

# Living Church News

Vol. 8, No. 2

March–April 2006



## Inside:

<b>How Does God View You?</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>The Mission of God's Church</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Turn off the "Gossip Channel"</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Overcoming Tests and Trials: Lessons from Hezekiah</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>How to Pray When You Are Discouraged</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>The Spirit of Love</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Local Church News</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>Commentary</b> .....	<b>24</b>

## World Events Are Speeding Up!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

I recently returned from a most inspiring trip to Mexico! Mr. Mario Hernandez, our Director of the Spanish Work, had for some time encouraged me to visit our brethren there, and it was very helpful and encouraging for me to join him in Mexico City in early February. The brethren were *very* enthusiastic, warm and loving, and the growth of the Work there is encouraging to behold. Mr. Hernandez has done a superb job overall, and I am very grateful for what Christ has been doing through him and through the other leaders in the area.

Mexico is a nation of 100 million people, and Mexico City alone contains about one-quarter of that number—*25 million*—making it the most populous city on earth! So there is tremendous potential there. Mr. Hernandez and some of the other leading men are making plans to establish an office there within the next year or two. They are praying, planning and hoping that one of our ministers (not Mr. Hernandez) may move to Mexico City and actually *live there* full-time to serve the brethren, that Mr. Hernandez can then get back on the powerful radio station in Mexico, and that God's Work there can truly move ahead as never before. Please *pray fervently* about this!

Flying into Mexico City on a Thursday afternoon, I was met by Mr. Hernandez and Mr. David Tenorio. Mr. Tenorio is an extremely capable and helpful servant of Christ, and is one of the leading men in our Mexico City congregation. After checking in at the Holiday Inn, we went to the home of the Cortes family, where we had an enjoyable meal with them, including their five adult children. It was wonderful to see the dedication and love of this family, and so many others in Mexico City.

On Friday morning, Messrs. Hernandez, Tenorio and I went to the Museum of Anthropology—one of the greatest museums of its type in the Western Hemisphere. This was very educational, and I was able to visit with these two men and gain more information and insight into the Spanish Work. On Friday evening, back at the Holiday Inn, I led a Bible Study which was received very enthusiastically by the several dozen brethren who attended.

After breakfast and a walk with Mr. Hernandez on Sabbath morning, I prepared the sermon and we were able to have a fine service for 104 enthusiastic brethren right there in the Holiday Inn. Mr. Tony Mora, an elder of Mexican origin who now lives in California, gave a fine sermonette.

That evening, after a long period of rest and visiting, we had a catered dinner for the entire congregation at the hotel. A mariachi band played, and we

enjoyed an impromptu "guest artist" performance when Mr. Hernandez beautifully sang a couple of numbers with the band!

On Sunday morning, we were able to share a meal at the home of some of our brethren, and we enjoyed getting to know them and their families better. We then went to visit the famous pyramids northeast of Mexico City, and learned more about the early history of Mexico. That evening, we went to dinner at the home of Mr. Tenorio's brother, and were able to become better acquainted with him and his fine family. Through all of this, I was able to experience a cross-section of Mexican life and to become better acquainted personally with our brethren.

On Monday morning, after breakfast and a final meeting with Messrs. Hernandez and Mora, we headed for the airport where we had to part ways, and all three of us flew to our homes. I returned with many happy and meaningful memories of my visit to Mexico, and with a deeper appreciation for the culture, the trials and the love and warmth of our Mexican brethren.

Going back a little in time, I should mention that Mexico City was not the first stop on my trip. I had gone from Charlotte to Phoenix, Arizona, where I joined Messrs. Ames and Crockett in visiting an important company that acts as an agency to buy television time for churches—as well as operating in many other areas of the media. We scheduled this visit in order to gain more understanding of their processes, and to think about using additional media-buying agencies to give us greater flexibility and perhaps better pricing as the Work moves ahead. We gained a good deal of insight from this visit, and hope that God will bless us and enable us to have a great deal more growth in this area in the future.

Even now, our television response is doing very well—especially considering the relatively small number of commercial stations that carry our program. The response to each weekly program in recent months has averaged more than 2,000—and often breaks 3,000! So we thank God for this, but we are always striving to do better. Also, we have put on an extra "push" in increasing our impact on the Internet. You have probably noticed our new Internet site over the last few months, and now we have extra programs in mind to increase the response and the impact of our Internet use. We will appreciate your prayers for the success of this effort.

Additionally, we are developing a Ministerial Training Program under the direction of Dr. Scott Winnail—the son of our Director of Church Administration, Dr. Douglas Winnail. Dr. Scott Winnail gained experience in developing teaching and training programs at the university level while serving as an associate professor at the University of Wyoming. He will be guided in putting this program together by his father, and by Mr. Lambert Greer, Mr. Rand Millich and others—with regular input from Mr. Dibar Apartian, Mr. Rod McNair and me here at Headquarters. So it will be a reflection of our "team effort" in putting together a program to help all potential ministers and leaders in the Work. Again, I solicit your earnest prayers for this. I hope that all who are asked to participate will try to get

continues on page 19

Editor in Chief . . . . . Roderick C. Meredith
Editorial Director . . . . . Richard F. Ames
Executive Editor . . . . . William Bowmer
Regional Editors . . . . . Rod King (Philippines)
Bruce Tyler (Australasia)
Gerald Weston (Canada)
Douglas S. Winnail (Europe)
Layout Editor . . . . . Donna Prejean
Proofreaders . . . . . Sandy Davis
Linda Ehman
Elizabeth Martin
News Bureau . . . . . June Olsen
Business Manager . . . . . J. Davy Crockett, III

Regional Offices

UNITED STATES:
P.O. Box 3810
Charlotte, NC 28227
Phone: (704) 844-1970
http://www.lcg.org
AUSTRALASIA:
GPO Box 772
Canberra, ACT 2601, Australia
Phone: (07) 5546 0472; Fax: (07) 5546 0768
CANADA:
P.O. Box 409
Mississauga, ON L5M 2B9
Phone: (905) 814-1094; Fax: (905) 814-7659
NEW ZEALAND:
P.O. Box 2767
Auckland, New Zealand
Phone/Fax: (09) 268 8985
PHILIPPINES:
MCPO Box 1774
Makati City 1257, Philippines
Phone: 63-2-813-6538; Fax: 63-2-867-1569
SOUTH AFRICA:
P.O. Box 4271
Luipaardsvlei, 1743 Republic of South Africa
Phone: (27) 11-664-6036
UNITED KINGDOM:
P.O. Box 9092
Motherwell, ML1 2YD Scotland
Phone/Fax: 44-1698-263-977

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

©2006, Living Church of God™. Printed in the USA. All rights reserved. Postage paid at Charlotte, NC.

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

The Living Church News is not responsible for the return of unsolicited articles and photographs. Scriptures are quoted from the New King James Version (©Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

# How Does God View You?

## *Editorial*

By Roderick C. Meredith

**W**e who know the Truth are held accountable for that precious knowledge. As Jesus clearly stated, “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more” (Luke 12:48). As God looks down from heaven upon *all* His people, what does He really see? Does He see a group of people with true faith in Christ, who are obedient to His laws? Does He see a group of people who actually *practice* His government and are really, *truly* preparing to be kings and priests as they *study* His laws, His statutes and prepare to teach and administer this entire way of life in Tomorrow’s World?

As each Passover approaches, it is vitally important that we *honestly* examine ourselves, as the Bible commands: “Examine yourselves *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). Is Christ *actually* “living” in *you*—and in *me*? As we ask that question, we must realize that we gain *absolutely nothing* by merely “kidding” ourselves! It is for *our own benefit* that we must be honest and frank as we privately and conscientiously go through the process of *genuinely* examining ourselves before God.

*Think!* How much more fully is Christ actually “living” in you

now than a year ago? How much more do *you* reflect Jesus Christ in your absolute *awe, worship, adoration, obedience* and *service* to the God who made you? How much more do you *reflect Christ* in your love, kindness, patience and service to your fellow human beings?

### **God Must Come FIRST**

Jesus said: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment” (Matthew 22:37–38). Yet *all of us*, from time to time, let other

**Jesus said: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment” (Matthew 22:37–38). Yet all of us, from time to time, let other people, situations and “things” come between us and God.**

people, situations and “things” come between us and God. In our modern, confused, hectic and materialistic society, it is *very easy* to compromise and put other things ahead of the great God who gives us life and breath. We must examine ourselves to be sure we are *fully* putting God *first* in every phase and facet of our lives. We must be sure that we are **not** “watering down” His instructions regarding full obedience to *each* of the Ten Commandments. We must be sure to truly *revere* His Sabbaths and Holy Days, to *fully*

tithe on our income and give generously in addition as we are able. We must be sure to *fully* give ourselves in actually *doing* His Work in every way we personally are able to do. As God looks down from heaven, how do *you* “measure up” in regard to all of the above?

Are we, as a Church, truly *learning* and *practicing* God’s form of government, and genuinely preparing to become kings and priests and administer *that very form* of government? Remember Jesus’ definite plan for *each of us*, that He “has *made us kings and priests* to His God and Father” (Revelation 1:6). As God

tells us: “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be *priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him* a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6). Are we *fully aware* that in the Millennium, our actual responsibility for the next *one thousand years* will be to help *rule and govern* this entire earth under the direction of the living Jesus Christ? Is that “real” to us? Or are we so fully absorbed with the idea

*continues on page 17*

# The Mission of God's Church

By Douglas S. Winnail

Jesus said, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). But *why* did Jesus start a church? What is its mission and purpose? What *should* the Church of God be doing today? Do you know—for sure?

It is *incredible* how much confusion about the mission of God's Church exists today. You have probably heard numerous ideas about what God's Church should be doing as the end of the age approaches. Is the mission of God's Church to preach about Jesus, to feed the flock, to fellowship together, to serve the community or to welcome all comers? Should God's Church re-examine basic beliefs, study Jewish traditions, rejoin the "Christian mainstream," focus on prophecy, share opinions about the Bible or "get the bride ready?"

Today, many feel that *all* these ideas are pleasing to God and are acceptable missions for God's Church. But do these ideas represent God's instructions, or human opinions? Is it really up to *us* to select the mission of God's Church? Or does God *plainly reveal* the mission of His Church *in Scripture*? Can you *prove* from the Bible what that mission is? Are you deeply committed to the mission that God has outlined for His Church? Divisions arise when isolated verses or human opinions replace the biblical mandate. The mission Jesus emphasized *again and again* for His Church *contrasts sharply* with many ideas now held by those who were once with us. Those ideas are dangerous and deceptive, because they divert God's people from the *assigned* mission for which we are held *accountable*!

## Called for a Purpose

Jesus started the New Testament Church by calling and training a group of disciples. The Greek word for church—*ekklesia*—means a *called out* group of people. A disciple is one who follows and faithfully conveys the instructions of Jesus Christ. When Jesus called the disciples, He outlined their mission very clearly from the beginning. He said, "Follow Me, and I will make you *fishers of men*" (Matthew 4:19). He did *not* say, "follow your feelings or your own opinions." He said, "Follow Me"—His example, His instructions. Fishermen have a job—to catch fish! They do not just sit around socializing, sharing their opinions about fishing. As "fishers of men," the disciples were com-

missioned to reach hearts and minds with an important message. The disciples were called and trained for a *specific and ongoing* purpose.

The disciples were *not* to rejoin the religious establishment, but were to "come out from among them and be separate" (2 Corinthians 6:17). Jesus said of His disciples, "they are not of the world." He said that they would be "sanctified" [set apart or distinguished] by the "truth" they taught (John 17:16–19). Jesus said that the world and its religious leaders would hate His disciples just as He was hated by people who professed to believe in God (John 17:14). The Bible reveals that the Church Jesus established would be small (Luke 12:32), scattered (John 16:32) and persecuted (Matthew 10:17). A religion having more than two billion adherents (approximately one-third of mankind), peacefully keeping Sunday as its day of worship, cannot be the Church of God described in Scripture!

Jesus told His disciples that the burden of their mission would be challenging, but not impossible (Matthew 19:26). He promised to be with them "even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20), and to *reward* them for following His instructions. God inspired John to write, "Because you have *kept My command to persevere*, I also will keep you from the hour of trial" (Revelation 3:10–11). Those disciples who remain faithful to their mission will be protected from the tribulation, and will receive a crown to reign with Christ in the Kingdom of God (Revelation 5:10). Individuals and organizations treating this mission lightly, failing to carry it out, will go through the tribulation (Revelation 12:17). This is why it is so important to remain focused on what Jesus told God's Church to do! But just *what* was the mission that Jesus Christ gave to His Church?

## The Mission in Matthew

Jesus' ministry involved "*teaching* in their synagogues, *preaching* the gospel of the kingdom, and *healing* all kinds of sickness" (Matthew 4:23). This was the example His disciples were to follow. Jesus taught about the Sabbath, the Holy Days, tithing, dietary laws, repentance, forgiveness and loving your enemies. He preached constantly about the kingdom of God (see Matthew 13) and the purpose of life (Matthew 19:29; Revelation 5:10). He also *warned* that

monumental events would precede His second coming (Matthew 24).

Looking at the book of Matthew, compare the number of times Jesus referred to His death and resurrection, and the number of times He referred to the Kingdom of God. You might be surprised by the result—Jesus focused on *His mission!*

Jesus instructed His disciples to preach the gospel of the kingdom “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:6–7). To do that, the disciples had to know the *identity* and *location* of the Israelites. History indicates that the disciples went into Scythia (southern Russia), Parthia (Iran) and India, and through Europe to Britain and Ireland—where many Israelites had gone. As God’s Church grew, it was to preach this same gospel to the Gentiles. This mission—to reach the nations of Israel—still applies to God’s Church today. Jesus said that His disciples would *not complete* the work before He returned (Matthew 10:23). Yet, in spite of what Scripture plainly

cannot do this if we just sit around and discuss our opinions about the Bible!

The mission of God’s Church, as outlined in Matthew, involves teaching God’s way of life, healing the sick, preaching about the Kingdom of God and warning of events that will mark the end of this age and the return of Jesus Christ. We find similar instructions repeated *again and again* in the Bible!

### **The Mission in Mark**

The gospel of Mark *mirrors* Matthew when it outlines the mission of God’s Church. Mark explains that “Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God” and emphasizing the need to repent—to change—and believe the gospel (Mark 1:14–15). Preaching about the coming kingdom was the *major* thrust of Christ’s work on earth. This same focus should be the mission of God’s Church today. Jesus called His disciples to become

---

**Jesus’ ministry involved “teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness” (Matthew 4:23). This was the example His disciples were to follow. Jesus taught about the Sabbath, the Holy Days, tithing, dietary laws, repentance, forgiveness and loving your enemies.**

---

states, many today believe that the work is finished, and that there is nothing to do but get the “bride” (God’s Church) ready for Christ’s coming. Scripture does not support the idea that the work of preaching the gospel to the world is finished. That is a presumption! Noah did not wrap up his work as a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5) decades before the Flood! His work ended when God shut him into the ark—when it began to rain (Genesis 7:7, 16).

One *major* aspect of Jesus’ ministry was a *warning* about specific world events that would occur just before His return (see Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). Jesus said that His *faithful* servants will provide a warning as they see the days approaching. He also warned that “many will come in My name [claiming to be Christians and ministers of Christ]... and will deceive many” (Matthew 24:4–5). He stated that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a *witness* to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). A witness is meant to warn and inform, not necessarily to convert. When Christ returns, He wants to find His disciples doing the work He said to do (Matthew 24:46), making disciples of all nations and teaching what He commanded to be taught (Matthew 28:19–20). We

“fishers of men”—not members of a social club, a ministerial fraternity, or a private study group (Mark 1:17). He taught people how to keep the Sabbath (Mark 2:23–28; 3:1–6). He also revealed that His disciples would be given an understanding that the world would not have regarding the Kingdom of God—an understanding that would aid God’s Church in fulfilling its mission (Mark 4:10–12). Jesus said that *most* in this age who heard the true gospel would not understand the real mission of God’s Church, or would eventually lose interest (Mark 4:13–20). Only a *few* would hear and would *follow* Jesus’ instructions. How does that apply to you?

In Mark 6:7–13, we find Jesus sending His disciples on a training mission, with instructions to heal and to preach. They were preaching about the Kingdom of God (see Mark 1:14–15). Mark also records Jesus’ detailed instructions to *watch* for and *warn* about the events signaling that His coming would be near (Mark 13). Mark states that the Great Commission of God’s Church is to “go into all the world and preach the gospel [of the Kingdom of God]” and to baptize those who believe (Mark 16:15–16). This is the primary mission—the *work*—of God’s Church. This is the reason for publishing magazines and booklets, and for being on radio, televi-

sion and the Internet. This mission requires a dedicated group of disciples working together as a team. It cannot be carried out by isolated individuals. It cannot be done by sitting at home or by participating in discussion groups or by socializing. It cannot be accomplished by ministers who promote their own agendas. However, as clear as these instructions are, it is amazing that some still say, “We will do a work when God shows us what to do” or “We cannot do a work because we do not have enough money” or “We do not publish magazines and booklets because that is too elementary; we need to do in-depth research,” or “We do not accept a salary so we cannot do a work.” These are excuses that Christ will not accept! Jesus gave His Church a mission—not to be debated or denied but to be *carried out!* That is our job, and we will be held accountable!

### **The Mission in Luke**

In Luke, as in Matthew and Mark, we find Jesus observing the Sabbath and giving instructions on how to keep the Sabbath (Luke 4:16, 31; 13:10–17; 14:1–6). God’s Church, following Christ’s example, will continue to do this. Luke describes *two* training missions that Jesus organized for His disciples. Jesus sent the 12 apostles on a mission to “preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1–6). Later, He sent out 70 to heal and preach about “the kingdom of God” (Luke 10:1–12). Jesus cautioned His disciples to *beware* of the religious establishment, not to join it (Matthew 23:2–10; Luke 20:45–47). Luke also records Jesus’ instruction to *watch* and *warn* about specific events that will indicate His soon return (Luke 21). Thus we see that Matthew, Mark and Luke provide *essentially the same* outline and perspective on the mission Jesus outlined for God’s Church.

### **The Church as a Watchman**

A church that follows Christ’s instruction to *watch* for specific events and *warn* of their appearance *will function* as a watchman. A watchman’s job is to watch and warn. The gospel writers clearly record Christ’s instructions on this matter. The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel had the same mission. He was to be “a watchman to the house of Israel” and warn the nation of punishments God would send because of disobedience (Ezekiel 2:3; 3:4–7, 17). Ezekiel was told that if he saw trouble coming and delivered a warning, he would save himself and anyone who would listen (Ezekiel 33:1–5). However, if he saw events developing and did *not* deliver a warning, he would be *held responsible* for those who died (Ezekiel 33:6–9). Ezekiel was commissioned to be God’s watchman to

ancient Israel. According to Jesus’ instructions in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 the Church of God *today* shares that same solemn responsibility! That is part of our mission!

Before Israel and Judah went into captivity, God sent prophets to point out the nations’ sins and the consequences of breaking God’s laws. Isaiah was told to “cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isaiah 58:1). Jeremiah carried a similar warning to the nation of Judah (Jeremiah 2). This same warning—the need to repent of breaking God’s law—was *also* delivered by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1–12). It was also delivered by Jesus Christ (Mark 1:14–15) and the disciples He trained (Acts 2:38). This has never been a popular message. Telling people that they need to change, and that their preconceived ideas about God may be mistaken, does not win friends or foster goodwill. It cost the lives of Jesus and most of the early disciples, but it is part of the mission of God’s Church. The Church must preach *more* than a gentle message about love and Christian living if it is going to fulfill the mission outlined by Jesus Christ.

### **John and the Mission**

The gospel of John was written from a different perspective than the other three gospels, giving particular emphasis to Jesus’ identity as the divine Son of God. Still, regarding God’s Church, John describes the *same mission*. Jesus told His disciples to “Follow Me”—to follow His example and His instructions (John 1:43). In John, Jesus asserts that repentance is required to gain the Kingdom of God. Jesus heals the sick and infirm and gives instructions about keeping the Sabbath (John 5:1–15). He also kept, and gave instructions to keep, the Holy Days (John 7). John’s gospel reveals that Jesus repeatedly clashed with the religious establishment over doctrine. Religious leaders of Christ’s day did not recognize who He was, nor did they understand His mission or His message. It will be no different today for a church that teaches what Jesus taught. When Jesus was urged to relax, He responded, “My food [my mission] is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work” (John 4:33–34). Jesus was mission-oriented!

The gospel of John emphasizes that Jesus died for the sins of mankind (John 1:29), and that Christians should “love one another” (13:34; 15:17), but this does not replace the command to preach the gospel of the kingdom and to warn the world. In John 21:15–17 we read that Jesus instructed Peter to “feed My sheep.” Feeding the sheep does not mean turning inward; you can only feed

those who have responded to the message the Church is preaching! Moreover, as we will see, this feeding should help God's Church accomplish its mission.

### **The Apostles and the Mission**

Even some who call themselves Christians believe that the Apostle Paul "reformulated" Christianity to make it more palatable to the world by altering the message and mission of God's Church. However, this belief simply does not agree with Scripture. The New Testament reveals that the Apostles were faithful to their mission. After the resurrection, Jesus continued to focus the disciples on the "kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3–6). Peter's sermon on Pentecost emphasized that Christianity requires repentance and coming out of this world (Acts 2:38). The Apostles continued to heal by miracles (Acts 3:1–10; 9:32–43; 19:10–12). Philip "preached the things

for Christ's return. This misunderstanding is based on a lone scripture in Revelation 19:7. Of course, one verse does not negate the whole mission that is clearly described *throughout* the New Testament. The Bible explains what "getting ready" entails. Before Christ returns, God will raise up an Elijah-type work to "restore all things" (Malachi 4:4–6; Matthew 17:10–11). Just as John the Baptist prepared the way for the first coming of the Messiah, an end-time work will "Prepare the way of the LORD" and "Make His paths straight" (Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:3). This involves straightening out centuries of confusion about the gospel, about the mission of God's Church and about His way of life—by restoring knowledge of the Truth. The work begun by Jesus Christ and the Apostles continues today, and will continue into the Millennium (Acts 3:19–21; Isaiah 2:2–4; 11:9). This restoration of the Truth is part of what God's Church is to do to get ready.

---

## **Today, even some in God's Church wrongly assume that the work of preaching the gospel is over, and that all that remains for God's Church is to "get the bride ready" for Christ's return.**

---


concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12). Paul's "custom" was to keep the Sabbath (Acts 17:2). Like Christ, he taught on (and taught about) the Sabbath and Holy Days (Acts 13:13–15, 42–44; 1 Corinthians 5:7–8). At the end of his ministry, Paul was still "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 28:23, 31). The New Testament reveals that the mission of God's Church did not change under the leadership of the Apostles. This is why Paul advised Christians, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

The Apostles continued to *warn*, as Christ had, of events that would mark the end of the age and the second coming of Jesus Christ. Paul, Peter and John mention additional details (2 Thessalonians 2; 2 Peter 3; Revelation 11:15–19; 19:5–21). The mission to warn the world is a *command*, and so is not to be taken lightly! The epistles are also replete with warnings that religious deception will increase as the end of the age approaches (1 Timothy 4:1–5; 2 Timothy 4:1–5; 2 Peter 2). Some today are deceived about the mission of God's Church!

### **The Mission in the End-Times**

Today, even some in God's Church wrongly assume that the work of preaching the gospel is over, and that all that remains for God's Church is to "get the bride ready"

Another vital aspect of the Church's end-time mission is to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). This called-out group of individuals—God's Church—must be *prepared* to do a work. They must be ready to preach the gospel of the Kingdom, teach God's way of life and heal the sick—as much as God makes possible. God's Church must also *watch* world events in order to *warn* mankind as the end of the age approaches and the return of Jesus Christ nears. Preparing a people to do that job is part of our mission. If we merely focus on self—praying, fasting and studying the Bible for our own benefit—we will not fulfill the Great Commission that Jesus Christ outlined for His Church. Are we willing to risk our reward by ignoring Christ's own words?

Scripture *clearly* outlines the true mission of God's Church. We cannot afford to be deceived by numerous and conflicting ideas about what God's Church should be doing. Knowing and carrying out the mission of God's Church is vitally *important*, because it demonstrates whether or not we are willing to *follow* Christ's instructions. Understanding and developing a deep commitment to fulfill that mission is a basic requirement for our being in the Kingdom of God. This is what Apostolic Christianity is all about—carrying forward the instructions of Jesus Christ. We must work together to achieve that mission, because we will be held accountable for what we do—and for what we fail to do! 

# Turn off the “Gossip Channel”

By Michael Elertson

**H**ave you ever heard the old adage, “Good news travels fast”? Although this may be true, it seems equally true in the opposite direction; even “bad news” travels fast. Truly, we live in the Information Age. Just about anything you may want to know is at your fingertips—only a remote control, phone call, or Internet connection away!

As my wife and I were grocery shopping one day, a thought came to me while we were standing in the checkout line. Seeing the teeming tabloids lined up in the checkout aisles, it struck me how the human psyche seems to want to know it all—to get the latest “juicy” details on this or that person or event. This trait seems inextricably connected with human nature. Just look at the profitable industries fueled by human beings’ insatiable appetites for the newest “dirty” scoop. In the tabloids, people can find out the latest gossip. As Christians, do we find ourselves symbolically “picking up the tabloids” in our families, or workplaces or among our Church brethren?

Have you asked yourself: does the desire to hear and spread gossip reflect God’s character, attitude and way of life? Is gossip ever okay? As Christians, how should we approach the “gossip channel” in our lives and around us?

## Is Gossip Ever Okay?

What exactly is gossip, anyway? Gossip is idle talk or rumors about others—for we would never gossip about ourselves! Sometimes “details” about a person or situation

are passed along with seemingly the best of intentions, but even with the best of intentions hurt can result. Often, gossip is simply negative or confidential information that makes the sender and receiver feel important for being “in the know.”

Scripture uses many analogies and examples to explain what gossip actually entails. Solomon advised, “The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body” (Proverbs 18:8). Also: “A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter” (Proverbs 11:13). And: “He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; Therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips” (Proverbs 20:19). Another clue is given in Proverbs 16:28, “A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends.” The Apostle Paul points out that one of the reasons God is now taking a “hands off” approach with most people in this age is that “they are whisperers, backbiters” (Romans 1:29–30). Paul also instructs Timothy, “And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not” (1 Timothy 5:13).

Notice what God taught about gossip to the congregation in the wilderness. “You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:16). God was showing His people—who were to be a chosen people and holy nation—that gossip does not follow the principle

of “love your neighbor as yourself” (v. 18). Interestingly, the Bible makes no exceptions that allow idle talk or spreading rumors about others. In fact, Christians should not even associate with those who are perpetual gossipers—and you know who they are (Proverbs 20:19)! This becomes especially difficult when it is a friend. But ask yourself the old “bridge question”—if your friend asked you to jump off a bridge, would you? Should you?

## Love Covers

A mature and loving brother or sister will not draw attention to a fellow Christian’s sins. “Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins” (Proverbs 10:12). This does not mean that like ostriches we bury our heads in the sand. But neither should we gossip and spread a matter out for all to see. This does not mean that we should pretend that nothing is wrong, but we as loving Christians must deal with matters discreetly—at the right time, the right place and with the right people (Matthew 18:15–20). All too often we forget this vital biblical principle. This is truly a matter of our Christianity.

When is something gossip, and not just passing on information? The “golden rule” is a good tool for discernment. “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). This is a very simple rule of thumb, but how often do we really follow it? It is actually quite simple. The next time you find yourself tuned in to the “gossip



channel” just ask yourself, “Is what I am hearing, saying or passing on something that I would like to have said about me? Does this information edify, build and exhort (1 Timothy 2:3–4)? Is this information true? Can this information be passed on? If not, then will I resolve that it ends with me?”

Some have wondered whether the example given in 2 Timothy 2:16–18 is an example of gossip. Paul was writing about two individuals: Hymenaeus and Philetus. These two were guilty of damaging the faith of other Church members and causing division within the congregation—through falsehoods, half-truths or no truths at all—which God plainly

sense; our neighbor is anyone else. A hypocrite—a duplicitous person, who lies, who pretends to be one way and is actually another—goes about trying to destroy others. One of the ways to do that is not necessarily with a weapon, but with the mouth. Words are very potent, powerful things. If they start telling lies and leveling false accusations against the other individual [even unknowingly], if they start undercutting or spreading rumors about their neighbor, they can end up actually *destroying* another person just by the words that come out of their mouth [even unknowingly]. But the antidote, or the defense to

idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not” (1 Timothy 5:13). The truth of the matter is that true Christians will never want to hurt others—even unknowingly—by interfering with, speaking ill of or gossiping about them.

Is the subject of gossip really that big a deal? Is it really something to become so concerned about—a matter of salvation? Let the Apostle Peter shed some truth on the subject: “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evil doer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the

---

## The truth of the matter is that true Christians will never want to hurt others—even unknowingly—by interfering with, speaking ill of or gossiping about them.

---

hates (Proverbs 6:19). So, how was Paul’s letter an example of passing along information, rather than gossiping about two people? Simply put, Paul was an apostle writing to the young evangelist Timothy—a shepherd writing to another shepherd. As shepherds, it was their responsibility to protect the flock, the same responsibility that God’s ministers have today. Paul’s letter was not an example of gossip, but rather of protecting and edifying the sheep.

Another vital point: “The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous will be delivered” (Proverbs 11:9, *KJV*). Evangelist Charles Bryce, in his online Bible Study on the book of Proverbs (available in the Bible Study area of [www.lcg.org](http://www.lcg.org)), states:

No matter if it is a next-door neighbor, or a family member, or a fellow worker in the broadest

something like that, is knowledge—godly knowledge, true knowledge, right knowledge, real knowledge. “Through knowledge shall the [righteous or the] just be delivered.”

Knowledge is the key to this issue. Not any knowledge, but true godly knowledge that comes from the only reliable source—the Bible (Matthew 4:4).

### Root Causes

Some of the root causes of gossip are clear. “For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all but are busybodies” (2 Thessalonians 3:11). Some people seem to have so much time on their hands that they have nothing better to do. Paul describes such people: “And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only

time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:15–17). Did you notice how seriously Peter takes gossip? Peter ranks a busybody right along with thieves and murderers, which shows the importance of the subject. Christians must take the approach, “The buck stops here” and put an end to gossip when it reaches them instead of passing it along. Remember, God’s Church is being judged right now—and our judgment now determines our future. It is vital that we all examine ourselves on this issue (2 Corinthians 13:5).

The third chapter of James gives Christians important guidelines for the use of the tongue. The tongue is one of the smallest members of our body—far smaller than an arm or a leg—but it can be used powerfully for good or for bad. How are you using your tongue? James admonish-

*continues on page 16*

# Overcoming Tests and Trials: Lessons from Hezekiah

By Rand Millich

**A**s Christians, we face physical and spiritual trials in our lives. Some ordeals we anticipate. Other tests come unexpectedly, and we find ourselves unprepared. Sometimes trials come, and we do not even recognize them for what they are.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). When it comes to tests and trials, we can learn many valuable lessons from the life of King Hezekiah. He was a leader who “did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done” (2 Chronicles 29:2).

Hezekiah was fully prepared to face his first major trial: to overcome the apostasy that his father, Ahaz, had caused to befall the nation. Ahaz had destroyed “the articles of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and made for himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem” (2 Chronicles 28:24).

At age 25, in the first year of his reign, Hezekiah began to correct the sins of his father. We read that “he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them” (2 Chronicles 29:3). Because the priests and the Levites had been negligent in their duties, they were now required to sanctify themselves and to clean up the holy place.

Hezekiah understood the principle of “cause and effect.” He understood that there was a reason for the trouble the nation was enduring. The wrath of the LORD had fallen on Judah and Jerusalem, because the nation had broken the covenant it had made with the LORD God of Israel. Hezekiah turned God’s fierce anger from Judah, by spurring the nation to become obedient to that covenant once again (2 Chronicles 29:8–11). He worked diligently with the priests and Levites to re-establish the worship of God in the Temple at Jerusalem. However, there were too few priests to offer the sacrifices, and the people did not have time to gather at Jerusalem. So, following God’s instructions, Hezekiah and the nation kept the Passover in the second month (Numbers 9:10–11).

Hezekiah and a great congregation kept the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month, and he continued to restore the worship of the LORD to Judah and to as many from Israel as were willing to follow the LORD. We read: “And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered” (2 Chronicles 31:21). Hezekiah had faced the trial that he had clearly seen coming and, when he became king, successfully dealt with it.

For 14 years, everything went very well for Hezekiah and Judah. Then Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against Judah (Isaiah 36:1). Hezekiah may not have seen this disaster coming, and probably thought what we often think when we are afflicted with a major trial. “But God, I have been following you with my whole heart and I’m doing Your Work. Why are you letting this happen to me?” However, Hezekiah did what he should have done. We are told that, “when King Hezekiah heard it, that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD” (Isaiah 37:1). Hezekiah sought counsel from God’s prophet Isaiah, and God’s angel destroyed Sennacherib’s army (vv. 36–37). God fought the battle for them!

Later, another major unexpected trial hit Hezekiah. Isaiah told Hezekiah to set his affairs in order because he was going to die, and God was not going to heal him (Isaiah 38:1). Again, Hezekiah faced this trial in a proper way. He turned to God and wept bitterly, and he prayed that God would heal him of this affliction. Hezekiah was humble and contrite. “And the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, ‘Go and tell Hezekiah’, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years’”(Isaiah 38:4–5). How would we live if we knew the exact year we were going to die? This could be a trial in itself!

Hezekiah had to face one more major trial in his life, to test him. This time, the trial blindsided him, because he did not recognize it for what it was.

Merodach-Baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and gifts to Hezekiah, telling him that he was glad to hear Hezekiah had recovered from his serious illness (Isaiah 39:1). God then withdrew from Hezekiah, to test him and to see what was in his heart (2 Chronicles 32:31). Hezekiah was flattered by the attention from the king of Babylon's son, and he showed off all his silver, gold, spices and precious ointments, and all his armory (his war-making abilities). He withheld nothing in his house or kingdom. Hezekiah did not think of this as a trial—he thought it wonderful that other people cared about his health and were pleased to hear of his recovery. In reality, however, he let his pride get to him. Although the coming captivity had to do primarily with the sins of other kings and of the nation, Hezekiah's attitude partially affected God's decision as well (2 Chronicles 32:24–25).

Through the prophet Isaiah, God told Hezekiah that the days “are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left... and they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon” (Isaiah 39:6–7).

Hezekiah failed that test, but he repented (2 Chronicles 32:26) and God forgave him, just as God will forgive us if we repent when we fail tests. Overall, Hezekiah did very well, and Scripture tells us that “the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, indeed they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet” (2 Chronicles 32:32).

We can learn several lessons from Hezekiah's life. We may face different kinds of trials: some we clearly see, some are unexpected and some we may not realize are tests! Through all our trials, we must focus on God. We must look straight ahead to God and do what God wants us to do. When Hezekiah dealt with the trial he could plainly see—the apostasy—he was certain of the right course of action. Proverbs 4:23–27 tells us to look straight ahead and to do what is right, turning neither to the left or the right. We are to seek first the kingdom of God and trust Him to provide all our needs (Matthew 6:33). We should approach all of our trials in this way.

Hezekiah's example also reminds us that we must use our time well, for it is our life. Hezekiah rose to the occasion when he finally recognized unexpected trials for what they were. When he knew he was going to die, he sought God's mercy with fervent prayer and humility of mind. When God extended his life, he eventually lived it in such a way that God recognized him for his goodness.

If you knew that you had 15 years left to live, how would you use that time? Would you think that you could

party and carouse for 14 years and 11 months, then repent and “be good” for the last few weeks—or even days? God wants us to use our time, and our lives, wisely. Paul tells us: “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the LORD is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:15–18). If we live this way, we will be able to deal with all the trials of life—even the unexpected ones.

Hezekiah's example also reminds us to be wise and discerning. Hezekiah had the proverbs of Solomon: “These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied” (Proverbs 25:1). Therefore, Hezekiah should have known, “A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet” (Proverbs 29:5). The men of Babylon were searching out Judah's strengths and weaknesses, and they used flattery to convince Hezekiah to show them all that Judah possessed. Proverbs also tells us, “He who hates, disguises it with his lips, and lays up deceit within himself” (26:24). The envoys from Babylon used kind words to deceive Hezekiah, and we are warned not to believe the kind words of an enemy (Proverbs 26:25). Satan comes as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:13–14). He is our enemy. An enemy may flatter us, but he is still an enemy. Even though we may not recognize a situation as a trial, we will pass the test anyway if we use wisdom and discernment.

Hezekiah's example should remind us to be humble, not prideful. While Hezekiah's pride was based on the good he had done, we must remember that we are here by God's grace and mercy. “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). Proverbs also reminds us that “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts” (21:2). God was testing Hezekiah's heart (2 Chronicles 32:31). The Apostle James reveals that, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore submit to God” (James 4:6–7). When we are humble, we will be able to overcome every trial, because we will be close to God and have access to His Spirit and power.

We need to learn these powerful lessons from the life of Hezekiah. Most of Hezekiah's life was spent wisely in devotion to doing God's work. He was focused on God. Let us be focused on Jesus Christ, and on the work He has given us to do. Let us use our time circumspectly. Let us walk with wisdom and discernment, and let us follow Hezekiah in one of the strongest traits he possessed: humbly seeking God through fasting and prayer. ☞

# How to Pray When You Are Discouraged

By J. Charles Ogwyn

**D**o you find it difficult to pray when you are discouraged or depressed? It is ironic that just when we need God's help the most, we may have our greatest difficulty in reaching out to Him for the help that we so desperately need. Why is this? It is because we doubt. We may doubt whether God is hearing our prayers. We may doubt that our prayers can make a difference. We may even doubt that God really wants to help us. Just when we need God's help the most, we may doubt that His help is available.

During these times of doubt, we may find it difficult to pray, if we can even bring ourselves to pray at all. We have trouble knowing what to say, putting our thoughts into words, focusing on our prayers and blocking out distractions. These troubles can discourage us further, and can feed any doubts we may have.

How can a Christian escape this spiritually self-destructive approach? How should we pray when we are discouraged—when we feel all alone, when we feel as though things cannot possibly grow any worse? How can we pray when we cannot see the “light at the end of the tunnel”?

## **Start With What You Know**

It is important to go back and start with what we know, and then work forward from there. Starting with what we know will establish our focus in the right place. So, what do we know that we can use

as our starting point? We know that God exists. We know that the Bible is His word. We know that His word is faithful and cannot fail. The proof of these truths is all around in His creation, in His prophecies that have been fulfilled and in the many mighty miracles that He has performed. Starting from what we know, we can then move forward using His word as our guide. Whatever our discouragement, God's word holds the key to helping us move forward.

Sometimes we feel unable to reach out to God in prayer because we cannot forgive ourselves. But where did we get the idea that we have done something so terrible that God cannot forgive us? Does this discouraging idea come from God's word? Certainly not! The idea that God cannot forgive us—and that we cannot forgive ourselves—is an idea rooted in self-pity that comes directly from Satan!

In Romans 3:23 we are told that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” In other words, everyone has come short of God's glory. No amount of righteousness or good works will ever atone for the mistakes we have made. We must accept the reality that there is nothing anyone can ever do to “earn” salvation. In Romans 6:23 we are told that “the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We have all fallen short, and the penalty is death. Only through Christ's sacrifice do we have hope.

This stands in stark contrast to the Satan-inspired idea that there are different classifications of sin. Call them mortal sins and venial sins, or call them greater sins and lesser sins, but the idea that some sins are grievous, while others do not really matter, is not an idea rooted in God's word! The Bible tells us that, as far as God is concerned, all have earned the death penalty through sin—but that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ's shed blood pays the penalty for our sins, as long as we continue to repent and keep striving to overcome.

Have you stumbled so many times that you are embarrassed to ask God for forgiveness? You may think, “If I were God, I would have given up on me a long time ago.” We can all be thankful that our Father in heaven is merciful and forgiving—more merciful than we are, and more merciful and forgiving than anyone we have ever known. Consider the example of the Apostle Paul. Before he was called, he was involved in the murder of Christians. Paul, also known as Saul, was persecuting and trying to destroy God's Church. Consider the enormous guilt that he must have felt after God called him (Acts 9:1–5). Consider his tremendous feelings of guilt upon realizing that he had been doing Satan's work. Yet, because Paul was deeply repentant, God not only forgave him, but went on to use him in a remarkable way!

No matter what we have done, and no matter how many times we

have stumbled, all we have to do is repent—turn from sin—and move forward with God’s help, striving to build His character in our lives, and accepting that Christ’s shed blood has washed away our sins.

### **Expect Trials**

Perhaps we are going through such difficult trials that we feel we have no hope. It may seem as though our trials are overwhelming us, and that they will never end. What does God’s word say? The Apostle Peter wrote: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you” (1 Peter 4:12). We should not be shocked and surprised when we face grievous trials—we should expect them!

Why should we expect such difficult trials? Hebrews 2:10 reminds

can overcome our carnal human nature, build His character in our lives, and eventually share in His glory as part of His Family for all eternity. Why is He doing this? Because God is love (1 John 4:8).

We must always remember that our loving Father in heaven takes great pleasure in hearing our prayers. He enjoys the time we spend with Him in prayer, in much the same way that a loving parent or grandparent delights in spending time with children or grandchildren. And He knows what we need, even before we ask (Matthew 6:32). Since God already knows what we need, even before we ask, why does He want us to ask for it? Why does Scripture instruct us, “let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6)?

It should be clear that God wants us to pray for our benefit, not for His. After all, not only does He know what we need before we

how we feel. If we know that our attitudes or our feelings are wrong, we should tell Him. We can explain to Him why we feel the way we do, and we can ask Him to help us overcome those feelings.

This act of talking freely to God moves our focus away from the physical and puts it on the spiritual—on our Father in heaven who loves us and who gave His Son for us (John 3:16). It puts our focus on His word and on the principles it contains. As we focus on God, it will become easier for Him to work with us—to mold and shape us, to guide and direct us.

### **Be Thankful**

Philippians 4:6 reminds us that as we make our requests known to God, we should do so “with thanksgiving.” This approach also helps us put our problems in the proper per-

---

**This act of talking freely to God moves our focus away from the physical and puts it on the spiritual—on our Father in heaven who loves us and who gave His Son for us (John 3:16). It puts our focus on His word and on the principles it contains.**

---

us that our Savior was perfected through suffering. There is no shortcut. Growth is difficult, and is often painful. Thankfully, we need not endure our trials alone and without help. No matter how difficult our trials may become—even if we feel abandoned by those around us—God promises, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you. So that we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper’” (Hebrews 13:5–6).

God wants to perfect us, not to overwhelm or crush us. Christ was sent not to condemn us, but to save us (John 3:17). God is on our side; He is not “out to get us.” He does not want to see us stumble or fail. He is arranging our circumstances so we

ask, He also knows what is in our hearts and our minds (1 Samuel 16:7). So, what do we gain by praying, if we are simply telling God what He already knows? Prayer is a vital exercise. It forces us to focus on Him—the One who has power without limits, who is bigger than our problems (cf. Matthew 6:9–13).

When we focus on God, this helps us gain the proper perspective on our problems. When we talk with our Father about what is on our mind, we can speak freely—even bluntly. We need not be ashamed, because God already knows our thoughts before we express them to Him in words. As we talk through our problems, we should tell God

perspective. No matter how much we need, we can be thankful for the many blessings that far outnumber our needs. We should also remember that there is often a difference between what we think we need and what we really need. Sometimes we confuse our wishes and desires with our needs. As we tell God what we need, or what we want and desire from Him, it is fitting that we always do so in the context of being thankful for what He has already done for us, and for what He promises He will do for us in the future.

As we spend time earnestly pouring out our hearts to God, our

*continues on page 16*

# The Spirit of Love

By Don Davis

**E**ach year, as the Day of Pentecost approaches, we need to focus more closely on the most precious and loving gift our Creator has given to us, His Holy Spirit. At baptism, we receive God's Spirit. But what does that gift do for us, and how are we to use it?

Christ instructed His disciples that after His ascension they were to remain in Jerusalem. "And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'" (Acts 1:4-5).

If any of the apostles had disregarded Christ's instruction, and had been absent from Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost, they would have missed one of the greatest events in the history of God's Church—and in the Father's plan for human beings. "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4).

Each year, at Pentecost, God's Church remembers this amazing and wonderful event. As God's people see the end of this age approaching, each Feast of Pentecost should be more exciting than the last, reminding us that our salvation is nearer than when we first believed (Romans 13:11).

On that wonderful Pentecost in 31AD, the Apostle Peter began to explain who Jesus of Nazareth really was, and that mankind had killed the very Son of God, the Messiah. As a crowd gathered to listen, many were convicted, and wanted to know how they should respond. "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said

to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:37-38).

Before we can receive this marvelous gift from God, we are first selected by the Father (John 6:44). Having been selected, we must display the fruits of repentance upon our heartbroken realization that God's only-begotten and sinless Son had to pay the death penalty for our sins. Because we have broken God's holy and righteous law, our Creator had to come to this earth and live a perfect, sin-free life, then shed His precious blood and die for us. Realizing our debt to our Savior, we must then be baptized and have hands laid upon us by a true minister of Jesus Christ, in order to receive God's Spirit (Acts 2:38; 8:17; Hebrews 6:2). Only those God the Father is calling now, to be the firstfruits in His soon-coming kingdom, can receive His Spirit, which is the "earnest" or "down-payment" to us on His promise of eternal life. "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39).

## Count Fifty

We know the date of Pentecost not through human reasoning, but from looking into the Bible. "And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD" (Leviticus 23:15-16).

God told the Israelites to bring to the priest a sheaf of the first cutting of the spring grain harvest (Leviticus 23:10). The priest was to wave this sheaf solemnly before God, to receive His blessing on the spring harvest. The waving of the sheaf also exemplified God the Father accepting the resurrected Christ as the first of the firstfruits of His begotten family, trans-

formed from flesh to spirit, “the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

The wave sheaf ceremony was held each year on the Sunday that fell during the Days of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:11). Similarly, John’s gospel describes that Jesus Christ, after rising from the dead, was to present Himself to the Father on the day after His resurrection (John 20:17).

“Pentecost” means “50th.” Each of the other Holy Days occurs on a specified day of a specified month on the sacred calendar. Only Pentecost, as its name implies, is counted from a date that changes from year to year—the date of the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. This count always brings us to a Sunday seven weeks after the wave sheaf offering. On that Sunday, each household in ancient Israel was to offer two wave loaves. (Leviticus 23:15–17). These loaves of fine

Finally, in the “second” or “general” resurrection, God will offer His Spirit to all who had ever lived but never had an opportunity to accept the truth of God, if they are willing to repent and obey their Creator. “Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it,” says the LORD” (Ezekiel 37:13–14).

### **Godly Love: Sharing the Truth**

Why do some in God’s Church believe that the Work of God ended with the death of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong in 1986? Hundreds upon hundreds of newly called and baptized members of God’s Church were never aware of

---

**We must never forget that God’s Holy Spirit empowers us to do His Work. We were not called just for our personal salvation. The spirit of Philadelphian love leads and motivates us to share the truth of God as a witness to the world.**

---

flour, baked with leaven, symbolized the firstfruits who, having His Holy Spirit, would be granted immortality in the first resurrection.

### **The Gift of God’s Spirit**

From righteous Enoch to the time of Christ’s coming, God gave His called servants His Holy Spirit, and they now await the “better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35, 40). King David had the Holy Spirit; otherwise he could not be in the first resurrection, ruling over Israel under Christ (Psalm 89:20; Ezekiel 34:23–24; 37:25). David said to God: “Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit” (Psalm 51:11–12).

Beginning at Pentecost in 31AD, God has been giving the Holy Spirit to all those whom He calls who obey Jesus Christ—their personal Savior—by repenting and accepting baptism (Acts 2:38). The book of Acts shows that God is now offering salvation to the Gentiles, as well as to the children of Israel. “And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also (Acts 10:45). During the Millennium, the Holy Spirit will not just be available to a select few, as it is today; it will be given to all who are willing to obey God and receive it (Ezekiel 36:24–28).

Ambassador College or the *World Tomorrow* telecast or the *Plain Truth* magazine. Their calling—and their response to the *Tomorrow’s World* telecast and magazine, and to the Work of the Living Church of God—is proof that God’s Holy Spirit is still at work and available today, as God continues to call additional sons and daughters into the Body of Christ.

Meanwhile, even while zealous new Christians are being called, many long-time Christians who have God’s Holy Spirit are in idleness, letting their reward slip away. “But many who are first will be last, and the last first” (Matthew 19:30). We must never forget that God’s Holy Spirit empowers us to do His Work. We were not called just for our personal salvation. The spirit of Philadelphian love leads and motivates us to share the truth of God as a witness to the world. The Apostle Paul knew his duty to Christ. “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship” (1 Corinthians 9:16–17).

Though some long-time Christians look inward and forget about the Work, each new Christian called and converted now is the fruit of God’s Holy Spirit working in us. Each is a jewel in our crown—proof of the love that the Philadelphian spirit has built in us. “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you

should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another” (John 15:16–17).

We are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Galatians 5:14). If we love ourselves enough to strive to enter the Kingdom of God, we should similarly strive to help others receive the Truth that leads to receiving God’s Holy Spirit. We should want to help and serve all whom God wills to be in that Kingdom

with us—even laying down our own lives for them (John 15:13).

The Feast of Pentecost celebrates God opening His salvation to all men and women who will accept His offer of eternal life. It reveals His great love for human beings, through His willingness to place His very life within us, begetting us so that we may be ultimately born into His Family.

“And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him”

(1 John 4:16). We have been called and been given God’s Holy Spirit now, so we can have His power in us to do the Work. “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). The end is near, and the time to work is short (Revelation 12:12). Let us fulfill God’s calling by using His Spirit to show His love to one another—and to the world—as we bear witness to all in word and deed. This is the true meaning of the Day of Pentecost. LCN

### Turn Off the “Gossip Channel”

*(continued from page 9)*

es us to use it for good. Why? “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1). When James mentions the word teacher, he is primarily referring to ministers, who “receive a stricter judgment.” They receive a stricter judgment because they can either help people or hurt people—even drive them away from God’s Church—by the wrong use of their position or the wrong use of their words (1 Timothy 4:16). This is a tremendous responsibility!

However, this admonition applies to all teachers, not just ministers. When we take it upon ourselves to pass along information we have received, we are in a sense taking on the role of a teacher, and thus becoming subject to a stricter judgment. Even if we are trying to do good by sharing what we know, we must be very careful. No matter whether one is a false minister, a recognized teacher, or merely a well-meaning person trying to “do good” by gossiping, one who leads another person astray—even accidentally or unknowingly—will come under condemnation (Luke 17:1–2). We must be careful, because without even knowing it we could easily be spreading false doctrines or false ideas, as well as incorrect facts.

As a true Christian, do not let yourself become an interested listener to heresies or evil words spoken against others. The next time you feel the urge to tune into the “gossip channel” or pick up the latest tabloid, remember the words of Paul: “That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you” (1 Thessalonians 4:11). LCN

### How To Pray When You Are Discouraged

*(continued from page 13)*

focus shifts away from preoccupation with the physical realm and our own problems, and onto our Father in heaven. As we focus on what He is doing, and on what He will do, we begin to focus on His plan for us, and He will respond by helping to guide not only our steps, but also our thoughts. As we focus on His role as our helper—the One who will never leave us or forsake us—we will more deeply realize that “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

We can take great comfort from Paul’s words: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). When our lives seem difficult—when it seems that God’s answers to our prayers are not what we had hoped—we can meditate prayerfully on this scripture. In doing so, we can begin to grasp the “bigger picture,” gain a proper perspective on our problems, and realize that God’s plan is much larger than we are—that He can bring good out of even the most painful experiences.

However, in order for that good to come about in our lives, we must continue to focus on God. We must not allow ourselves to become distracted by self-pity. We must not allow ourselves to be led astray by Satan’s wiles. Rather, we must continue to focus on the One whom we thank for making us a part of His grand and masterful plan. When we feel discouraged, we can turn our minds to the Apostle Paul’s words, which give us hope: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). LCN



**How Does God View You?***(continued from page 3)*

that “democracy” is the best form of government that we are not *genuinely* able to believe and to focus on the reality of God’s form of government? Do we realize how very **important** that is to God—so important that we should *daily* be preparing for our participation in *that very form of government* within the next several years?

In the lead article of the March-April 2005 issue of *Tomorrow’s World* magazine, I wrote *in depth* about this whole matter. Please note carefully the following excerpts from that fundamental article:

“Many of our own early leaders *deeply understood* that not just any people, anywhere, could make democracy successful. In fact John Adams—the second President of the United States—stated, ‘We have no government armed with the power capable of contending with human passions, unbridled by morality and true religion. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.’...

America is not only in danger of becoming a ‘judgocracy’ because of the activist judges changing our entire way of life. We are also increasingly becoming an ‘oligarchy’ because of the domination of our thinking, our corporations and many facets of our lives by a *very small* and very powerful group of people. Although this is **not** what the “founding fathers” envisioned, it is what the U.S. is swiftly becoming.

Therefore, *why* should we possibly imagine that this type of government ought to be

imposed on the primarily uneducated masses of the Middle East who have *no familiarity whatsoever* with this form of government or with democratic institutions, and who are often opposed to democracy on very strong religious grounds?....

Although democracy is one of the best *humanly* devised forms of government, it is not the “wave of the future” by any means. Truly, we all need to learn and understand *God’s* form of government—for the true saints of God will soon be called on to administer *that form of government* in *Tomorrow’s World*. All genuine Christians—

soldiers to carry out the needed tasks, so U.S. overseas commitments will *have to be curtailed* in the near future—perhaps even if a draft is reinstated. All of this is definitely *weakening* America’s national capacity to respond to crises around the world. And those crises are *increasing*, not decreasing. For in addition to the Palestinian uprising, the government of Iran is boldly plowing ahead with its intent to manufacture *atomic weapons*! Yet President Bush knows that he cannot possibly attack Iran, and at the same time carry on wars in Afghanistan and Iraq while simultaneously putting out “brush-fires” all around the world! So the “democratic experiment” in the

**God’s plan has never been—nor is it now—to use “democracy” as His means to govern human beings. We in God’s Church especially should understand that one of the main reasons we are called now is to prepare us to be the kings and priests actually ruling this earth—under God’s government, not democracy—in Tomorrow’s World.**

and *all* men of goodwill—should learn to pray with *understanding*, ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done **on earth** as it is in heaven’ (Matthew 6:10).”

My friends, even though I wrote the above paragraphs a little more than a year ago, they should resonate even more today! For, even as I write, most thinking people are *deeply concerned* that Hamas—the Palestinian *terrorist* group—has won a majority of the votes in the recent Palestinian elections. Meanwhile, several newspaper reports in leading publications are telling us that U.S. military forces are “stretched too thin.” American equipment is wearing out, and there are not enough

Middle East is certainly going to come apart, for these and *many* other reasons.

God’s plan has *never* been—nor is it now—to use “democracy” as His means to govern human beings. We in God’s Church *especially* should understand that one of the main reasons we are called now is to prepare us to be the *kings* and *priests* actually **ruling** this earth—under **God’s** government, *not democracy*—in *Tomorrow’s World*. God wants us to “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). Therefore, we must truly *understand* that democracy is **not** part of that process, and we must be preparing ourselves in a *realistic* way to help

Christ carry on *God's form of government in the near future!*

As God looks down from heaven, does He see *you* and *me* actually doing this? Does He find that our *whole hearts* are in the work of preparing for His coming government, which will soon take over the entire world?

### Genuine Love and Service

How much more than in years past are you and I growing in the practice of *outflowing concern* for our brethren and for **all** human beings? In doing this, how well are we growing in *fully* obeying the second great commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39)?

Are we becoming more clean and pure and honest in our daily lives? Do we genuinely *cry out* to God for help in overcoming the common tendency to "compromise" with the world?

I know—and many of *you know*—that many in God's Church, members and Church youth alike, *drink too much alcohol*. Some *still smoke* cigarettes or even use drugs occasionally. Some use foul or filthy language, tell lies, abuse their wives or children or *lust* after people to whom they are not married. Some even commit fornication or adultery! Others go to the opposite extreme and become self-righteous, judgmental and often *unforgiving*. They quickly forget Jesus Christ's powerful instruction: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14–15).

As I have preached in sermons for years, we are the "Church of the forgiven." We have *all* had to be forgiven of our past sins in order to receive God's Spirit and be in God's Church. So we absolutely **must** learn to love and forgive one another. We *must* "receive back" those who have

sinned or left our fellowship and want to come back, *as long as* they come back repentant and genuinely trying to be better, to be cooperative and to be a positive part of our Church fellowship. Anything less will simply *cut us off* from the very God we think we are serving!

We must each do the best we can—with God's help—to exude *loving kindness* and *service*. Proverbs 19:22 instructs us, "What is desired in a man is kindness, and a poor man is better than a liar."

Are *you* trying to be the most patient and kind and thoughtful individual you can possibly be, with the help of God's Holy Spirit? Are *you* trying to be patient, truly humble and *forgiving* of others?

In thinking about a happy marriage and family, we often cite the example of the Proverbs 31 woman. For she is a woman who works hard, has great integrity, *serves* her husband and family and is certainly what you would call a "giving person" in every way. One key verse, however, is vital in understanding the full extent of such a woman's humility, self-discipline and character: "She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the *law of kindness*" (v. 26). How many women do you know—and how many **men**—who practice the "law of kindness" when they speak to others? That is something that we *all* need to work on.

For, when all is said and done, God wants every one of us to have for one another, in every way, the same *genuine outflowing concern* that Jesus Christ has for us. This is a kind, serving and a **sacrificial** love. It is a love guided by *wisdom*—wisdom that at times will even correct others in love, for their own good, as Jesus had to correct the scribes and Pharisees in His day. It is a love that is "soft-hearted," yet not "soft-headed!" For giving people things they should not have, or placing people in

positions they do not deserve—where they could even *hurt others*—is not genuine love and wisdom!

As the people of God, we should study, meditate and pray day by day that we may more fully obey the teaching of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who stated: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34–35).

Jesus' instruction was "new" in that He Himself exemplified the *perfect* way to love, so His disciples could learn to love each other "as I have loved *you*." In this, He shows that a definite "sign" radiates from those of us in God's Church, through the love we show one another. By our Christ-like love, "all will **know** that you are My disciples."

As we examine ourselves before Passover—and *throughout the entire year*—we should constantly meditate on how to fulfill Christ's two great commandments ever more perfectly. We should try to think about how God "views" us as He looks down from heaven. Does He see that we *truly* love and obey Him? Does He see that we are willing to *learn* and *practice His* government, and **genuinely** prepare for His soon-coming Kingdom by doing as He says, and by *participating enthusiastically* in the very Work of God—assisting Jesus Christ in preparing for His soon-coming government over this entire world?

We dare not "kid" ourselves. We dare not slack off and "compromise" through a process of self-deception. For it is the great **God** we must please. In the end, it is *He*—not those around us "in the Church," or in the world—who will give us our reward. As the aged Apostle John wrote before he died, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in *deed* and in *truth*" (1 John 3:18). ☐

## World Events Are Speeding Up!

(continued from page 2)

involved with this program, since we certainly need more leaders in God's Church—and in His ministry—today!

As the prophesied European Empire rises up, and as the Muslim nations turn more and more against Europe and the United States and bring about the prophesied "King of the South," we will begin to experience more of the events predicted to occur at the end of this age. The "great" earthquakes Jesus predicted in Luke 21 and Matthew 24 will shock many. The continuing wars all over the world, the alternating drought and storms, the fires and floods, the coming severe famines and the horrifying disease epidemics will intensify over the next several years and will certainly shake mankind's complacency. Brethren, our God will get the attention of human beings through His mighty intervention! We need to do all we can to reach out to a confused humanity with the message of Christ's coming Kingdom; the message of the true way of life that will bring ultimate peace and joy to the world, and of the purpose God has in giving us life and making every single human being in His image. We in God's Church have a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to do all of this—and certainly to powerfully warn our Israelitish brethren of the very-soon-coming Great Tribulation and traumatic events at the end of this age, so they may act ahead of time and be protected.

Dear brethren, please be zealous in obeying Jesus' command to "watch" world events! Watch especially the Middle East and Jerusalem, as I have often encouraged you to do. For remarkable events are truly beginning to occur, which the Church of God has prophesied for decades. A recent article in the *Washington Post* gives this insight into the situation there:

"The goal of reuniting Muslims under a single flag stands at the heart of the radical Islamic ideology Bush has warned of repeatedly in recent major speeches on terrorism. In language evoking the Cold War, Bush has cast the conflict in Iraq as the pivotal battleground in a larger contest between advocates of freedom and those who seek to establish 'a totalitarian Islamic empire reaching from Spain to Indonesia.'

The enthusiasm of the extremists for that vision is not disputed. However unlikely its realization, the ambition may help explain terrorist acts that often appear beyond understanding. When Osama bin Laden called the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade

Center and the Pentagon 'a very small thing compared to this humiliation and contempt for more than 80 years,' the reference was to the aftermath of World War I, when the last caliphate was suspended as European powers divided up the Middle East. Al Qaeda named its Internet newscast, which debuted in September, 'The Voice of the Caliphate.'

Yet the caliphate is also esteemed by many ordinary Muslims. For most, its revival is not an urgent concern. Public opinion polls show immediate issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and discrimination rank as more pressing. But Muslims regard themselves as members of the *umma*, or community of believers, that forms the heart of Islam. And as earthly head of that community, the caliph is cherished both as memory and ideal, interviews indicate.

That reservoir of respect represents a risk for the Bush administration as it addresses an issue closely watched by a global Islamic population estimated at 1.2 billion. Already, many surveys show that since the U.S.-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, Muslims almost universally have seen the war against terrorism as a war on Islam.

'Why do you keep invading Muslim countries?' asked Kerem Acar, a tailor in central Istanbul. 'I won't live to see it, and my children won't, but one day maybe my children's children will see someone declare himself the caliph, like the pope, and have an impact'" (January 14, 2006).

Indeed, as you can see, the coming "Mahdi"—or "King of the South" (Daniel 11:40-45)—will soon arise and have a dramatic impact on world events. He will unite many of the more than one billion Muslims. He will be a genuine menace to the coming European Empire, which will have to crush this threat in order to continue exploiting Middle Eastern oil to further its military ambitions.

Also note that the Vatican is now "muscling in" on Jerusalem and trying to gain more and more power in that part of the world—as we have for years indicated would happen. In a recent article on the "Jerusalem Newswire," Stan Goodenough reports:

"The Roman Catholic Church says the Jewish state cannot be trusted to exercise control over the city of Jerusalem—ancient and eternal capital of the people of Israel.

In a statement whose arrogance and contempt he seemingly could not see, the Vatican's legal advisor in Israel, David Jaeger, told an international conference in

Haifa Tuesday that Jerusalem was too important a city to leave in the hands of either 'Palestinians' or Jews.

Jaeger's view was that the status of Jerusalem required the approval of the international community as a whole.

Ironically the Vatican, which claims to be spiritual home to one billion of the world's Christians, rejects the biblical stipulation granting everlasting possession of ancient Canaan, inclusive of Jerusalem, to the Jewish people.

Since 1947 it has sought to have Jerusalem internationalized, confident that with Rome's massive global constituency the pope will be able to exercise substantial control over the city.

Jaeger is historically on solid ground when he says the Palestinian Arabs should have no say over Jerusalem. The city has never been an Arab capital and the 'Palestinians' have no historic or national rights to it (or to any other part of Israel's biblical homeland).

The Jews, by contrast, have venerated the city as their holiest site for over 3,000 years. Israel is the only nation that has ever had Jerusalem as its capital. During centuries of exile, Jews everywhere prayed daily to return to Jerusalem in order to be able to once again worship their God in this place" (January 4, 2006).

Before the end of this age, the coming "prince" of the revived Roman Empire in Europe will apparently grant

the Jews an opportunity to once again offer animal sacrifices on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. But this opportunity may be cut short by the revocation of a treaty he makes with the Jewish people, as the final "Great Tribulation" begins in earnest (Daniel 9:26–27). As you and your family carefully watch all these events, this should certainly make your watching and reading the news *far more exciting and meaningful!* For God's word *will stand*. All these events are beginning to occur, and *will occur* with increasing intensity over the next several years of our lives.

We in God's Church are the *only ones* who truly **understand** the real meaning of the events that are now winding up the present 6,000 years of human existence under the influence of Satan the Devil. God grant that we take advantage of this understanding, *appreciate it* and draw ever closer to our Father—and to the Living Jesus Christ, our High Priest, sitting at His right hand.

May God inspire *all* who are called to "get with it"—to be truly zealous in His service and in preparing for Christ's return as the *literal* King of kings, to rule over the nations of this earth!

With Christian love,



## Upcoming *Tomorrow's World* Telecasts

**WGN:** Sunday, 6:00 AM ET

**Inspiration:** Friday, 10:00 PM PT

**VISION (Canada):** Sunday, 5:30 PM ET; Monday-Friday, 3:00 AM ET

Air Date	Broadcast Title
March 5	How to Overcome Satan
March 12	Who Controls the Weather?
March 19	Does God Heal Today?
March 26	America's Moral Meltdown
April 2	The Power of God in History
April 9	Prepare for Christ's Second Coming
April 16	Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days?
April 23	Framework for Prophecy
April 30	Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

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

## Living Youth Camp in Argentina



On Saturday, December 31, at about 10:00 p.m., we joyfully started our journey to our campsite in Sierra de la Ventana, a beautiful town located some 74 miles from Bahia Blanca, Argentina.

Around 21 persons from the Bahia Blanca and Buenos Aires congregations participated. We felt a spirit of adventure from the moment we departed. There was a great storm, and the closer we came to our destination, the more we felt like we were at the center of this storm. The wind blew strongly, the lightning tore the sky and the thunder shook us. This was a great experience for the children. The wonderful thing was that they were not afraid but, as they heard every thunder, they commented, "It's like the voice of God."

We arrived at the Yapay campsite after midnight, and set up our tents, after asking the Eternal to delay the rain until we had gone to bed. He, as a loving Father, granted us our wish. It rained throughout the night.

The next morning, it was as though creation had washed its face very well to receive us, and the birds had rehearsed their best melodies to wake us. We had breakfast, we organized work teams and we went out on our first hike to contemplate God's handiwork in every stone and flower.

Our oldest campers, Carlos Navarrete and Santiago Canclini, were in charge of the Bible Studies. Though addressed to the children and teens, we all learned something from them.

Mr. Navarrete spoke on "How to Seek the Right Way" based on the book of Proverbs. Mr. Canclini spoke on "Lessons from the Bees," comparing the honeycomb to the lives of God's people.

On Sunday night, Aaron Bravo and Vicente Arcuri made a stand and roasted a lamb. Three beautiful days went by, with hikes, conversations, games and swimming in the stream. During these days, we became better acquainted and we learned to love each other more and to accept each other as we are, because even though we are so different and have different personalities, we are joined by the most precious love of Christ and the eternal hope of the Kingdom.

—Estela Bravo

### Births

Gabriel and Nohemi Ortega, of the LCG congregation in Queretaro, Mexico, are happy to announce the birth of their son, *Neri Zuriel Ortega* on January 8. He weighed 6.7 pounds and was 20 inches long at birth.

Ray and Ro Pereira, of the LCG congregation in Charlotte, North Carolina, are pleased to announce the birth of their son, *Caleb Ray Pereira*. He was born on Tuesday morning, January 31. He weighed 6

pounds, 6 ounces, and was 19 inches long at birth. His eight-year old sister, Naomi, is very happy.

Justin and Angie Wilsbach, of the LCG congregation in Nashville, Tennessee, announce the birth of their daughter, *Melanie Kay Wilsbach*, on August 24, 2005. She weighed 7 pounds, 8 ounces at birth and measured 21 inches. She is the first grandchild of Mr. and Mrs. Larry Wilsbach of the LCG congregation in Chicago, Illinois.

## Auckland, New Zealand



**Brethren from Auckland, New Zealand.**

## Philippines Living Youth Camp



**Twenty-seven campers took part in Living Youth Camp 2005, December 27-29, at the Edlimar Farm and Spring Resort in Bukinon, Philippines.**

## *Fall Creek Falls Family Weekend*

Sixty-five brethren gathered, December 23-25, for a Winter Family Weekend getaway at Tennessee's Fall Creek Falls State Park. Brethren came from Chattanooga, Crossville and Nashville, Tennessee, as well as from Alabama, Georgia and Missouri.

The weekend's activities began with a Friday evening fried chicken potluck meal, shared with fellowship around a cozy open-hearth fire. Sabbath split-sermons by Area Pastor Mr. Bob League, and by Mr. Bill Oswald, an elder visiting from Missouri, were both instructive and inspiring. After an appetizing and nutritious lunch, Mr. League then conducted a Bible Study, including a question and answer session to which many contributed with genuinely thoughtful questions.

After feasting on a delicious dinner, brethren enjoyed a captivating "variety fun show." Entertaining performers brought the house down with a jam-packed night of engaging and comical stand-up, skits, music, singing, dancing and games. In his closing remarks, Mr. League observed, "Of the several years that we have had this outing, this by far has been the most relaxed, the most peaceful and the most enjoyable so far!"

Brethren departed on Sunday morning after a hearty breakfast, thinking of ways to expand and improve next year's Winter Family Weekend.

—James Sweat

## Anniversaries

*Mr. and Mrs. Gordon and Cindy McCarty* of the LCG congregation in Hawkins, Texas, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary on January 29.

*Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Bachmeier*, of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on November 30, 2005. The Calgary congregation recognized this wonderful milestone with a gift and card. Joe and Dolly have six children, 13 grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren.

## Ordinations

*Mrs. Suzanne Pyle* of the LCG congregation in Charlotte, North Carolina, was ordained a deaconess on the Sabbath of January 21. The ceremony was performed by Messrs. Meredith, Ames, Apartian, Crockett and Davis. Mrs. Pyle and her husband, Mr. Wayne Pyle, have been serving the brethren of the Headquarters congregation for many years.

*Mr. Wallace Smith* was ordained an elder on the Sabbath of February 11, by evangelist Dr. Douglas Winnail and Regional Pastor Mr. Rand Millich. Mr. Smith and his wife, Jeanine, have been serving in the Kansas City, Missouri area under Mr. Millich since June 2005, as part of the Ministerial Training Program.

## In Loving Memory

*Mr. John L. Albright*, of Irwin, Pennsylvania, died on February 8. He was 59 years old. Baptized in 1966, he was a longtime faithful member of God's Church. He attended weekly Sabbath services in Akron, Ohio. His funeral service was conducted on Monday, February 13, at the Vincent Rodgers Funeral Home in Irwin, by Mr. Eng Monson. He is survived by his two sons, who live in Florida.

*Mrs. Louise A. Newton*, of Zanesville, Ohio, died on Friday November 4, 2005. Baptized in 1983, she was blessed with 35 grandchildren and 40 great-grandchildren. The funeral service was conducted on November 9, at the Hillis & Hardwick Funeral Home in Zanesville, by Mr. Eng Monson.

## Little Rock Spokesman Club



The Little Rock Spokesman Club got off to an exciting start with its very first meeting held on Saturday night, December 10, 2005. The club has 20 members, one of whom drives all the way from Memphis, Tennessee, to participate.

## Wedding

*Mr. Michael Wellborn* and *Miss Kristin Flowers* were joined in marriage on December 18, 2005, in Ringgold, Georgia. The wedding ceremony was performed by Mr. Bob League in the company of friends, family and brethren. The newlyweds will reside in Ringgold, Georgia and attend services in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

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

# Commentary

## A Time of Restoration

By Martin Fannin

Not long ago, a friend and I stood on a mountain crest located on the Cumberland Plateau. Before us were broad grassy meadows, created from land that had been strip-mined. Although major damage had been done to the land through the strip-mining and the clear-cutting of timber, reclamation was producing positive results. The meadows were pleasing to the eye and the animals we saw near the edge of the meadow greatly enhanced the view.

When the first Europeans arrived on the North American continent, they found a land with abundant natural resources. In biblical terminology, it might have been described as a “land flowing with milk and honey.” Unfortunately, these resources were not managed in a wise and considerate way. All the major resources—including water, forest, grasslands and animals—were badly used and abused. Most, if not all, of the flora and fauna were grossly mismanaged. Why did it happen this way? It happened because the overall motivation was one of selfishness and greed! God’s way of “give”—of loving your neighbor as yourself—was not practiced. Instead, the human way of “get”—the way of self-interest regardless of the cost—was followed.

From the beginning, God instructed humanity in the proper care of His environment. We read that “the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). Notice that it

was a garden—a place of beauty and fertility. Proper care for it would enhance and maintain its beauty, fertility and value. Sadly, human beings have ignored God’s instruction. As a result, the land, plant and animal life—as well as human life—have all suffered.

Can people take care of their environment? Can they be good stewards of the land and other resources? Yes they can, if they practice the way of love toward God and love toward neighbor, and reject the harmful way of indulgent self-interest that ultimately is not good for “self” or for anyone else!

In general, human beings have always shown the proclivity to abuse and misuse natural resources and to pollute the environment. They have done this with little or no thought for the present, much less the future. However, a change is coming—a change that will be prompted by the return of Jesus Christ. Revelation 11:18 tells us that when Christ returns, He will destroy those who destroy the earth.

In Acts 3:19–21, we read about a restoration of all things after Christ’s return, when even the present waste places and deserts will become like the Garden of Eden (Isaiah 51:3). Finally, human beings will listen to God, their Creator, and will do what they should have done from the beginning. They will properly “tend and keep” their garden. When they do, it will be a blessing to all humanity—and all creation.

---

The above is adapted from one of the many commentaries, discussing vital topics facing our world, available at the [www.lcg.org](http://www.lcg.org) and [www.tomorrowworld.org](http://www.tomorrowworld.org) Web sites.