rejoice before the Eternal, and to learn to fear Him (Deuteronomy 14:23–26).

Brethren, there is nothing new in these reminders, but if we all do these things, we truly can have the best Feast ever!