

Living Church News

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Do You Radiate FAITH in God?

Dear Brethren and Friends,

One of the most important qualities Herbert W. Armstrong radiated was deep faith in the God of the Bible. I often say “God of the Bible” because so many people in this world have a terribly distorted concept of God. And many are taught only to have “faith in themselves.” While a right balance of confidence in our own human ability is important, genuine faith in the Creator God of the universe is always essential.

If you have really proved to yourself that a personal, all-powerful God exists, and that He literally inspired the Bible, you must learn to build on that, for then you will increasingly “see” God’s hand in a multitude of current events, in situations in your own life and in His guidance and blessing in leading His Church. All of the outstanding servants of God—certainly including Mr. Armstrong—had that kind of understanding and that kind of faith. As prophetic events speed up in our world today, we will more and more profoundly need this genuine faith in God. For although these end-time events will seem exciting to those of us who understand, they will also be sobering.

As Jesus Christ said, describing the events that will occur before His Second Coming: “And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.... Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:11, 28). Those who genuinely understand and have **faith** will have a sense of exhilaration as they see the end approaching, for they will know that all these seemingly horrifying events will eventually work for good (Romans 8:28).

But, when these final prophesied events start occurring with full force, even many of God’s own people may become fearful, disoriented or even bitter—because some of us will experience at least part of the suffering of those days. Remember, ancient Israel experienced the first three of the ten plagues God poured out on Egypt (Exodus 7–8). After the third plague, God warned that if no repentance was forthcoming, He would send “swarms of flies” on Pharaoh and the Egyptians. However, God also promised: “And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there, in order that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the land. I will make a difference between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall be” (vv. 22–23).

Since Christ is “the same, yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8), we can expect a similar pattern of events to occur in the near future. This

may mean that some of us will have to suffer from the soon-coming fires, floods, storms, drought, earthquakes and even disease epidemics! Remember that Jesus told His followers: "You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls" (Luke 21:16-19).

The "patience" Jesus said we should have in this time of trial and testing will come from our having real **faith** that God will—in the end—deliver us and bring us into His everlasting Kingdom. We will have this patience if we truly believe that God means what He says in the Bible!

Genuine FAITH

God tells us, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Brethren, we develop that necessary faith in God as we "**diligently seek Him.**" If you and I are not regularly, zealously "seeking" God by truly **studying** the Bible and "feeding on Christ"—and by continuous prayer and drinking in of His inspired word—then we will **not** grow in the real faith that our Father in heaven expects us to have! Jesus said: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who **feeds on Me** will live because of Me" (John 6:56-57).

Nearly all of us, in our daily lives, are surrounded by the presence and often the interference of radios, telephones, televisions, computers, sirens wailing up and down the street, airplanes overhead—and many other distractions. Men like Abraham, Moses and David did not have to contend with any of these! Because of these distractions, it can be so easy to put off or avoid any long, uninterrupted Bible study, or deep thought and meditation about our relationship with God, or time spent in heartfelt prayer and **fasting**—which we must realize we need. Satan, through our human civilization, has indeed surrounded us with physical things and distractions to keep our relationship with God shallow and often sporadic!

So we must literally fight to make sure that we do not allow ourselves to become shallow, lukewarm or worldly! It is a continuous battle!

The Apostle Paul was inspired to use a military and sporting analogy in describing our Christian struggle. Near the very end of his life, he wrote, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have **kept the faith**" (2 Timothy 4:7). Each of us, like Paul, must really learn to **trust** that God will take care of us in every phase and facet of our lives. Before God gives us eternal life and glory, He wants to be absolutely sure that we trust in **Him**, in His ways and in His leading. We need to realize fully that He is **in charge**, overall, of the major events of the world, and of the major direction of His Church, in spite of human faults and problems. We must genuinely **trust** His leading,

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Do You “See” God in Current Events?

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

After describing the series of events prophesied to occur at the end of the age, Jesus Christ instructed His followers, “**Watch** therefore, and **pray** always that you may be counted worthy to **escape** all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36). He also said, “Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (v. 28). So not only are we to “watch” these ongoing prophesied events, but they should inspire us and stir us to look forward to the Kingdom of God—and to be encouraged that it is coming soon as these prophetic events unfold! This is a vital part of helping us to becoming “Philadelphian” Christians!

Yet, brethren, I find that many Church members do not seem to have much knowledge of current affairs. They are not “tuned in” to prophetic events. They do not even subscribe to a daily newspaper or check current events on the Internet regularly.

Many times I have visited our own brethren and found that this is the case. I also saw this, years ago, when I lived in Oregon and Mr. Armstrong suggested that I attend the “Sardis” Church of God—as we had no local congregation there ourselves. During an entire summer there, on the summer break from Ambassador College, I would eat with and visit in the homes of the local

brethren. I saw that these people lived in their “own little world.” They talked about the weather, the farming conditions and their family and friends. Practically no discussion ever came up about prophetic events, or about the need to reach the whole world with the Gospel while we still have the opportunity for this type of “Big Picture” discussion!

This type of atmosphere might be reasonable among God’s people, except that we are **right now** living at the **end** of the age! Right now, we should be excited about it. We should “see” God’s hand in bringing about the awesome world events that He has prophesied, which we have known about for so many years. We should realize that far more of these prophetic events are coming together than at **any time** in human history! No, things are not “the same as always!”

As the Charlotte Observer reported last March 21, “The 2005 hurricane season was the worst since record-keeping began more than 150 years ago. Hurricane Katrina, which struck the Gulf Coast on Aug. 29, brought the most destruction. Last year’s season included 15 hurricanes, more than double the six that typically strike, said Lixion Avila, a hurricane specialist at the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami.”

Remember, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ commands us to “watch!”

Think! Has there ever been a time like this in human history when mankind could annihilate itself from this planet? Yet Jesus said that just before the Great

Tribulation, this is how it would be. “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21–22).

Right now, brethren, virtually all the news sources indicate that Russia has far more nuclear weapons than would be required to destroy humanity! Russia’s leader, Vladimir Putin, is increasingly being described as a virtual “dictator” who is taking to himself increasing power and authority along the lines Adolf Hitler did before the Second World War! Have you thought and prayed about this?

Also, China is gaining increasing nuclear capability. China is the largest nation on earth in terms of population and, increasingly, is competing with the United States and the western nations in world trade and world influence. Following is a significant quote from WorldNetDaily.com, last March 19: “Here’s one that tops the Dubai Ports World deal—but, so far, no one is complaining. U.S. taxpayers are lending Westinghouse Electric Co. almost \$5 billion to build nuclear power plants in China—even though the company, based in Pennsylvania, is about to be sold to Japan’s Toshiba Corp., and even though the company is currently owned by British Nuclear

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How To Avoid Deception

Biblical principles can help you avoid being misled!

By Douglas S. Winnail

One of Scripture's clearest warnings concerns the danger of religious deception. Jesus said: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ' [I am a Christian, or a minister of Christ], and will deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5). The Apostle Paul warned that, before Christ's return, there will be a great falling away and many will be deluded because they did not love the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 10-11). Paul also wrote that the time will come when people will "turn their ears away from the truth" and will believe fables (2 Timothy 4:3-4). The Apostle Peter warned, "there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly [subtly] bring in destructive heresies... and many will follow their destructive ways... [and] deceptive words" (2 Peter 2:1-3). These prophetic warnings have become a sobering reality!

The biggest dilemma for many of God's people today is trying to determine where God is working. Who is preaching the truth? Whom do you believe? In recent years, more than 300 splinter groups have emerged from the Worldwide Church of God. Add this to the more than 600 denominations spawned by the Protestant Reformation that shattered the Roman Catholic Church. All these groups claim to be of God, teaching divine truth. But can all these groups, which disagree about so many doctrines, be right? The Bible tells us that Christ is not divided, and that true Christians should "all speak the same thing" and "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). The spiritual chaos of our age indicates that many are obviously deceived. But how can you know who is right and who is wrong? How can you avoid being deceived? How can you navigate through the perilous waters of deceptive religious ideas that may appear to be based on the Bible? Why has God allowed such confusion to exist?

A Fundamental Deception

One of the greatest deceptions among professing Christians today is that you are saved if you simply believe in Jesus. This idea is based on a faulty understanding of both God and Scripture. Many "believe" in Jesus but neither understand the Bible nor keep God's commandments. The Bible reveals that only those whom God calls will understand Scripture and the plan of God (John 6:44, 65). We are also told that God is not calling large numbers today (1 Corinthians 1:26-27) and that, of those called, only a few will be chosen (Matthew 20:16). Those chosen to be among the firstfruits in the Kingdom of God must be faithful (Revelation 17:14). They must avoid being deceived, and must endure to the end (Matthew 24:11-13). They must overcome obstacles, and must persevere during trials (Revelation 3:10-12). They must remain on course and finish the race (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). If we are deceived, or if we consistently fail to overcome the tests and trials we encounter, we will not receive a reward. The Bible reveals that there is more to Christianity than simply believing in Jesus! We need to understand how God works in the lives of those He is calling.

God Tests Those Whom He Calls!

When God called Abraham, He challenged him to "walk before Me and be perfect [blameless]" (Genesis 17:1). Abraham's challenge was to learn to live by God's instructions and to make godly decisions. Jesus gave His disciples the same instruction (Matthew 5:48). God tested Abraham in a variety of circumstances (Genesis 22:2, 12). Through this testing, God was able to discern Abraham's character and true priorities (Genesis 18:19). God was preparing Abraham for a big responsibility—to become the Father of a nation God wanted to use as an example for all mankind (Genesis

12:1–3; Deuteronomy 4:1–10). Before giving Abraham this incredible opportunity, God had to know that he would make the right decisions.

God dealt with ancient Israel in a similar manner. He tested the Israelites over the issue of the Sabbath—whether they would observe it according to His instructions (Exodus 16:4). He tested Miriam and Aaron (Numbers 12), the leaders closest to Moses. He tested the entire congregation of Israel (Numbers 14), and the leaders under Moses (Numbers 16), to see whether they would follow God’s appointed governmental structure. In each case, many failed their tests, losing their lives and their rewards because they were deceived. God also warned the Israelites that they would have to recognize false teachers and reject those teachers’ misleading ideas (Deuteronomy 13:1–4). We must learn the same lessons. This is part of God’s purpose for mankind (Deuteronomy 30:15–20). God desires that we develop wisdom and character, so we will be qualified to reign with Jesus

how can you make such decisions? What guidelines should you use? Thankfully, the Bible gives us plenty of advice!

Focus on Truth

Jesus explained that a house built on solid rock will withstand trials, but a house built on sand will be swept away (Matthew 7:24–29). His point was that if we base our beliefs solidly on Scripture, we will prevail, but we will be deceived if we trust in our own ideas. Jesus said, “Your Word is truth” (John 17:17). Paul reminded us: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). Even so, many of today’s professing Christians doubt the authenticity and authority of the Bible, because of the influence of skeptics in our secular society. People today feel free to discount and discard Bible passages if they do not agree with their

By taking time to compare our thoughts, attitudes, ideas, motives and priorities with the standards God has outlined in the Bible, we can develop more of God’s mind. Without regularly examining ourselves in the light of God’s word, we can deceive ourselves.

Christ. Future leaders in the kingdom of God must pass crucial tests (1 Peter 4:12–19). We cannot afford to be deceived!

The Bible reveals several aspects of God’s testing program. God tests us by watching how we react in real-life situations, and by examining the decisions we will make when faced with a choice. We must also examine ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:28–32). This is a vital lesson of the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. By taking time to compare our thoughts, attitudes, ideas, motives and priorities with the standards God has outlined in the Bible, we can develop more of God’s mind. Without regularly examining ourselves in the light of God’s word, we can deceive ourselves. To avoid being misled, we must also learn to evaluate ideas that we receive from others. Paul admonished Christians to “test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). John cautioned that Christians should “not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). The early Church had to distinguish between authentic apostles and frauds (Revelation 2:2). We face the same situation today. You cannot afford to be deceived by impostors parading as apostles, prophets and ministers of God. But

own opinions. This leads to much confusion about religious ideas. Radio, television and the Internet have become a supermarket for self-proclaimed religious teachers. We, however, can avoid being deceived by professing Christianity if we ask simple but pointed questions, and compare the world’s answers with what we find in our Bibles.

Does the Bible command us to observe Christmas and Easter, or are these pagan practices to be avoided? See Jeremiah 10:1–4. Did Jesus and the Apostles observe the Sabbath and Holy Days, or did they observe Sunday? See Luke 4:16, Acts 17:2 and 1 Corinthians 5:7–8. Was Jesus’ gospel about the coming kingdom of God or just about His life, death and resurrection? See Mark 1:14–15. Did the Apostles preach the same gospel as Jesus, or a different one? See Acts 8:12 and Acts 28:23, 31. Do Christians go to heaven when they die? See Acts 2:34 and 13:36. Do human beings have immortal souls? See Ezekiel 18:4, 20. Are sinners tormented forever, or are they burned up and extinguished? See Malachi 4:1–3. Is the Holy Spirit the power of God, or a person? See Acts 8:18–19. Do all professing Christians receive the Holy Spirit, or is it only given to those who obey God’s instructions upon repentance, baptism and the laying on of

hands? See Acts 2:38, Acts 5:32 and Acts 8:14–19. Do God’s people need a ministry today, or is everyone a minister? See Titus 1:5–11, 1 Timothy 3 and James 3:1. Do we need government in God’s Church? See Acts 15. Is it scriptural for churches to select their own leaders by popular vote, or does God provide other means? See Acts 6:1–4 (compare Exodus 18:17–26), Galatians 1:15–16 and Galatians 2:7–8. Is it important to know the identities of the Israelite nations? See Genesis 48–49, Ezekiel 3 and Ezekiel 33. Is this knowledge important to the New Testament Church? See Matthew 10:6. What is the real purpose for human life? See Romans 8:14–18 and 1 John 3:1–3. The list could go on.

From Scripture, we can prove the truth about all these issues! We need not be deceived by any of the conflicting ideas that we hear. Each of us must ask where we first learned the truth, and who is still teaching that truth plainly and powerfully? Can you recognize who has begun to compromise, change and discard the truth? If you follow such individuals or organizations, you will be deceived! Jesus told His disciples: “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). We can avoid being deceived if we focus on the truth, prove the truth and hold on to the truth. God’s truth does not change—it is the solid rock on which we must build!

Define the Mission

Many today, even in God’s Church, do not fully understand why we are called and what we are to be doing. Individually, we are called to learn to live “by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). We are to be “lights” to a darkened world, showing humanity the proper way to live (Matthew 5:14). As Christians, we must “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). Our challenge is to learn to think and act in any situation as Jesus would—to develop the very mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). Jesus did not argue with God or try to reason around the clear intent of Scripture; He obeyed His Father’s instructions (Philippians 2:8) because He knew that was best (Deuteronomy 4:40; Proverbs 3:1–2). Many people today have been deceived into believing that they can disregard God’s instructions in Scripture as long as they continue to pray, go to church and be “nice” to other people. The Bible calls this attitude hypocrisy (Romans 2:17–24; James 2:10)! We must avoid it.

The Bible clearly states the Church’s mission: to proclaim the good news of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins (Matthew 1:21) and preach the gospel of the coming kingdom of God (Mark 1:14–15; 16:15; Acts 8:12). The gospel is to be preached as a witness—to let the world

know what is coming—even though many will not believe what they hear (Matthew 24:14). The Church also has the responsibility of feeding the flock—teaching those who are called how to live by every word of God (John 21:15–17). Another aspect of the Church’s mission is to warn the world of the sobering events that will soon mark the end of this age and the return of Christ (see Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). This is a major task of God’s end-time Work (see Ezekiel 3; 33). Neighborly acts of kindness and charitable actions in the community may be good, but even the greatest act of physical kindness or charity cannot be a substitute for the clearly stated mission of God’s Church! Those who presume that we can pick and choose elements from Christ’s biblically defined mission are promoting deception. We need to ask ourselves: What is the group I am part of doing to carry out Christ’s mission? What am I doing? Are we focused on the mission God outlined, or are we misled, busily doing our own thing?

Know Your Enemy!

The Bible reveals that Satan is the predominating influence in this world who blinds, deludes, divides and deceives whomever he can (2 Corinthians 4:4). Many Christians today seem to think they are immune to Satan’s influence because they have been “called” into the Church, yet Peter warned us to “be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Peter was speaking from experience, because he had been deceived several times by his own ideas, and by listening to others’ misguided ideas (see Matthew 16:21–23; Galatians 2:11–14). Paul warned the Church that “savage wolves will come in among you... speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:29–30). Paul was concerned that people would be deceived by false doctrines spread by false teachers who claimed to be ministers of Jesus Christ, but were in reality agents of the devil (2 Corinthians 11:1–15). Satan’s efforts and activities spawn confusion and deception (1 Corinthians 14:33).

When we consider the doctrinal confusion that pervades the Church and the world today, it should be obvious who is causing the problems! Even within God’s Church, some of the deceptive ideas circulating include:

- The Work is over; only Mr. Armstrong was commissioned to preach the gospel.
- We do not need a ministry or government in the church. Since we are all ministers, we can select our own leaders—we do not need to let God make those selections.

- The world is full of “Christians” who do not fully understand the Bible or keep the commandments.
- God’s people need not agree on basic doctrines, and individuals can decide doctrine for themselves based on their own feelings.
- We do not need to keep the Passover on Nisan 14 even though the Bible specifies that date.
- We can decide what calendar to follow based on our own reasoning.
- There will be no place of safety during the tribulation.
- The United States is not Manasseh in end-time prophecy, and the British-descended nations are not Ephraim.
- Understanding the modern identity of biblical nations is not relevant for understanding end-time prophecy.

The list could go on, but this should illustrate what can happen when people are deceived into ignoring what

Many of Jesus’ listeners were familiar with His background (Mark 6:3). Peter and Paul openly revealed their names and their personal histories for all to judge (see Galatians 1:11–24). If you are going to follow some group, you had better know something about it and where it got its ideas, or you risk being deceived!

The Bible also states that “in a multitude of counselors there is safety” (Proverbs 11:14). If you seek advice and check appropriate sources before jumping to a conclusion, you can avoid being deceived. Do not just believe the latest idea you hear or see in print. Check out what critics have to say before you buy! Determine what is valid and what is not. Recognize that our vanity prompts us to think that we do not need any help, and that we can figure everything out on our own. This is a prescription for failure, which only fools choose to follow (Proverbs 12:1, 15). Paul advised Christians to evaluate everything


To avoid being deceived, we must be able to recognize the fruits of deception, and be able to recognize who is promoting these deceptive ideas (1 Peter 5:9; Ephesians 6:11). Jesus said that we should recognize false teachers by their fruits. He warned that many who call themselves Christians are actually deceived because they do not recognize their enemy or his methods (Matthew 7:15–23)!

the Bible plainly states. To avoid being deceived, we must be able to recognize the fruits of deception, and be able to recognize who is promoting these deceptive ideas (1 Peter 5:9; Ephesians 6:11). Jesus said that we should recognize false teachers by their fruits. He warned that many who call themselves Christians are actually deceived because they do not recognize their enemy or his methods (Matthew 7:15–23)!

Think Critically

Many assume that Christianity is only about loving, trusting, believing and having faith and hope. Yet Jesus warned His disciples to “be wise as serpents and harmless as doves,” because they would need to deal with “wolves” intent on their deception and destruction (Matthew 10:16). As Christians, we must learn to think—and to think critically! In Proverbs, we are told “the first person to plead his cause seems right”—until he is cross-examined (Proverbs 18:17). It is risky to believe the first idea that you hear, or the first book that you read! We should always ask: Who are these people promoting a novel idea? From where do they get their authority? What is their track record? How has God used them over time?

carefully—he did not say “just believe” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Peter warned that ignorant and unstable individuals would twist Paul’s writings out of context (2 Peter 3:16). It is instructive that people who want to do away with the Sabbath, the Holy Days, the dietary laws and various other doctrines commonly use Paul’s writings to try to prove their points, in spite of Peter’s clear warning! We need to be alert to this. To avoid being deceived, we must learn to think critically. This is part of a Christian’s responsibility.

God has warned His people that Satan has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). Satan deceived Eve, and led Adam to shirk his leadership responsibilities. He misled Peter, and deceived Paul before his calling. Satan prompted Ananias and Sapphira to lie and lose their reward (Acts 5:1–11). He sowed discord between Paul and Barnabas in an attempt to disrupt preaching the gospel (Acts 15:36–41). Satan, along with those he has influenced, has wreaked havoc on true Christians down through the ages. As Christians, we must be able to recognize and resist Satan’s deceptive methods. That is why God provides clear warnings and helpful principles in Scripture. Our challenge is to use this information so we can avoid being deceived! 

Coping with Frustration

By J. Charles Ogwyn

Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed by feelings of frustration? Certainly we all face frustrating situations from time to time. If we are not careful, we can become so completely focused on the source of our frustration that we lose sight of everything else. In doing so, we lose sight of the much more important issues that are facing us—such as whether we are fulfilling the roles and responsibilities God has given us, and how we are growing spiritually as we handle frustrating situations.

Scripture tells us, “there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). This means that, no matter what emotions we are wrestling with, others have wrestled with them as well. So we can and should look to Scripture, to learn how others coped with those very same feelings. We can read the stories of the men and women in the Bible, and can try to understand what it must have been like to “walk in their shoes” when they experienced situations like our own.

Perhaps you feel frustrated by a situation that you cannot fix. When you ask God to fix it, nothing happens. The situation just drags on, or even grows worse. Are there any examples in Scripture where the people involved must have felt similarly? Certainly, there are! With this in mind, we can look at some sources of frustration, and consider several descriptions from the Bible of people wrestling with feelings of frustration.

The Example of Job

Although none of us has experienced such loss and suffering as Job, we know he wrestled with many of the same emotions we do—including frustration. Job’s calamity came upon him suddenly, but it did not end quickly. We are told that his trial lasted for months before he repented (Job 7:3). In addition to losing his children, his servants, his health and his wealth, he also suffered from sleep deprivation! Throughout his suffering, his close friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar tried to “help” by pointing out that his problems must be the consequence of his secret sins (cf. Job 4:7–8).

Try to imagine what Job must have felt like as his trial continued—seemingly without end. Certainly, Job was frustrated, hurt and confused. He was so frustrated that he even wished he had never been born (Job 3)! He did not understand what was happening, or why God had “let him down” and allowed him to suffer. Job was frustrated not only because of his trial, but also because he could not understand the reason for it. To make matters worse, Job’s three close friends became part of his trial, giving him their own misguided opinions instead of offering sympathy.

As the months dragged on, Job tried to understand why his trial continued. He asked God for relief, but nothing happened. His suffering dragged on, and gradually worsened. His “friends” kept picking at him,

and he continued to suffer from lack of sleep.

Job was discouraged and frustrated, and his situation was not improving. We can see the depth of frustration he wrestled with, but what can we learn from Job’s frustration? Instead of following the example of Job’s friends, trying to answer the question they could not answer, we can take a different approach. The Apostle Paul wrote, “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).

To understand how this verse applies to Job, we must look beyond the physical. Romans 8:28 explains a spiritual principle, so unless we look at the spiritual dimension along with the physical, we cannot understand this verse in action. Physical life is transitory, and is meant to prepare us for what lies ahead. In this life, we are preparing to become part of the God family—preparing to work under Christ in the Kingdom of God (cf. Hebrews 2:5–8; Revelation 20:6). How do we prepare for this awesome future? We prepare by building God’s holy and righteous character in our lives.

God is so powerful that He can turn to His advantage (and ours) even what appear to be the most severe setbacks. What was the outcome of Job’s trial? Job built holy and righteous character. He came to a much deeper understanding of God, and he was blessed physically with

twice as much as before (cf. Job 42:5–6, 10).

What about Job's children and servants, who lost their lives at the beginning of his trial? They will yet have their opportunity to become a part of God's family for all eternity!

The Example of Eli's Sons

Perhaps your frustration stems from a problem that has continued for a long time, with seemingly no change. Maybe you cannot fix the problem, and you feel that God is unwilling to help. The account of Eli the priest and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, can teach us impor-

“who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless?” (1 Samuel 26:9). You could not stop Eli's sons from profaning even the sacrifice that you brought to God, since if you would not cooperate with them, they would take it by force (cf. 1 Samuel 2:16). Nor could you have made your sacrifice in private, because to do so was a death penalty offense (Leviticus 17:8–9).

Certainly, it would have been incredibly frustrating to see the tabernacle of the God you serve profaned in this way. It would have been terribly disheartening to see others led astray by Hophni and Phinehas. It would have been heart-wrenching

hoping he would indeed do what needed to be done. God was also preparing Samuel to lead the nation. To the Israelites, it may have seemed that God was allowing the problem to continue for decades, but God was working to achieve His purpose. And God did bring justice to pass, exactly as had been prophesied (1 Samuel 4:11).

Even when it may seem that God is not hearing our prayers, we must remember that He **does** hear—and He **will** intervene. While we wait for God's intervention, we must continue to grow spiritually and build His righteous character in our lives by the way we handle our frustration. We must remember that our hope is

Focus is the key to coping with—and overcoming—frustration. Frustration builds when we focus on the cause of our frustration, and it abates when we focus on something bigger.

tant lessons about situations when it seemed that the people could not do anything to fix a problem, and it must have seemed as though God was not hearing their cries.

When we are introduced to Eli's sons, we are told about their great wickedness (1 Samuel 2:12–17, 22–24). These evil priests profaned the sacrifices and offerings that were brought to the tabernacle. They made no effort to hide their adulterous affairs, and they were also leading others astray! These two wicked sons of Eli clearly deserved the death penalty, yet they were allowed to continue in the duties of the priesthood.

Imagine what it must have been like to be a God-fearing Israelite at that time. You would have been powerless to enforce the death penalty upon the wicked priests; that responsibility fell to their father, Eli. It would have been a sin to take the matter into your own hands—

to cry out to God day and night about this abomination, yet day after day see absolutely no change whatsoever in the situation. Over time, more and more Israelites withdrew from God. Some followed Eli's sons, while others withdrew from the tabernacle out of discouragement and frustration.

In the midst of this, God was very upset about what was happening. He was working speedily in His way to bring this evil to an end. Yet most of the Israelites would not have recognized God's involvement in the situation.

What is the lesson? Often, when we are wrestling with frustration and there seems to be no change, we are not seeing the “big picture”—that God is indeed involved, and His purpose is being worked out actively (cf. Luke 18:1–8).

In the matter of Hophni and Phinehas, God was working with Eli—being patient with him and

not in vain, and we must not let our frustration at what seems to be God's inaction prevent us from growing through the trial. Scripture tells us that “in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Galatians 6:9). God promises that one who “sows to the Spirit” (v. 8) while waiting on Him will reap—in His time. This often requires us to wait patiently.

Focus Is Vital

The ability to focus is a very powerful tool. As with any powerful tool, the result can be absolutely awesome if the tool is used in the right way, but can be terribly damaging if the tool is misused. Are you using the tool of focus in the right way? If your sense of frustration is growing, you may be misusing the tool of focus, by concentrating more

continues on page 21

Christian Enthusiasm

By Rod McNair

Would you describe yourself as an “enthusiastic” person? Can you grow in Christian enthusiasm even if you are not an “extroverted” person? Should you?

Enthusiasm is often misunderstood. Some think of enthusiasm as simply being a “cheerleader”—a “rah-rah” type of person making a lot of noise and chatter! While enthusiasm may sometimes involve clapping, cheering and other outward signs, it often does not—and often involves much more! Properly understood, enthusiasm is vital to our lives as Christians, and we should all aspire to grow in Christian enthusiasm.

Successful people in the world have often described enthusiasm as one of the essential elements for success. Even secular leaders have learned the importance of enthusiasm in motivation and leadership. Without enthusiasm to see a task through, our talent, ability, opportunity and wealth mean nothing.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, a poet and philosopher living in the early 1800s, said: “Every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is the triumph of enthusiasm. Nothing great was ever achieved without it.” Charles Schwab, president of Carnegie Steel and U.S. Steel in the late 1800s, said: “A man can succeed at almost anything for which he has unlimited enthusiasm.”

Anyone familiar with the legendary American football coach, Vince Lombardi, will recognize his tongue-in-cheek motivational style in his famous statement: “If you aren’t fired with enthusiasm, you will be fired with enthusiasm!”

How enthusiastic are we in our daily lives, and in our walk with Christ? Are we as enthusiastic as King David? This son of Jesse was truly an enthusiastic person. Scripture shows us how David was enthusiastic when he personally accompanied the ark of God on its return from

the house of Obed-Edom. As he entered the city of David at the head of this procession, David was so overwhelmed with joy and excitement that he and the other Israelites danced—with all their might! “So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet. And as the ark of the LORD came into the City of David, Michal, Saul’s daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the LORD” (2 Samuel 6:15–16). David was truly enthusiastic in his relationship with God.

But was David only showing enthusiasm by jumping around, shouting and whirling? His leaping and shouting were not the totality of his enthusiasm—anyone can leap and shout just as a result of stubbing a toe! It was not so much David’s activity as his attitude that made him enthusiastic.

Enthusiasm for the Work

Later in life, David was just as enthusiastic about preparing raw materials for the work of the temple. “Then David said, ‘This is the house of the LORD God’... So David commanded to gather the aliens who were in the land of Israel; and he appointed masons to cut hewn stones to build the house of God. And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails of the doors of the gates and for the joints, and bronze in abundance beyond measure, and cedar trees in abundance... Now David said, ‘Solomon my son is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all countries. I will now make preparation for it.’ So David made abundant preparations before his death” (1 Chronicles 22:1–5).

When David understood that it would not be his job to build the temple, he nevertheless endeavored to play at least a supporting role by

preparing raw materials—and he prepared enthusiastically until his death! In his enthusiasm for God’s work, David gathered “one hundred thousand talents of gold and one million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond measure” (v. 14)—a tremendous sum even today!

Supporting the work by quietly laboring, even in a supporting role, takes effort and enthusiasm. Why? Because **enthusiasm is more than a particular activity—it is a state of heart.** Solomon, David’s son, saw in his father an outstanding example of this character trait, and wrote this timeless advice: “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Do we bring enthusiasm to everything we do in life? Enthusiasm truly is a key to success—especially to spiritual success.

Enthusiasm in Giving

The Apostle Paul understood the need for enthusiasm in many different aspects of our lives. He wrote part of his second letter to the Corinthians to commend them for their enthusiasm in giving—and to prod them to keep it up! “Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority” (2 Corinthians 9:1–2). The Christians at Corinth were showing their enthusiasm by being willing to give, and they were also stirring up others’ zeal!

Paul continued: “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:6–7).

God is not trying to squeeze every penny He can out of you and me. He is changing our hearts so that we tithe and give offerings voluntarily and heartily—even cheerfully.

What good would it do for God to have billions of sons and daughters who would grudgingly and grumblingly obey, but would “drag their feet” all the way? God is indeed teaching us to obey Him, but—**just as importantly**—He is teaching us to enjoy obeying Him!

This is not always easy. When we come face to face with our carnal nature, it is not fun or comfortable to admit we are wrong, or to let go of our disobedience. It is hard to be cheerful in such a circumstance, yet we are called to strive for that high and difficult standard—not just compliance, but cheerful obedience, even when it hurts.

Parents need to teach this to their children. It is not enough for siblings to “say” that they are sorry when they hurt or offend a brother or sister. They must genuinely mean it! And parents can usually tell whether their children truly “mean it” or not, by observing their body language and tone of voice. Is God any different? Can He not read us better than we can read our children? Is He pleased by half-hearted compliance, or is He seeking wholehearted and cheerful obedience in us in all our giving, including our tithing and giving offerings?

Enthusiasm in Service

In his first epistle, the Apostle Peter explained a vital principle of enthusiasm. Though it was written

Enthusiasm is not just being a “flash in the pan.” Enthusiasm is often best displayed by a slow and steady effort, maintained over a long stretch of time. Our goal is not just to be enthusiastic for 30 minutes, or 30 days—or even 30 years. Our goal is to be enthusiastic and excited about God’s way of life for all eternity!

primarily for leaders in the Church, we can all apply it to ourselves, whether or not we are in the ministry: “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly” (1 Peter 5:2). The word “willingly” can mean “voluntarily.” Do we step forward when there is a need in our local congregation? Are we eager to sign up when there is a call for volunteers to help in a particular area? Are we observant, even without being asked, to see the needs in our local congregation, and to think of (or suggest) ways to step in and help? If we do volunteer, do we show up on time, every time?

Enthusiasm is not just being a “flash in the pan.” Enthusiasm is often best displayed by a slow and steady effort, maintained over a long stretch of time. Our goal is not just to be enthusiastic for 30 minutes, or 30 days—or even 30 years. Our goal is to be enthusiastic and excited about God’s way of life for all eternity! Our enthusiasm is to be a consistent and long-term commitment! We must never think that steady and quiet service behind the scenes does not require enthusiasm. In one sense, it takes **more** enthusiasm to maintain steady and consistent effort over

the long haul. Many brethren in our local congregations show this consistent enthusiasm, and it is of inestimable value.

Enthusiasm in Church Attendance

Another simple way of expressing our enthusiasm for God and His way of life is simply by showing up to Sabbath services! “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24–25).

It requires effort and sacrifice simply to come to Sabbath services. With rising gas prices, long drives and smaller congregations than in the past, some can become discouraged and stop attending regularly. However, Hebrews shows how vitally important it is that we do come to services regularly, even if it is difficult—especially as the end nears. We need to “stir up love” in each other. That word means to “sharpen” or “incite.” One of the reasons we come to Sabbath services is to help increase others’ enthusiasm and our own, simply by being there and fellowshiping!

How many times have you arrived at Sabbath services feeling tired, run-down and weary, yet by the time you left you were encouraged, excited and energized—ready to tackle the world again? A big part of that comes from just rubbing shoulders with brethren, absorbing others’ enthusiasm. We need each other, and it is a great blessing when we can be with our spiritual family each week.

There are appropriate reasons to stay home from services, such as having a contagious or chronic illness. But we should not let an occasional emergency become a pattern just because we find it more comfortable. If we begin to waver in our Church attendance, our Christian enthusiasm will suffer. The more we stay home from services, the weaker our enthusiasm will be, the less resolve we will have and the more the cares of this life and the world will weigh us down. We will become easier targets for Satan to attack, because our defenses will be down.

“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward... ‘Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back [begins to wane in his enthusiasm], my soul has no pleasure in him.’ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:35–39).

Enthusiasm under Duress

We need to retain our enthusiasm, even when we endure trials. In fact, our enthusiasm is a key to endur-

ing our trials! Winston Churchill said: “Success is going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm!” It is enthusiasm that will keep us going and pull us through, even when the road is hard and our load is heavy.

Proverbs 17:22 says: “A merry [or enthusiastic] heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.” In Proverbs 18:14, we find: “The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?” We must carefully nurture and cultivate enthusiasm in our lives—it is what will sustain us in tri-

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als—especially if it is enthusiasm for God’s way, driven by a vision of God’s plan for us.

But how do we get this kind of enthusiasm? If we are searching not for superficiality, but for an enthusiasm of the heart, from where does it come? How can we begin to develop real enthusiasm—for the Work, for giving and serving, for supporting one another and for worshiping God—that will sustain us for all eternity? We must go to the source.

That source of genuine godly enthusiasm is the Creator of the universe, Himself! After all, God was pleased with His creation—He said “it was good”—and He is excited about His laws, His ways and the fruits they produce. He is especially thrilled about having Spirit-born human beings join His family for all eternity!

Growing in genuine Christian enthusiasm requires tapping into the source—God and Jesus Christ—more deeply and profoundly, for they have enthusiasm and zeal that literally moves the world! Regarding Jesus Christ’s place in the expansion of God’s Kingdom throughout the universe, Isaiah wrote: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be

called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6–7).

When God is excited about getting something done, it gets done! Would you like to tap into the zeal of God in your life, in a more profound way than ever before? Would you like to have more of His thoughts, His mind and His excitement about life?

You can! In fact, this is what God wants for us. Interestingly, the word “enthusiasm” itself contains a key to growing in this vital character trait. The word “enthusiasm” comes from the Greek “en” (meaning “in” or “within”) and “theos” (meaning “God”). Yes, even the word “enthusiasm” itself has to do with God living in us! The more God lives in us—the more we have His mind and thoughts—the more we are excited about what He is excited about, and the more we experience true, Christian enthusiasm.

When encouraging Timothy to use the Spirit of God—and therefore the mind of God—Paul exhorted him to “stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:6–7). God’s Spirit, if we use it, can help us have less fear—and more enthusiasm!

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul encouraged the brethren to “have the same mind.” However, they were not to have just any mind—they were to have God’s mind. “Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind... Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God...” (Philippians 2:2–6). It was the joy set before Jesus Christ that enabled Him to humble Himself to the point of crucifixion (Hebrews 12:2). That joy—or enthusiasm—for God’s plan sustained Jesus in the worst trial of His life. We, too, can have His joy and enthusiasm, through His Spirit in us, to sustain us in our darkest trials.

Paul wrote much about suffering, and about maintaining our enthusiasm while we suffer. His life was a living testimony to the enthusiasm we can have when Christ is living in us. Paul wrote: “If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His

Spirit [which] bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. 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 8:10–11, 16–18).

Paul displayed genuine Christian enthusiasm. He knew the future awaiting the saints of God, a future next to which any suffering in this life seemed insignificant by comparison! Paul was excited about reigning with Christ in His Kingdom, and this excitement helped him endure seemingly unbearable trials. If we really seek God, He will help us have a perspective like Paul’s—positive, forward-looking, upbeat and enthusiastic.

When God is excited about getting something done, it gets done! Would you like to tap into the zeal of God in your life, in a more profound way than ever before? Would you like to have more of His thoughts, His mind and His excitement about life?

As we draw near to the end of this age, religious activism is on the rise. Sectarian violence fills the daily news, as old religious differences boil over into dangerous fanaticism. We know that Bible prophecy foretells a “Christian” fanatical movement in the end-time—led by the beast and the false prophet—which will enforce the worship of a false god (Revelation 13:11–15). We also know that the final era of God’s Church—Laodicea—will be noted for its predominantly lukewarm attitude (Revelation 3:14–19), characterized by a waning of genuine enthusiasm.

Against this backdrop of extremes, Jesus Christ is issuing a call to us. It is a call for balanced, obedient, and godly enthusiasm for His way, His laws and His plan, with the help of His Holy Spirit. This approach should be evident in many areas of our life—our focus on His Work, our enthusiasm in giving and serving, our Sabbath attendance and even our endurance in trials. Remember that Jesus Himself has admonished our generation to maintain our enthusiasm: “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I come quickly! Hold fast what you have that no one may take your crown” (Revelation 3:10–11). ☐

The Righteous Pruner

By Don Davis

God uses many agricultural examples to explain what He is doing here on the Earth, as He works out His plan for mankind. Parallels drawn from husbandry make His analogies obvious to the converted listener. The people of God are the sheep of His pasture (Psalm 100:3). In referring to the righteous and the wicked, Jesus said: “All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’” (Matthew 25:32–34).

Jesus also used the plant kingdom in His parables, to depict both those who are good and those who are evil in the Father’s eyes. “But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn [the kingdom]”’” (Matthew 13:29–30). In Matthew 13:41, we find that the angels are the reapers.

What horticultural example applies to those God has called? Does the Father simply let them grow wild like the berry vines in a field, or trees in the deep forest? Or, are we cared for as a farmer lovingly tends an orchard or a vineyard? Jesus gave us the answer: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine-dresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away;

and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:1–2). Anyone who has ever grown roses knows that if you do not prune a rose bush, it will return to a wild state. Any nourishment it receives will cause it to grow long, thorny and good-for-nothing branches, instead of producing beautifully colored roses.

If God Has Called You, Expect Pruning!

A true child of God, called by the Father and given into the hand of Jesus Christ for safekeeping and training, must expect pruning—which comes in the form of correction. When we receive this special attention, it is proof of God’s love for us. When trials come, a son or daughter of God should not be surprised. “And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges [prunes] every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons” (Hebrews 12:5–8).

When Christians are pruned—even by correction that may humanly seem to be too harsh, unjust or undeserved—we are storing up for ourselves a greater reward in God’s kingdom. And we can withstand that correction—and grow! “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be

tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

God did not call us to fail! If He was not sure that (with Christ’s help) we could successfully endure the pruning He must give us, we would have been left in the world until the second resurrection. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. ‘I and My Father are one’” (John 10:27–30). Only we can remove ourselves from the hands of Christ and the Father—but to do so would be to reject the very salvation we are seeking!

God’s Love for Humanity

What kind of trial would cause you to leave the truth of God or take you out of His Work? Could you endure disgrace and rejection in the eyes of others? Could you face the threat of an excruciatingly painful death? What could make a son or daughter of God turn aside from worshiping the Creator who loves mankind so much that He wants to share eternity with us? “As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing,

shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:36–39).

Our Savior, Jesus Christ—the second member of the Godhead—loves us so much that He was willing to risk His eternal life to save all the human family. Yes, it was a risk! Had Jesus slipped just once, He would have died for His own sin and we would not have a Savior. The Word, divesting Himself of glory and divinity, became flesh. He offered up His sinless body to a vicious scourging so we might have physical healing in the flesh, and sacrificed His perfect life for our sins, by the shedding of His righteous blood as He hung in agony, nailed to the crucifixion stake. Then, through the resurrection, He became our High Priest, interceding on our behalf before the throne of God. “Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death, whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it” (Acts 2:23–24).

Called To Be Corrected

No matter what accusations, humiliations, degradations or insults are presented to us in this temporary life, they are less than nothing compared to the glory God has in store for us when Christ comes. “But on this one will I look:

on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:2). We are all sinners, and we all have faults—which Christ is trying to correct by pruning us.

Trials come in many forms, affecting our finances, our health and our relationships with other people. Sometimes we may think a trial is not justified; we may even feel that we are receiving correction based on falsehoods or lies told about us. But this does not make our correction any less beneficial! “Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. **For to this you were called**, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: (1 Peter 2:18–21). Jesus Christ was perfect, yet He was **murdered** because His humility and righteousness threatened the religious leaders of His day. “If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation” (John 11:48).

Years ago, when my son Mark was 10 years old, I punished him for something I later found out he had

not done. After I apologized to him, he graciously accepted. Then, I asked, “How many times have you done something you should have been punished for, but were never caught?” As a mischievous smile crossed his face, he answered, “Plenty.” I suggested that he simply apply the spanking he had received to one of those times. He nodded in agreement, and I hugged him, thankful for his honesty.

Even when we feel we have been unjustly corrected for something we did not do, we can be grateful that we were not swiftly punished for all the sins we committed in the past, and we should thank God for His mercy and long-suffering toward us. “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:5–7).

The True Source of Persecution

Satan the devil is seeking to destroy the plan of God. He knows that he has a very short time left before Jesus Christ will return and remove him from his position of

Clarification

Readers have asked us about two apparently contradictory statements in the first two paragraphs on page 15 of the March-April 2006 *Living Church News*. The article *correctly* stated, “The wave sheaf offering was held each year on the Sunday that fell during the Days of Unleavened Bread” (p. 15, first paragraph). We regret that the article’s next paragraph may be misleading, as it fails to account for those years when the Holy Day and the wave sheaf offering would occur on the same day. For a more detailed explanation of this point, read “Counting Pentecost” by Mr. John H. Ogwyn, in the March-April 2005 *Living Church News*.

rulership over the earth. Satan knows that he has lost the game, but he is still playing for points! The devil wants to hurt God by depriving Him of the sons and daughters He has called. Satan does this by trying to plant—then water and fertilize—any seeds of spiritual bitterness we may allow to take root in our minds. We must be “looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled” (Hebrews 12:15).

As Christians, we must never let our guard down—not even for a moment! We cannot afford to take a “vacation” from prayer, Bible study, fasting and meditation! When we do stray from God, Satan is always at hand, waiting to rush in upon us. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you” (1 Peter 5:8–10). God allows us to experience trials when we fail to follow Him fully, but He will rescue us when we cry out for deliverance. “‘Now, therefore,’ says the LORD, ‘Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.’ So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm” (Joel 2:12–13).

The devil enjoys pointing out our faults and sins to other people, and to our Father in heaven. But in the end, Satan will be silenced—when God intervenes to remove

him from his seat of power. “Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “‘Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death’” (Revelation 12:10–11). How can we overcome Satan? By our testimony to the world—even at the peril of our lives—that Christ will soon return to the earth to set up the globe-girdling government of God!

Regardless of the Source

No matter what the source or provocation of a trial, a Christian will rise above the hurt, no matter how painful the correction. Even when a trial comes about unjustly, a Christian will endure it patiently—no matter how hurtful the insult, how damaging the false accusation, or how saddening the betrayal. Even when our reputation and character are falsely maligned, we know God will use the trial to strengthen us—for our eternal benefit.

King David suffered the pain of having friends and family—and peers whom he loved and admired—turn against him. “For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng. Let death seize them; let them go down alive into hell [the grave], for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them” (Psalm 55:12–15).

Facing such disappointment, David knew where to go in times of trouble. He knew Who would uphold him. “As for me, I will call upon God, and the LORD shall save me” (v. 16).

Not Much Longer Now

Those who are called, chosen and faithful will not need to wait much longer for God’s intervention—for His salvation from the persecutions and corrections that sometimes seem to wash over Christians like the waves of the sea. Until then, we can be happy in the trials we must endure, because they serve Christ’s purpose. “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6–7).

The pruning process, which every son and daughter of God must endure, “is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer” (2 Thessalonians 1:5). Though often painful, this pruning will bear wonderful fruit now and for eternity. God’s Spirit “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. 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 8:16–18). As Christians, when the Righteous Pruner does His work in us, we should accept it with gratitude. LCN

Feast of Tabernacles 2006

The 2006 Feast of Tabernacles will begin with an opening night service on Friday evening, October 6. The Last Great Day this year is on Saturday, October 14.

In the United States, there will be Living Church of God Feast sites at the following locations:

- Copper Mountain, Colorado
- Oxnard, California
- New Braunfels, Texas
- Paducah, Kentucky
- Daytona Beach, Florida
- Poconos, Pennsylvania

In Canada, there will be three Living Church of God Feast sites:

- Canmore, Alberta
- Orford, Quebec
- Western Shore, Nova Scotia

In addition, there will be Living Church of God Feast sites in dozens of other countries around the world. Sites that may be of particular interest to English-speaking brethren include:

- Ayr, Scotland
- Evian, France
- Ocho Rios, Jamaica
- George, South Africa
- Albany, Australia
- The Entrance, Australia
- Taupo, New Zealand

As of May 1, more than 75 percent of the Living Church of God members in the U.S. and Canada had already registered for the Feast. If you are a Church member in the U.S. or Canada, and you have not already registered, please do so as soon as you can. If you live outside the U.S. or Canada, consult your Regional Office for Feast site pre-registration information.

Site coordinators will need a July 1 “head count” of those planning to attend each site, so please register by July 1 if at all possible. This will help site coordinators ensure that rooms of the appropriate size are available for events, and that enough food is prepared.

Please note that some hotels have reserved blocks of rooms for the Living Church of God at rates that expire as early as July 5, so the sooner you can make

your housing reservations, the more affordable your reservations are likely to be.

Each Living Church of God congregation in the U.S. and Canada has been assigned to a Feast site, but the Festival Office expects to be able to honor nearly all transfer requests. Unlike previous years’ procedures, this year’s online registration gives e-mail notification of transfer approval in just minutes in most cases.

To register, go online to the www.cogl.org Web site. If you have not previously set up an account in the “MyLCG” area, you will need to do so before you can register. Follow the instructions on screen, and once you have received your password you can then log in and complete the online Feast registration process.

What happens if you decide to change your plans? If you wish to change your registration—perhaps to add family members or transfer to another site—just go back to the online Festival registration area and update your information.

When you register, please consider volunteering to serve in some capacity at the Feast. Many brethren have experienced that the joy of the Feast is enhanced when one is able to be of service to others. There are many different ways to serve—from ushering, to singing in the choir, to staffing an information table—and all are greatly appreciated.

Site coordinators will be updating the Church Web site with event information as it becomes available, so please remember to check back from time to time to see what new activities and opportunities may be available to help you enjoy your Feast.

If you do not have access to a computer, your congregation’s Festival Advisor can complete the registration process for you. This year’s new online registration process could not have been successful without the service of the many Festival Advisors, who have helped answer the brethren’s questions, and helped them work through occasional technical problems and other difficulties. If you are one of those who cannot register online, your local Festival Advisor can give you a printed registration form and then register on your behalf.

The Festival Office is working hard to help everyone in the Living Church of God have their “best Feast ever.” As the Feast draws nearer, and anticipation grows, do not wait until the last minute to make your plans. Prepare now to have a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles 2006!

Do You “See” God...?*(continued from page 3)*

Fuels Ltd. And, so far, no one in the U.S. government is showing any interest in scrutinizing the sale over the transfer of nuclear-power technology—or in halting the loan from the Export-Import Bank.”

Additionally, as you may have read, President Bush recently approved the United States assisting India—the second largest nation on earth—with its nuclear development! Obviously, our leaders know nothing about biblical prophecy or how God warns modern Israel that its “lovers”—allies—will turn against it! Meanwhile, the news is full of information about Iran moving steadily ahead toward developing nuclear weapons. America and Britain are wringing their hands over this development, seemingly unable to do anything since China and Russia object! Yet Iran is one of the nations President George W. Bush has labeled as part of the “axis of evil”—one of America’s primary enemies!

I trust we all know the vivid description of the “great whore who sits upon ‘many waters’” (Revelation 17:15). This great “woman” is a false church who is the “mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth” (v. 5). Prophecy indicates, at least indirectly, that many of the “daughters” will come back to their mother. As you read world events, you can see that this is happening in a frightening manner. A recent article tells us, “Dr. Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, is expected to make his first formal visit to Pope Benedict XVI in Rome this year in an attempt to heal the centuries-old rift between the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches” (The Times of London, March 11, 2006).

Most of you older brethren will remember that the Church has long

taught that at the time of the end, children will rise up and be insolent and oppressive toward their elders. As Jesus Christ “is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8), the attitude for which God punished ancient Israel and ancient Judah will apply today. Remember, God prophesied of them: “I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. The people will be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbor; the child will be insolent toward the elder, and the base toward the honorable.... As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths” (Isaiah 3:4–5, 12). Many dozens of articles have come out in the media—as most of you know—indicating that this is certainly becoming increasingly common today.

One recent example is an article by newspaper columnist Kathleen Parker, answering New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd who had asked, “Are men necessary?” Parker commented: “I wrote in response that, yes, men are necessary, if not to certain women, then certainly to children, who, despite the creative inventions of many modern mothers, seem to love their daddies. At least they love the idea of Daddy, since so few children these days get to have a real one. A third of all American children are born to unwed mothers and half will sleep tonight in a house where their biological father does not live.... A society in which women are alone, men are lonely, and children don’t have fathers is nothing to celebrate. And a future world filled with fatherless children—bereft of half their identity and robbed of a father’s love, discipline and authority—won’t likely be a pleasant place

to live” (Charlotte Observer, March 23, 2006).

Indeed, brethren, our entire society is becoming less and less “a pleasant place to live.” As we read about all the burgeoning crises evident all over this planet—the horrifying atrocities against women and children in Darfur and many other nations in Africa, about women and children being oppressed in many of the Muslim nations, and about the frankly horrifying condition of the U.S. when you consider the massive national debt, the oil crisis and the crisis of American leadership—it should be obvious that this world desperately needs Jesus Christ’s Second Coming as King of kings!

Also, brethren, we who understand the meaning of these events have the opportunity and the responsibility to powerfully warn our Israelitish brethren—and all others to the extent we can—that the Great Tribulation will truly come primarily upon the British-descended and American peoples soon, unless we repent of our sins! As God’s Word powerfully reminds us: “Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, ‘Surely we did not know this,’ does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?” (Proverbs 24:11–12).

So let us go all out in proclaiming the full message of Jesus Christ—including the end-time warnings. Let us follow Christ’s direction to “watch” these world events zealously. And let us heartfully “deliver” those around us who are being “drawn toward death” as the greatest tribulation in human history comes closer and closer. Please be sure that you do your part to watch and to respond to the end-time events taking place in front of your very eyes! ☐

Do You Radiate FAITH in God?

(continued from page 2)

and have faith in God and in the Christ of the Bible to direct matters according to His will. We need to show God that we will follow His direction of our activities and our lives through all eternity. So, we must **demonstrate** to God—through a life of faith and overcoming—that we genuinely love Him and trust Him **now!** Otherwise, God knows that He might end up having more “Lucifers” around, who would turn against Him as did Lucifer, who became Satan.

Therefore, by **immersing** ourselves in fervent prayer and earnest Bible study—drinking in of God’s mind, and of the way He thinks and acts—we must build a deep trust that **God is there**, and that He will always back up His Word and direct all things **for good** in the end. Through Paul, God described Abraham to illustrate this kind of faith. “He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also **able** to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for **righteousness**’” (Romans 4:20–22).

Because of this genuine faith, Abraham became the “father” of the faithful (v. 16), and his deep love, trust and **commitment** to follow God was “accounted to him for righteousness.”

Keys to Building Faith

Three major aspects of Christian living can help us greatly increase our faith. First, we should fervently **pray** for faith, for faith is a quality of the Holy Spirit. And God certainly indicates in many ways that we should fervently pray for the Holy Spirit! Paul wrote: “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant.... But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:1, 7–9). Here we can see that faith is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, and is tied intimately—in the same verse—to the “gifts of healings by that same Spirit.” This is something for which we all ought to pray earnestly and continuously.

Second, we should remember, “So then faith comes by hearing, and **hearing** by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Remember, our faith should increase as we read about how God guided His servants in the past, heard their prayers, intervened for them and in the end worked out “all things for good.” As we “feed” on these biblical

examples (John 6:57), we will more deeply realize how God works, and will therefore learn to **trust** in Him—as all of His great servants in the past have done. Through the Bible, the Creator God becomes **real** and personal to us far beyond just seeing His power in creation. **Without fervent Bible study**, simply praying for faith is **not** enough! Thoughtfully, carefully and prayerfully “drinking in” of the Bible and of its examples of faith, helps us build a deep and abiding **trust** in our Creator beyond anything else we can do.

Although famous evangelist Dwight L. Moody was not called to the same level of understanding as many of us are today, I totally agree with a very thoughtful comment he made about faith: “I prayed for Faith, and thought that some day Faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But Faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, ‘Now Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.’ I had closed my Bible, and prayed for Faith. I now opened my Bible, and began to study, and Faith has been growing ever since.”

The third key to developing a deeper faith is to **exercise** genuine **faith** in God. As each day, month and year of our life passes, we should learn to commit more of our life to God, really **trusting** Him to direct us in our family lives, our personal lives, our health, our work or vocation, our finances, our use of leisure time, and indeed in every aspect of our lives! As we learn to do this, we will genuinely see that in following God’s ways we will be more fully blessed in our families, in our work, in our overall joy and peace of mind—and certainly in the closeness of our relationship to Him. Throughout more than 56 years in God’s Church, I have definitely seen that people are blessed in every phase of their lives to the degree that they follow God’s ways—and follow His approach to each aspect of their lives with faith that **God’s way works!**

As we learn to exercise faith just as we would exercise our muscles, our genuine faith in God will grow and **grow!**

Make Building Radiant Faith a PRIORITY!

If you and I are to continue faithfully in God’s Church—and if God is to use us to help complete His Work at the end of this age—we will need a **great deal** of genuine faith! For we will truly be tried, tested and **persecuted**. Remember Jesus’ commission to His disciples—including us—when He told them what was ahead: “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues.... Now brother will

deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:16–17, 21–22).

Dear brethren, some of us may literally be **beaten**—like the Apostle Paul and many others—or thrown into jail, harassed, vilified and “hated by all.” We will need genuine trust in God to remain in a right attitude as we go through all of this! But, as Christ said: “He who endures to the **end** will be saved” (v. 22).

As I have indicated, we or our loved ones may at the time of the end have to suffer through the earlier plagues—such as drought, famine and disease epidemics. But we will finally be **delivered** when we are taken to a Place of Safety, before God's full wrath is poured out for the 3½ years of the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord.

God warns us about a truly terrifying time coming in probably just a few years—the final heavenly “war” when Satan will be cast back down to earth for the last time and will turn on God's people in fury: “And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:7–9).

Scripture then describes how Satan will begin to come after God's people: “For the accuser of our brethren who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (vv. 10–11). Here is clearly indicated a time when people are being harassed and perhaps even tortured to death by Satan's cohorts! And, continuing: “**Woe** to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having **great wrath**, because he knows that he has a short time” (v. 12). This final horrifying period of Satan's wrath will occur immediately before the genuinely **faithful** people of God are taken to safety. “Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent” (vv. 13–14).

At that time, those who are actually “Philadelphian” in their relationship with God will be taken to a Place of

Safety. As Jesus said: “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown” (Revelation 3:10–11). If we have persevered—have been faithful and willing to hold fast to the “whole counsel of God” and be zealous in going through the “open door” to preach the Gospel to the world—which is a special sign of the Philadelphians (v. 8)—then we will be supernaturally taken away from the “hour of trial.” That is Christ's **promise**!

However, those who are Laodicean and “lukewarm” (Revelation 3:14–16) will be spewed out of Christ's mouth for their own good because they have been unwilling to exercise genuine **faith** and fully trust God. These Christians may have to go through the terrible times of testing to follow. “And the dragon was **enraged** with the woman, and he went to make war with the **rest of her offspring**, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17). These people—although they are commandment-keepers—will obviously **not** have been fully faithful in following Christ and His ways, or in doing the Work as Revelation 3 indicates they should. So they will need the Great Tribulation to humble them, teach them and help them make a total commitment to exercise genuine **faith** in God's ways!

Those of us who understand—if we are truly filled with **faith** in God and His ways and are willing to take part in teaching the full Truth, to zealously do the Work, and to truly follow God's kind of government—will be taken to a Place of Safety. Until then, we must learn to “walk with God,” continuously and genuinely, in **every way**, in how we direct and participate in the activities and the government of His Church, and in every aspect of doing His Work.

In all of this, we will need to maintain a deep relationship with God—an actual, ongoing communication and fellowship with Christ and the Father, and a profound and radiant **faith** that we have let Christ build within us over many years. May God help each of us realize how **real** this is—and how **vital** this is in our walk toward the Kingdom of God!



Coping with Frustration*(continued from page 9)*

on the source of your frustration than on the bigger picture.

Focus is the key to coping with—and overcoming—frustration. Frustration builds when we focus on the cause of our frustration, and it abates when we focus on something bigger. We clearly see this principle at work in how the Israelites reacted to the report that the spies brought back from the Promised Land. The people focused intently on the problem—the strength of the inhabitants (Numbers 13:31–33). They missed the “big picture”—God and His promise (Exodus 23:20–31). The predictable result was that they acted out of frustration and became unfit to receive the promise that was theirs for the taking.


We all face different frustrations, but the way we can all cope is the

same. If we want to avoid being distracted by the physical problems around us, we must always place our focus first and foremost on our Father in heaven, and on His plan. If we do this, we can keep our physical problems in their proper perspective.

Human nature has not changed since the Bible was written. The people we read about in Scripture wrestled with the same emotions—including frustration—that we experience today. Not only do their examples show us how to cope with our frustration, they will in many cases make our own sources of frustration seem very minor, in comparison to theirs.

If you allow your frustration to go unchecked, it will grow until you eventually become so obsessed with the source of your frustration that you will be unable to look beyond your situation or see anything clearly. If this happens, bitterness and

resentment will begin to set in. You will find yourself in a weakened spiritual condition, where it will become harder and harder to use the tools necessary to cope with frustration in the proper way.

Peace is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). That peace is much more than the absence of war; it involves freedom from oppressive thoughts or emotions—and it cannot co-exist with frustration. Our feelings of frustration should serve as a warning that we need to do a better job of directing our focus, so that we can grow in the fruits of the Spirit. While we wait—for however long—to see God’s answer to our prayers, we must never forget what God has promised us in Galatians 6:9—“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” 

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
May 7	How to Survive Stress
May 14	Prepare for Christ's Second Coming
May 21	Who Is the Beast of Revelation?
May 28	The Power of God in History
June 4	America and Britain in Prophecy
June 11	Danger in the Middle East
June 18	Seven Keys to Effective Prayer
June 25	Life After Death?

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

Local Church News

Anniversaries

Ronald and Loni Oliver, of the Milwaukee, Wisconsin congregation, celebrated their 25th anniversary of marriage on April 5. Ron was baptized in July 1978, and Loni was baptized in February 1980. They are the parents of Mark, Nick and the late Bart Oliver.



Brethren from the Living Church of God congregation in St. Louis, Missouri, gathered on January 21 to celebrate the anniversaries of four couples who have been married for more than 40 years. Pictured, from left to right, are: Evelyn and John Cathcart Sr. (married for 48 years), Barbara and William Oswald (married for 47 years), John and Gloria Blakely (married for 44 years) and Linda and George Demery (married 41 years). After the Sabbath sermon by Mr. Oswald, the brethren shared a congregational meal, followed by evening activities including games, dancing, steel guitar music and much enjoyable fellowshiping.

Births

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Hamby, of the Lafayette, Louisiana congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their son, **Jacob Benjamin Hamby** on February 25. He weighed 9 pounds, 8 ounces, and measured 20 inches long. He was welcomed home by his two sisters. Mother and baby are doing well.

Gary and Gwen Jones, of the LCG congregation in Kansas City, Missouri, are excited to announce the birth of their daughter, **Lynnette Marie Jones**, on March 10. She weighed 7 pounds 11 ounces, and measured 20 inches long. Lynnette is the Jones' first child, and is the first grandchild on both sides of the family.

Matthew and Rebecca Kidney, of the Akron, Ohio congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their son, **Hayden Edward Kidney**, on January 3. He weighed 7 pounds, 8 ounces, and was 20 inches long.

Mr. and Mrs. Mark and Natalie Lorenz, of the Milwaukee, Wisconsin congregation, announce the birth of their son,

Benjamin James Lorenz, on February 27. He weighed 7 pounds, 5 ounces, and measured 20 inches long. Mother and baby are doing well!

Peter and Denise Martin, of Canada's Guelph, Ontario congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their son **Jeremy Owen Martin** on July 1, 2005. He weighed 8 pounds, 7 ounces at birth, and is doing well. His three-year-old brother Timothy is happy to have a playmate!

Brian and Bethany McKenzie, from the Perth congregation in Western Australia, are delighted to announce the birth of their first child, **Benjamin Russell McKenzie**. Born on April 7, he weighed 8 pounds, 3 ounces, and was 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches long. The happy grandparents are Bruce and Sonnie Tyler (Brisbane, Australia) and Barry and Tina McKenzie. (Manjurah, West Australia). Great-grandparents Harry and Barbara Schaer (Bishop, California) are thrilled to now have five great-grandchildren attending the Living Church of God.

Wedding

Ron McAfee and Cindy McDonald, of Canada's Barrie, Ontario congregation, were joined in matrimony on October 9, 2005. After Mr. Winston Gosse performed the ceremony, attended by 183 family members, friends and brethren, Canadian Regional Director Mr. Gerald Weston gave a short discourse explaining the importance of giving in a successful marriage.

Ordinations

Gary Alan Maney was ordained an elder on April 13, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, by Mr. Martin Fannin. Mr. Maney had been serving as a deacon in the Asheville, North Carolina congregation since February 2002.

Dale Otis was ordained a deacon on April 19, the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, by Mr. Carl Ponder. He is serving the brethren of the Birmingham, Alabama congregation.

In Loving Memory

Bion Baker died at home on February 4. He was 83 years old. Baptized in 1955, he is survived by wife Alvera, son Aaron, daughter Sharon and seven grandchildren. He attended the Living Church of God congregation in Lansing, Michigan.

Floyd Jaspersen, husband of Living Church of God member Vivian Jaspersen, died on March 10. He was 80 years old. Though he was not a member of God's Church, he faithfully attended services with his wife of 44 years, most recently attending the Living Church of God congregation in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Connie Poole died on February 28, after a long illness. She was 59 years old. Mrs. Poole attended the Living Church of God congregation in Lansing, Michigan. She is survived by her husband Bob, by her sons Ron and Rob and by several grandchildren.

Purphey J. Trahan, of Youngsville, Louisiana, died on February 25. He was 82 years old. Baptized in 1970, he attended services in Lafayette, Louisiana. He is survived by his wife of more than 59 years, Eve Trahan, and by ten children, 21 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren. Mr. Rod Reynolds conducted a graveside service on February 27.

Hilda Waters, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, died on December 24, 2005. She was 79 years old. Baptized in 2004, she is survived by a daughter and a son.

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).

Commentary

Sex Sells... But Let the Buyer Beware!

By J. Davy Crockett, III

It is **everywhere**—lots of flesh, provocative poses, suggestive moves, lyrics and dialogue—all calculated to stir the passions of young or old, male or female.

Mankind's desire for physical pleasure is used to purvey every kind of product and service in every form of media. It is slick. It is colorful. It is well done—and it is effective. Sadly, great talent and creative ability go into producing a flood of images and sounds that lead people to focus on misusing sexuality—a gift from the Creator God that is wonderful when used as He intended.

See the little girls scantily dressed in provocative poses. See the young women exposing themselves with bare midriffs, wearing underwear as outer garments. See the popular singers—female and male—gyrating in simulated sex acts. See this on television, on the Internet, at the video rental store, on the cinema screen and plastered on the many magazines that crowd super-market checkout lanes.

What is driving this cascading downturn in our nations' morals? Greed plays a huge role. Businesses use sex to sell fashion goods, to gain huge profits from an affluent younger generation that is very susceptible to peer pressure and to the antics of "superstars" who flaunt their bodies and their avant-garde fashions. This greed is fueled by an almost complete abandonment of the Ten Commandments and moral teachings in homes and schools across the land.

And it is not only young people who are fascinated by, or immersed in, degrading activity. Television shows like "Desperate Housewives" are very popular with adults, and the scantily clad cheerleaders at professional sports events are a big drawing card for fans.

What has been the result of this downward moral slide? The modern lifestyle is not bringing happiness, prosperity or stability to those whom it misleads. Disease, both mental and physical, is rampant—often with life-altering or even life-threatening consequences.

Our Creator knew that it was within the base nature of mankind to have these problems. Accordingly, in the Bible—His handbook for human happiness—He gave basic rules of conduct to prevent the problems we are experiencing today.

For example, the Seventh Commandment gives the basic rule prohibiting adultery (Exodus 20:14). Leviticus 18 gives even more detail, strictly forbidding incest, pedophilia, homosexuality and bestiality. Jesus Christ made matters even plainer when He magnified that ancient code of godly conduct, saying, "You have heard it was said to those of old, 'you shall not commit adultery.' But, I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28). Paul wrote, "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

What will be the end for those who refuse to accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice and to repent of these sins? "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, **sexually immoral**, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Today, sex sells. But let the buyer beware, for God's righteous judgment awaits unrepentant sinners. While there is time, do not fail to get the spiritual help you need to come out of this world and avoid the punishment that is sure to come (Revelation 18:4).

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