

Living Church News

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A “Missing” Part of Christ’s Gospel

Dear Brethren and Friends,

As I contemplate more and more about how we should *fully* restore Apostolic Christianity, I realize that an absolutely *vital* part of Jesus’ example and message is virtually *missing* in the lives of many Church of God members!

What am I talking about?

I am referring to the *fact* that Jesus *and His faithful apostles* were constantly involved in *praying for* and *healing* the sick and the afflicted. All through the New Testament, this is evident. As Matthew describes the beginning of Jesus’ ministry: “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them” (Matthew 4:23–24).

Then, right after recounting Jesus’ teaching called the “Sermon on the Mount,” Matthew records this incident: “When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately his leprosy was cleansed” (Matthew 8:1–3). Clearly, it was Jesus’ practice to heal the sick—if they had *faith*. For, in healing the Roman centurion’s servant, Jesus said, “‘Go your way; and *as you have believed*, so let it be done for you.’ And his servant was *healed* that same hour” (v. 13).

That evening, Jesus healed *many* people and cast out *many* demons, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses’” (v. 17). So the New Testament reveals that Christ’s sacrifice directly involved our physical **healing**—as well as our being forgiven of spiritual *sin*.

Soon afterward, Jesus clearly revealed that *the power to heal* the sick was **not** for Him alone, but was to be exercised by His faithful ministers. For, in sending out the twelve apostles, Jesus instructed them, “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). Remember, the apostles were not even converted yet! For the Holy Spirit was not poured out until the day

of Pentecost, after Jesus' crucifixion! Also, very significantly, Jesus extended the power to heal the sick and cast out demons to 70 "other" young men: "After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go" (Luke 10:1). As they went out, Jesus instructed them, "Heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (v. 9). But what about their casting out demons? Luke explains, "Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you'" (Luke 10:17-19).

So, Jesus Christ gave wonderful power over Satan and over sickness to at least 82 of His mostly young disciples. He even gave them special protection from snakes and scorpions! And we should all remember: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Brethren, God's Church today has seen so many "splits"—and so many defections from the full Truth of God's word—that thousands have lost the zeal and the radiant faith they had in years past! Also, thousands of newer members have come into God's Church within the last 20 years. Many came into a group that was beginning to fracture and experience a lot of confusion, and came among members who were becoming "lukewarm."

In about the same period of time—in the last 20 years or so—a whole new generation of drugs has appeared, promising everything from cures for various diseases to help with sleeplessness, digestion and other common problems. In this environment, our newer members may never have experienced the spirit of zeal and the atmosphere of real faith in God that many of us experienced 30 to 50 years ago. Newer brethren were certainly not surrounded by Church members who always had their sick children anointed by the local ministers, or by people who frequently and enthusiastically described how God had healed them or their children.

Yet, when I came into God's Church in late 1949, that was the kind of spirit that prevailed! Looking to God to heal our sicknesses through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was the norm. Genuine healings certainly did occur very regularly!

What happened?

Satan has very cleverly succeeded in imbuing thousands of God's people with an attitude of cynicism and doubt. Forgetting Jesus' statement, "According to your faith let it be to you," many in God's Church even seem to take a cruel pleasure in spreading doubt. They will often recite how they have not been healed, or how something else has "gone wrong" in the Church. Little by little, their own cynicism and doubt spreads to others. They seem to ignore completely the transcendent importance of God's instruction, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe

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What Does Christ's Death Mean to YOU?

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

Many years ago, Mr. Hebert W. Armstrong admonished the entire Church that although we preached powerfully about Christ's second coming, the government of God and the law of God, we tended to leave out proper emphasis on the tremendous sacrifice Jesus Christ made for us in *pouring out His blood* as our Savior!

Mr. Armstrong noted that we rarely talked much about Christ's sacrifice, except at Passover-time. He said this was probably his own fault, because—coming out of Protestantism as he did—he had realized how many people over-emphasize this and fall into sentimentality, to the *exclusion* of Christ's message. Nevertheless, Mr. Armstrong reminded us, Christ's death and sacrifice are absolutely *vital* to Christianity, a *vital* part of the Christian message.

Then Mr. Armstrong went on to show how important it is for *all* true Christians to have a deep and **abiding** appreciation of Christ's sacrifice all through the year. I do not remember how much he went into detail about this. But I remember his heartfelt public "repentance"—so to speak—telling us that he felt we had not emphasized Christ's sacrifice nearly as much as we should. Now, also, I feel led by God to help *all* of us focus on this vital issue—and, again, **not** just at Passover-time!

Brethren, you and I must constantly realize that we are, in fact, *forgiven sinners*. If we do not realize this, we are probably **not** even converted! For, as God tells us in a number of places, "all have sinned and

come short of the glory of God." So, we ought to stand constantly in the realization of that fact—aware of the **tremendous** debt each of us owes not only to God the Father, but also to the *real* Jesus Christ of the Bible.

Yes, we must *always* remember *our Lord and Master*. So, we must *obey* both Christ and the Father—and must truly "walk" in His ways and keep His commandments. In doing so, we should certainly continue to focus on the soon-coming Christ as King of kings—and should *prepare* earnestly for this awesome event.

according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you'" (Hebrews 9:18–20). Paul then completes the picture by writing, "And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and *without shedding of blood there is no remission*" (v. 22).

From the very beginning, God's plan pointed toward the need for Christ's blood. For Abel, the child of Adam and Eve, "brought of the

We need to realize our need for the shedding of blood to cover our sins, and realize that it had to be the shed blood of the very Son of God who created us and whose life is worth more than all of ours put together!

But, *before all this*, we should have realized our own wretchedness and sinfulness. We should have deeply **repented** of our personal sins. And, as converted Christians, we should have the *continuing realization* of the **awfulness** of sin. Otherwise, it may be *too easy* to take Christ for granted and slip right back into sin. We need to realize our **need** for the shedding of *blood* to cover our sins, and realize that it had to be the shed blood of the very Son of God who created us and whose life is worth more than all of ours put together! For the Bible tells us—many times and in many ways—that **only** shed blood can fully "cover" our sins. The book of Hebrews explains: "Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people

firstlings of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering" (Genesis 4:4). Undoubtedly, God had shown Abel that the "blood sacrifice" of an animal was necessary for his offering. So, this *very first* offering the Bible describes involved the shedding of blood. We read: "For the life of the flesh is in the **blood**, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the **blood** that makes atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11). When God gave the "father of the faithful" *the supreme test* of his total yieldedness to God, what did He do? He told Abraham to *shed the blood* of his only legitimate son! For Isaac, as most of us realize, was a *direct type* of Christ. Isaac willingly went to the

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Lessons of Atonement

By Douglas S. Winnail

The Day of Atonement, one of God's seven annual Holy Days, pictures a major event in God's Plan—the binding of Satan at the beginning of the millennium. English-speakers have often heard the analogy that Atonement pictures our coming *at-one-ment* with God. But have you ever asked yourself, “What am I doing to *prepare* for this great event?”

Are you *ready* for what the Day of Atonement pictures?

Some may assume that since God will take care of binding Satan when the peoples of the earth become *at one* with God, there is little for us to do to prepare for this significant event. However, the parable of the ten virgins suggests otherwise. In the parable, the *wise* virgins took a supply of oil with their lamps and, when the bridegroom came, “those who *were ready* went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut” (Matthew 25:10). The *foolish* virgins were out of oil when the bridegroom came, and missed out on being part of the wedding—because they were *not ready!* Symbolically, the wise virgins became *at one* with the bridegroom at the wedding because they had *prepared* for this event. The foolish virgins lost the opportunity to become *at one* with the bridegroom, because they were not prepared when he came. The wedding in this parable portrays the marriage of Christ and the Church (Revelation 19:7–9). The oil is symbolic of God's Holy Spirit. The wise virgins were filled with the Holy Spirit, and were ready to become *at one* with God. The foolish virgins were not nourishing or using God's Spirit, so they were *not ready* for this momentous event.

In this article we will look at three important lessons that we must learn if we want to be ready for the Day of Atonement and what it pictures—a time when the world will become *at one* with God. We will also discuss what we need to understand about *this world* so we can be ready to rule with Jesus Christ in the “world to come” (Hebrews 2:5).

Remember the Meaning

The Bible reveals that the Day of Atonement is to be observed, as a high Sabbath and a holy convocation (a commanded assembly) on the tenth day of the seventh month on the Hebrew calendar (Leviticus 23:26–32). The statement that “it shall be a statute *forever*” indicates how important this day is to God (v. 31). God commands us to “afflict” our souls on the Day of Atonement—meaning we are to *fast* on that day (Psalm 35:13; Isaiah 58:3). Fasting is a very humbling experience, and it shows God that we are receptive to His teaching and willing to do as He commands. Paul's comment that “the Fast was already over” refers to the fast on Atonement, which clearly indicates that the New Testament Church was observing that fast (Acts 27:9).

The full meaning of the Day of Atonement is not revealed in Leviticus 23, where the Holy Days are listed and discussed, but other chapters of the Bible explain many details. God told Moses to perform, on the Day of Atonement, a ceremony involving two goats (Leviticus 16). The first goat was offered as a sacrifice (atonement) for the sins of the people (vv. 15–16). This sacrifice *foreshadowed* the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ that would reconcile sinful human beings to God (Romans 5:10–11; 2 Corinthians 5:18–19). It is significant that the word *atonement* means *reconciliation*. The Hebrew name for the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*, comes from the Hebrew word *kaphar* which means to cancel a debt or *reconcile*. Through the annual observance of the Day of Atonement, we are reminded of God's plan to ultimately reconcile—restore a right relationship between—human beings and Himself.

The second goat in this Old Testament ceremony is less understood—and is even puzzling to many theologians. This second goat was to bear the sins of the people, and be “sent away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man” (Leviticus 16:21). Many Bible

commentaries and handbooks speculate that the two goats represent “two natures of Christ,” or that the second goat represents “an aspect of Christ’s sacrifice” (see *Clark’s Commentary*, *Unger’s Bible Handbook*, *Halley’s Bible Handbook*). However, Scripture clearly reveals that is not the case at all. While some versions of the Bible refer to the second goat as a “scapegoat,” the actual Hebrew word from which it is translated is *Azazel*—a name that comes from the Hebrew word *azel*, meaning “separated” or “removed.” Jewish tradition has linked the *Azazel* with the prince of the fallen angels: Satan the Devil.

In the New Testament, the Apostle John records a vision that reveals the second goat’s significance. John saw “an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:1–3). The Bible reveals that the role of the “suitable man” who sent the second goat into the wilderness will be fulfilled by an angel, and that the second goat pictures the devil—who will be restrained during the millennium. When we observe the Day of Atonement, we are reminded of this major event in the plan of God. Most professing Christians have no idea of the meaning of this day, because they do not observe it as God commands.

But what does all this have to do with becoming *at one* with God? Are there important steps that we must take, or will God do everything for us? What must we do to *be ready* to become *at one* with God?

Overcome Satan’s Influence

Another lesson we need to learn from the Day of Atonement is how to *recognize*, *resist* and *overcome* the influence of Satan. This is an important step towards becoming *at one* with God. The Apostle Paul told Christians in Corinth that they were living in a world influenced by Satan. He explained that Satan has been the actual “god of this world,” and has *blinded* the minds of most people regarding God’s plan and purpose for the human race (2 Corinthians 4:3–4). The Bible also reveals that Satan has “deceived the whole world” (Revelation 12:9) by promoting lies and spreading false and misleading ideas (John 8:44), and that he has even used *misguided ministers* (2 Corinthians 11:1–15) to preach a different gospel and deceive people by twisting scriptures out of context (2 Peter 3:14–16). Paul admonished Christians to “come out” of this world and “separate” themselves from

the misinformed ways of human-devised societies (2 Corinthians 6:14–18). Paul warned Church members that they must understand how the devil operates, and must not be ignorant of his devices, “lest Satan should take advantage of us” (2 Corinthians 2:11). The devil’s deceptions include provoking wrong thoughts and ideas that lead to wrong actions (Ephesians 2:2), and fostering erroneous assumptions—for example, the idea that if something *seems* right to us, it must be right. The results of such erroneous thinking can be devastating (Proverbs 14:12).

The Apostle Peter warned believers 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 understandably concerned, because he knew that he, too, *had been deceived* by Satan (Matthew 16:21–23). Scripture reveals that Satan not only wanted access to Peter (Luke 22:31–32); he even wanted to deceive Jesus Christ and divert Him from His mission (Matthew 4:1–11). Christians must learn to *recognize* and *resist* the advances of Satan (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9) if we hope to become *at one* with God and be in His kingdom. In order to overcome the temptations that Satan puts in our path, we are told to put on “the whole armor of God” (Ephesians 6:10–11). That armor includes proving the Truth, obeying God’s commandments, learning to live peaceably with others, trusting in God’s promises, learning to nourish and use His Spirit and maintaining a close relationship with God through prayer and Bible study (Ephesians 6:13–20). This is how Jesus Christ overcame the satanic pulls of this world (John 16:33) and could be *at one* with God (John 10:30). It was also Christ’s prayer that we, too, would grow to become *at one* with God (John 17:11).

Develop God’s Mind

The third lesson we should learn by observing the Day of Atonement is that in order to become *at one* with God, we must develop the mind and perspective of God. We must learn to think like God. Jesus told His disciples, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30) and, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). In essence, Jesus was saying that He and the Father share the same values and the same perspectives—they both think along the same lines and are of the same mind. On the night before He was crucified, Jesus prayed in the presence of His disciples, “Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that *they may be one as We are*” (John 17:11). Jesus understood

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Becoming a Peacemaker

By J. Charles Ogwyn

For God's people, the Feast of Tabernacles is always a highlight of the year. Because we faithfully save our second tithe, we can enjoy a level of abundance far above our normal means. We also greatly appreciate the opportunity to spend time with old friends, and to make new friends. Then, as soon as it is over, we begin thinking about—looking forward to, and making plans for—the next year's Feast of Tabernacles.

Not only does the Feast teach us about God's great plan; it also gives us a taste of what Tomorrow's World will be like. The abundance we enjoy when using our second tithe is but a shadow of the abundance the whole world will know during the Millennium (cf. Micah 4:1–5). The peace and unity we share with our brethren at the Feast is but a foretaste of what all of humanity will experience when the Prince of Peace reigns on earth. In fact, the peace at that time will cover the earth so completely that it will even extend to the animal kingdom (Isaiah 11:6–9)!

Even so, peace will not come naturally to people during the Millennium, any more than it comes naturally to us today. The earth has been filled with violence for most of the last 6,000 years, yet human civilization is no closer to figuring out the way to peace now than it ever

was. Although people want it, they do not know how to attain it. We are told, "The way of peace they have not known" (Isaiah 59:8). Peace has been unattainable throughout history because people have failed to understand that *peace is the result of a way of life*. People have not practiced that way of life, and the result has been disastrous.

At the Feast, we look forward to the time when the way of peace will be taught to—and then practiced by—all of humanity. By calling us to be the firstfruits, God has given us a tremendous honor and privilege—opening our minds to learn and understand His way of life. By doing so, He is preparing us to take part in the administration of peace in Tomorrow's World. However, there is a "catch." To teach the way of peace, we *must first learn and practice it ourselves*. If we do not learn and practice it now, we will not be part of God's soon-coming administration of peace. It is not enough just to know about it; we must put it into practice in our lives. We must first *become* peacemakers—then we can *teach others* how to do the same.

To become peacemakers, we must realize that real peace comes only when we put into practice God's command to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19). Although this command sounds amaz-

ingly simple, we cannot put it into practice without God's help.

If being a peacemaker is only a vague concept to us, we will find it hard—perhaps impossible—to become one. As we try to live by God's command to love our neighbors as ourselves, we need to consider what that command means. Above all else, we need to realize that peace is based on love. Love is the foundational element without which there cannot be true peace. When there is love, there is peace. When there is strife, love is absent. However, the love that is a prerequisite for peace is not the love the world knows. Genuine love involves our using God's Holy Spirit. To practice this kind of love toward others, we must recognize what it looks like in action, and then must put it into practice in our lives.

Avoid Offense

Real love stirs in us the desire—and the effort—to avoid offending others (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:32). Offending others is a very serious matter. Christ warned, "Woe to that man by whom the offense comes" (Matthew 18:7). The Apostle Paul was so eager to avoid offending others that he was willing to avoid eating meat, if eating meat would offend those around him (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:13). If we are to be peacemakers, not only will we go out of our way to avoid

causing offense to others, we will also avoid taking offense at others. We read, “Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165, *KJV*). Nothing offends those who love God’s law, because they trust in God. Their focus is on Him and His plan. They are not preoccupied with what others are doing or saying, and as a result they have great peace. If our focus is on God, we will not offend—or be offended—in our dealings with others.

Treat People Fairly

Peacemakers are equitable and fair in all their dealings. Many contentions arise because people feel they have been treated unfairly, so we should take every step to ensure that we are treating those around us fairly. We are training to become

God told ancient Israel to have one set of laws for citizens and strangers alike; there was no “home field advantage” for citizens (cf. Numbers 15:16, 29–30). Everyone was to be held to the same standard. Playing favorites or holding people to different standards breeds contempt and is a cause of strife. As peacemakers, we should strive to be equitable in all of our dealings toward others. God makes it clear that if we fear Him, we will not oppress strangers (Leviticus 25:17). When we fear God, we make our decisions in the knowledge that He is watching us and will reward or punish us according to how we act.

Be Humble

Being a peacemaker requires a humble attitude. Pride gets in the

begin life humble before their parents, and look to them as their first teachers. As Christians, we need to be the same way. Being humble means being willing to “suffer wrong” as Christ did, and not try to return evil for evil (cf. 1 Peter 2:21–23). As peacemakers—future kings and priests—we should be putting on the mind of Christ, the Prince of Peace, and should endeavor to make His way of life our way of life (cf. Isaiah 9:6). This requires humility, and it requires God’s help. God “resists the proud,” so to whatever extent we remain filled with pride, we are unable to avail ourselves of the help God wants to give us (cf. James 4:6).

Be Quick to Listen

A peacemaker is quick to listen. Think of the many times you have

Genuine love involves our using God’s Holy Spirit. To practice this kind of love toward others, we must recognize what it looks like in action, and then must put it into practice in our lives.

God—to become part of His family—so we must be putting on His character in our lives. As Christians, we know that God is not a respecter of persons (Ephesians 6:9). He does not play favorites. Although He has worked specially with Abraham’s descendants to carry out His Plan, He has done so because of His desire to see *all human beings* accept His offer to become part of His family. Some have already received that offer; others will yet receive it—some before Christ’s return, others during the Millennium or Great White Throne Judgment. God’s Plan will ensure that all human beings have the opportunity to understand God’s word, apply it in their lives—and become part of God’s family if they respond to Him and obey Him.

way of peace. We read, “By pride comes nothing but strife” (Proverbs 13:10). This is an astounding statement. Pride leads to strife. Where you find contention, expect to find pride involved. To be peacemakers, we must work to empty ourselves of pride. The Apostle Paul talks about this key to peace in Philippians 2:3–8. As peacemakers, we should not be looking out first and foremost for ourselves, as the world does; instead, we should put others’ needs and well-being first.

Christ told His disciples, “unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). Faced with a big and unfamiliar world, children

experienced some problem because of a simple misunderstanding. We all encounter misunderstandings, but they need not become sources of contention if we handle them God’s way. The Apostle James tells us to “be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19). When we do so, we build peace and diminish strife.

This means that we will always want to listen, and never assume that there is nothing to be gained by listening. We should be quick to listen, instead of speaking quickly before we think. We should avoid “knee jerk” reactions to what we think we have seen or heard, and should always consider our words carefully before we utter them. Being a peacemaker involves careful listening.

How else can we provide the soft answer that will turn away wrath (Proverbs 15:1)?

Forgive

A peacemaker must be willing to forgive others. Consider the example of Stephen. Even while he was being stoned to death, he maintained a forgiving attitude toward the people who were executing him on false

peace could we have in our lives if no one ever forgave us for any of our infractions? Similarly, in order to have peace, we must forgive others when they wrong us.

Love

Christ made clear that love is the basis of God's law (cf. Matthew 22:36–40). God's law is revealed in the Bible. The Bible illustrates

beings have wanted peace but have not wanted to obey God. People have sought the blessing of peace without realizing that God has established spiritual laws for obtaining it—laws that are just as certain as the physical laws with which we are all familiar. We all recognize the law of gravity. Objects heavier than air always fall to earth. God's spiritual laws also bring predictable results, yielding long-term peace and happiness when they

How much peace could we have in our lives if no one ever forgave us for any of our infractions? Similarly, in order to have peace, we must forgive others when they wrong us.

charges (cf. Acts 7:59–60). As peacemakers, we must be willing to forgive not only those who are repentant, but also those who continue to wrong us. With those who are repentant, forgiveness comes more easily, and we can work to heal any breach that was caused when we were wronged. We are commanded to forgive our brother when he repents (Luke 17:3–4). But, as the example of Stephen shows us, forgiveness is also required toward those who are unrepentant and are continuing to wrong us (cf. Matthew 6:12). In one sense, this is not the same kind of forgiveness; we cannot heal the breach until the other party repents and makes changes. However, when we forgive the unrepentant, we are not excusing wrong actions; we are simply letting go of the offense and trusting in God, knowing that He will sustain us in our trial, and that He will work with the unrepentant and teach them their lessons, just as He teaches us ours.

We cannot put limits on our forgiveness. Peter thought it might be sufficient to forgive a sinning brother seven times, but Christ explained that we should never stop forgiving (cf. Matthew 18:21–35). How much

through prophecy and history what happens when people love God and their neighbor—and when they fail to do so! We live in a world that does not know how to love God or neighbor, and we see all around us the result of that way of life.

To be a peacemaker, we must handle contentious people and situations with wisdom, using the keys found in God's word. Love is the foundation of peace. Without real love towards others, we cannot even begin to practice the way to peace. Real peace does not come through a truce or a treaty; real peace is the result of love.

Peace starts with *each of us individually*—not with others. We cannot change other people; we can only change ourselves. Such change is not easy; sometimes it seems almost impossibly difficult. However, with God's help, we can put the keys to peace into practice in our own lives. Remember, in order to teach others the way of peace in Tomorrow's World, we must first learn and practice it in our own lives, *right now*, regardless of what others around us are doing.

God promises blessings for obedience. Throughout history, human

are obeyed. When God's laws are disregarded, long-term peace and happiness will never result.

The world does not know the way to peace, because it has rejected the only sourcebook that explains the way to peace. If you want to know what a word means, you look up its definition in a dictionary. If you want to know how to achieve love or peace or happiness, the answer is in the Bible—God's word. Society has rejected God's word, and is reaping the consequences.

At the Feast, we not only learn more about God's word; we also anticipate the soon-coming time when “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). Imagine what the world will be like then, filled with people living God's way of life, experiencing peace and prosperity. At the Feast, we gain a small taste of what lies ahead. This should encourage and motivate us as we prepare for the glorious future that lies ahead, when we as the firstfruits will serve as peacemakers. As Christ promised, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). LCM

Loyalty Builds Unity

By Don Davis

Without unity, human beings working together cannot accomplish very much. Loyalty is the glue that holds people together, and is the character trait that binds God and His people. Why does God value loyalty so highly? To whom or what are you loyal?

Amaziah was a young king of Judah whose reign started out well enough, but ended in disaster, because he stopped obeying God. “Amaziah was twenty-five years old, when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem.... And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a loyal heart” (2 Chronicles 25:1–2). At first, Amaziah followed God’s precepts scrupulously. Although he executed the men who had murdered his father, he spared their children, because he sought to do “as it is written in the Law in the Book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, saying, ‘The fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall the children be put to death for their fathers; but a person shall die for his own sin’” (v. 4).

Always Check with God First!

When Judah was preparing to go to war against the people of Edom, Amaziah wanted to supplement Judah’s 300,000-man army. So he hired 100,000 men of valor from Israel—without first asking God whether this was His will. “But a man of God came to him, saying, ‘O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the LORD is not with Israel—not with any of the children of Ephraim. But if you go, be gone! Be strong in battle! Even so, God shall make you fall before the enemy; for God has power to help and to overthrow’” (vv. 7–8). Amaziah then obeyed, and discharged the troops that had come to him from Ephraim. “Therefore their anger was greatly aroused against Judah, and they returned home in great anger” (v. 10).

God gave Amaziah a resounding victory, in which the king’s troops killed 20,000 Edomites. However, the discharged Israelites had been looking forward to taking the spoils of war, and felt cheated at having been dismissed. In revenge, they raided some of Judah’s cities; they killed 3,000 people “and took much spoil” (vv. 11–13).

A Disloyal Heart Leads to Disaster!

How did Amaziah react to the victory God had given him over the Edomites? The king foolishly brought the gods of Mount Seir into Judah; he adopted them as his own gods, bowing down and offering burnt incense to them. “Therefore the anger of the LORD was aroused against Amaziah, and He sent a prophet who said to him, ‘Why have you sought the gods of the people, which could not rescue their own people from your hand?’” (v. 15). Instead of confessing his sin and crying out for God’s forgiveness, Amaziah rebelled further, saying to God’s messenger: “‘Have we made you the king’s counselor? Cease! Why should you be killed?’ Then the prophet ceased, and said, ‘I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not heeded my advice’” (v. 16). Amaziah failed to realize that anyone who rejects God’s word will no longer have His help.

Angered by the raids on Judah’s cities, Amaziah challenged Israel’s King Joash to battle. Joash answered, saying: “Indeed you say that you have defeated the Edomites, and your heart is lifted up to boast. Stay at home now; why should you meddle with trouble, that you should fall—you and Judah with you?” (v. 19). But Amaziah, because of his pride, fought against Israel; he did not know that God intended Judah to lose the battle “because they sought the gods of Edom” (v. 20).

In his defeat, Amaziah suffered the destruction of approximately 200 yards of Jerusalem’s wall, between the Corner gate and the Gate of Ephraim, leaving the city defenseless (v. 23). “And he [Joash] took all the gold and silver, all the articles that were found in the house of God with Obed-Edom, the treasures of the king’s house, and hostages, and returned to Samaria” (v. 24).

Amaziah lived another 15 years, but did not repent of his turning to idols in rebellion against God. “After the time that Amaziah turned away from following the LORD, they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish and killed him there” (v. 27).

Amaziah knew the law, but did not love God with a loyal heart, as King David had done. His disloyalty caused his power to be humbled and Jerusalem’s wealth to be

lost. In the end, Amaziah's servants who had joined him in rebellion were not loyal to him, and he ultimately lost his life because of his sins, as the messenger sent by God had foretold.

Asa Became Disloyal

God is not mocked. Every sin brings a penalty. Repeated sin brings a curse, and total rebellion will bring death. When he began his reign over Judah, Asa did much to restore the true worship of the Creator—and God blessed the land with peace and prosperity. Because Asa put his trust in Him, God gave Judah victory over a million-man army that invaded from Ethiopia (2 Chronicles 14). Afterward, God sent a prophet to meet the king. “Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: ‘Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you’” (2 Chronicles 15:1–2). God clearly saw in Asa's heart the potential for disloyalty, so He sent the king a warning to remain faithful.

In the 36th year of Asa's reign, King Baasha of Israel threatened to invade Judah. Asa forgot what God had done for his kingdom against the Ethiopians; instead of trusting in the LORD to fight for him, Asa hired Syrians to help him in the coming war against Israel. In response, God sent the seer Hanani to Asa, with a message: “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars” (2 Chronicles 16:9). God, in His longsuffering, sent Asa this good advice. However, instead of becoming humbled, Asa's pride increased. “Then Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at that time” (v. 10).

After rejecting God's counsel, things only became worse for the king. “And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians. So Asa rested with his fathers; he died in the forty-first year of his reign” (vv. 12–13).

Although Asa had begun with high prospects for success, and for God's blessing and protection, he ended his reign in failure because he lacked a trusting and loyal heart toward his Creator. In the end, Asa had sought deliverance from men, no longer looking to God as his Savior.

Loyalty Must Never Waver

Although he spent ten years in danger of losing his life because of King Saul, David was never disloyal toward God, nor to the one He had anointed as ruler over Israel. After Saul and his sons died, Israel's army responded to the loyalty and dedication David had shown. “All these men of war, who could keep ranks, came to Hebron with a loyal heart, to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest of Israel were of one mind to make David king” (1 Chronicles 12:38).

God kept David safe, and gave him glory, wealth and honor. But David then broke faith with God, killing Uriah the Hittite in order to have this faithful soldier's wife. Seeing David's disloyalty to the commandments—and his disregard for the innocent life of a faithful soldier who had been loyal to him—God sent Nathan the prophet to confront the king about his horrible sin. “Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon” (2 Samuel 12:9; see also 11:12–21).

Though David's life was not forfeited for that sin, Nathan pronounced the punishments God had ordained he would suffer the rest of his life. “Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’ Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; [two of David's own sons were among those who rebelled against him] and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor [David's son Absalom], and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun [see also 2 Samuel 16:21–22]. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.’ So David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’ And Nathan said to David, ‘The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.’ [David would live, but his child by Bathsheba would not]. ‘However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die’” (2 Samuel 12:10–14).

Hezekiah's Loyalty to God

Of all the kings of Israel and Judah, few ever came close to displaying such loyalty as Hezekiah showed to God. At age 25, this young prince came to the throne in Jerusalem “and he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut

down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him” (2 Kings 18:3–7).

Although Hezekiah had paid a tribute of gold and silver in repentant apology for rebelling against Assyrian overlordship, King Sennacherib sent an army to conquer Jerusalem and deport its people. The Assyrian Rabshakeh, seeking to frighten Hezekiah and his people, then insulted the God of Creation, and listed all the cities and gods the Assyrians had destroyed. “Has any of the gods of the nations at all delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim and Hena and Ivah? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand? Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?” (2 Kings 18:33–35).

How did the king of Judah respond? When Hezekiah received a threatening letter from Sennacherib, he took it to the temple and laid it before his Creator, praying: “O LORD God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men’s hands—wood and stone. Therefore they destroyed them. Now therefore, O LORD our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD God, You alone” (2 Kings 19:15–19).

God answered Hezekiah’s prayer by destroying the Assyrian army that was besieging Jerusalem. He sent Sennacherib away to his death at the hands of two disloyal sons. “And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh. Now it came to pass, as he was

worshiping in the temple of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword” (vv. 35–37). Sennacherib, who had been disloyal to his repentant vassal Hezekiah, found that his pagan gods could not protect him, and he became the victim of disloyalty that arose from within his own family.

Later, facing terminal illness, Hezekiah reminded God that he had always been loyal to Him, and that he would trust Him for deliverance. “In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.’” Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD, and said, ‘Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what is good in Your sight.’ And Hezekiah wept bitterly” (Isaiah 38:1–3).

Seeing his faithfulness to his Creator, God had mercy on Hezekiah and extended his life. “And the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, ‘Go and say to Hezekiah, “Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years’”’” (vv. 4–5).

What Does God Expect from Us?

What lessons should God’s people today learn from the successes and tragedies that touched the lives of these four kings—before and during their reigns? We should see that God expects our loyalty to Him to be *constant*, from the day we are called to the day we die, no matter how great the obstacles and temptations. Jesus Christ wants us to endure. “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved” (Matthew 10:22).

We should appreciate that loyalty to God brings blessings. Though we may fail in perfect obedience, and may incur penalties, God is faithful to forgive us when we repent and return to following His ways, as David did.

Finally, we should recognize that when we are not loyal, we hurt not only ourselves but also those around us—and thus hinder the Work that God has called us to do (Malachi 3:7–10; Matthew 6:21).

No group of individuals—whether in families, companies, nations or God’s Church—can function effectively without loyalty. Loyalty to our Creator and Savior—to God’s laws and His government—must always come first.

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Living Youth Camp 2006

By Michael Elertson

Living Church of God campers gathered once again for Living Youth Camp this summer, July 18–31.

Campers and staff came from all across the United States and Canada—one even came from South Africa. More than 190 people spent two weeks enjoying

fun, food and fellowship, while working hard and learning. As in previous years, LYC was hosted by Northwoods Christian Camp, located near the town of Pickford in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Staff arrived in the afternoon on July 16—a couple of days before the campers. That morning, a tremendous storm had knocked out power in the area for seven hours. Everyone was caught off guard, yet everything worked out completely. All plans steamed ahead—yes, literally steamed—as some days were marked by high temperatures and humidity.

Each day's activities began at 7:45 a.m., when campers from four excited boys' and girls' dorms gathered for "Morning Motivation." One dorm would yell out, "We've got spirit, yes we do, we've got spirit—how about you?" Other dorms would reciprocate the chant. Camp Director Mr. Gerald Weston then led campers and staff in singing the "camp song"—with new verses added each day to

commemorate events that had occurred at camp. After viewing a newscast prepared the previous day by campers, everyone appreciated a proverb given by Mr. Weston.

After each "Morning Motivation," campers would enjoy breakfast before beginning a

rigorous and full day of activities. Each day, campers had a Christian living class in their first activity period, taught by Messrs. Weston, Jonathan McNair, Mario Hernandez, Sheldon Monson, Charles Ogwyn or Michael Elertson. The theme this year was "the biblical Church of God," and campers learned how to use concordances and Greek and Hebrew lexicons to aid their Bible study, as they found for themselves many of the

answers to questions posed in class. Not only did this approach prove effective in the classroom; the campers also learned new skills that will serve them for years ahead!

For the remainder of the day, each dorm rotated through a variety of different activities. For instance, a typical day after Christian living might include

dance, speech, volleyball, soccer, archery or media class.

Media classes this year were conducted jointly by assistant camp director Mr. Jonathan McNair, Mr. Brian Scarborough, Mr. Derek Forrestier, Mr. Myron Short and Mrs. Sue Ruddlesden. Each day, one dorm would create a newscast presented by two anchors, a weatherperson and field reporters. All this was done with amazing sound effects, background maps and other details that were truly impressive. Campers became familiar with the sound board, lights, cameras and computer software used

to create the newscast shown each day at "Morning Motivation." We truly had some talented campers in our midst.

One highlight was to hear each group of campers walking from activity to activity, singing their dorm's own special song, which unified the group and showed its uniqueness. One song this year was, "I'm a little 2B, short and stout, here is my handle and here is my spout. When we get all steamed up, hear us shout, just tip us over and pour us out!" Of course, the song was accompanied by a full range of motions and gestures!

One much-anticipated feature of this year's camp was the return of the overnight canoe trip, led by Mr. Sheldon Monson, area pastor from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Campers learned skills for fun and safe canoeing, then put those skills into practice in the waters of Lake Huron as



Pre-Teen Camp, Troy, Missouri

From June 18–25, 81 staff and campers gathered for a Living Church of God Pre-Teen Camp at Cuivre River State Park, in Troy, Missouri. The Church has used this location for several years; campers and staff alike have grown to appreciate its beauty.

Each day began with a fitness class led by Shirlene Solomon and her staff. After working up an appetite, it was time for breakfast, followed by a Christian Living class, taught by Mr. Larry Solomon, Mr. Barry Howdeshall or Mr. Bill Oswald. Then came a wide range of activities, including rifle safety, archery, square dancing, canoeing, fishing, flag football and kickball. Campers and some staff were challenged by an obstacle

course. Another favorite activity was arts and crafts; boys made clocks, and girls made handbags. The final event on Friday was a treasure hunt enjoyed by all the campers.

Evening activities included a dance, a sing-along, a variety show, and a Friday evening Bible study in which Mr. Solomon gave an overview of Christ’s life. Campers were joined for Sabbath services by the St. Louis congregation, and heard a sermon by Regional Pastor Mr. Rand Millich. After services, everyone enjoyed a covered-dish meal, and many took part in a Bible game. Campers departed on Sunday, June 25, already looking forward to next year’s camp.

—Larry Solomon

they paddled out to Government Island. Some canoes this year had to endure strong winds, lots of rain, soggy pancakes and eggs—still, valuable lessons were learned, such as: Never set something against a tent’s walls during the rain!



Mr. Monson also arranged a number of challenges on the island, designed to teach cooperation, teamwork and survival. In one challenge, campers had to start a fire using just a magnesium block and striker. Another challenge tested campers’ marksmanship skills.

Dr. Douglas Winnail was with us for the last four days of camp. In addition to visiting Government Island, he was able to see most parts of Northwoods Christian Camp, teach some Principles of Living classes, observe many other classes, give the last Sabbath sermon and conduct a leadership class for the staff. He seemed very happy with what he saw!

Girls in the Christian Roles class (taught by Dorothy McNair, Christie

McNair and Jenny Penman) were taught the art of hospitality. Each girls’ dorm planned an evening of topics and dance for a corresponding boys’ dorm. Each girls’ dorm decided on a theme—Big Band, France and Hawaii were among the themes chosen. With the assistance of their instructors, the girls prepared the food, decorations and entertainment for the evening.

“Evening Reflection” ended each day, giving everyone an opportunity to slow down before bed. Campers and staff gathered in the main hall to sing hymns, and to listen to Mr. Weston read stories with meaning pertinent to their lives. Each session ended with the hymn, “By This Shall All Men Know” before everyone contentedly and peacefully headed off to bed for the night.



Sunday night was the much-expected climax of camp. It was a bittersweet evening—the campers really looked forward to the final banquet, but it was also hard to say goodbye to old and new friends. After a scrumptious steak dinner prepared and served by the staff, everyone watched the camp video (prepared by Seth Forrestier), which recapped many highlights of the previous two weeks. Mr. Weston then gave the concluding remarks, and presented Steve Olson and Brian Scarborough with achievement plaques for their many years of tireless, humble and selfless sacrifices and service.

Though some campers and staff have come to LYC year after year, every year has a few “first-timers.” One father came to LYC for the first time this year, to see exactly what he was sending his son to. He wanted to see if camp was the real thing. He concluded, “I’m going home and talking up camp to every teen I can find.” These words and examples say it all!

Pre-Teen Camp, Mexia, Texas

June 11–15 was an exciting time for 36 campers and 35 staff members at the Living Church of God Pre-Teen Camp in Mexia, Texas. Campers between the ages of 8 and 12, mostly from Texas and Louisiana, spent five days at Fort Parker State Park, where teen and adult staff members led them in a wide range of activities, from archery to kickball to rock-climbing to classes in Christian living.

Mr. Gerald Weston, who oversees Living Church of God youth programs, provided guidance and support for those working with the Texas camp. Evangelist Charles Bryce, Regional Pastor for the southern United States, also provided guidance and support. Camp Director Mr. Charles Ogwyn, area pastor for Church congrega-

tions across most of Arkansas and part of Tennessee, was assisted by Mr. Deric Forrestier of the Gladewater, Texas congregation.

Campers enjoyed the beautiful setting on Fort Parker Lake, where they stayed in air-conditioned dormitories and ate their meals in an air-conditioned dining hall—which included a full institutional-style kitchen. Campers also made use of the park's playing fields and hiking trails.

There were six classes each day; three in the morning, and three in the afternoon. Campers and staff together attended the first class each day, which covered Christian living topics on the theme, "Building Blocks for Life." Mr. Ogwyn taught the class every day except Wednesday, when Mr. Bryce

taught the class during his visit to the camp.

Other classes included archery, riflery and canoeing (including an overnight canoe trip on the Navasota River, complete with a treasure hunt in which campers learned to use a map and compass.

After supper each evening, campers enjoyed activities such as tossing Frisbees or water balloons. Thursday evening featured a fun show, with many campers and staff members performing for everyone's enjoyment.

By the time camp ended, everyone was tired from the full schedule of activities, but anticipation of next year's camp had already begun. The pre-teens had learned new skills and made new friends, while having a lot of fun in the process.

—J. Charles Ogwyn

LYC 2006 Tacloban City, Philippines



Seventeen youthful campers spent May 1–5 at Bayanihan School, in Tacloban City. More than half had never before attended a youth gathering such as this. Six camp staff served as counselors and took care of food preparation, while the campers heard lectures on Christian living topics such as the Kingdom of God, the Festivals, living in the world, and Christian leadership. There were also classes in journalism, music and etiquette. A Bible Bowl deepened campers' familiarity with Scripture. We are already looking forward to next year's camp, perhaps at the national level or combining Davao and Tacloban.

—Felipe Casing

Preparing for Marriage

By Rod Reynolds

Most of you unmarried brethren who are reading this have thought about getting married someday. But have you ever thought seriously about why marriage exists, or where it originated? Have you taken steps to prepare yourself for marriage?

A few of you may be thinking, “What difference does it make? Why should I worry about preparing myself? As long as I find someone I’m attracted to, that’s what matters.” Sadly, that approach is very common in the world today. People often rush into marriage without considering that their choice of a mate will have a huge effect on their future happiness, and on the overall direction their lives will take.

In the United States alone, roughly 2.5 million couples get married each year. Tragically for those couples—and for their children—about half of those marriages will end in divorce (“Marriage,” *World Book Multimedia Encyclopedia*, 1998).

Why do so many marriages fail? Have you considered that there would be far fewer failures if people truly understood and respected that it was God Himself who established marriage and the laws that govern it? Remember, Jesus taught: “But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10:6–9).

If you want a happy and successful marriage, it would be wise to heed what its Creator says about its purpose—and to heed the laws that, if followed, will make a marriage successful.

Angels cannot marry, nor can they be born into God’s family (Matthew 22:30; Hebrews 1:5). Although some animals mate for life, only God and human beings marry (Ephesians 5:25–28; Revelation 19:7–9). At the “marriage supper,” the Church will be permanently joined to Jesus Christ under the terms of the New Covenant (Romans 7:4; Hebrews 8:6–13). Marriage among physical human beings is thus meant to be a spiritual “God-plane” relationship, typifying the eternal relationship Jesus Christ will have with His Church in the Kingdom of God.

To facilitate human marriage, God created human sexuality. Men and women were made different so that

through the proper kind of mutual attraction they would bind together in selfless love and create godly offspring. However, those differences can create untold problems when they are misunderstood or misused. For example, women are generally physically weaker than men, and some men use this as an excuse to abuse or mistreat women. Men who abuse women have failed to recognize that God wants them to balance their aggressive tendencies with tenderness, affection and honor toward the “weaker vessel” (1 Peter 3:7). Men need to appreciate that the “weaker” woman has some strengths that a man often lacks, such as a certain kind of sensitivity that is not generally natural to a more aggressive man.

Sex itself is often misused, before and even during marriage. Sexual infidelities lead inevitably to guilt, hurt, frustration, anger, hostility—and even murder. A large percentage of murders have their roots in misuse and abuse of sex. Poverty and crimes of all kinds are significant factors correlated with irresponsibility and abuse in relations between the sexes.

God wants to give us eternal life in His Kingdom, as members of His divine family. But He wants us not just to have life, but to have *abundant* life! “I have come,” Jesus said, “that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). As we have seen, human marriage is intended to be a figure or type of the abundant life in God’s Kingdom. A marriage between a man and woman where genuine love prevails can greatly enhance the happiness of both. “Live *joyfully* with the wife *whom you love* all the days of your vain [or temporary] life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is *your portion in life*, and in the labor which you perform under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 9:9).

What Is Love?

Yes, we are to live joyfully with the spouse we love. But what is love, and what are the principles of love that help a couple make their marriage work? You have probably seen movies, and heard songs, about two strangers who meet and suddenly “fall in love.” The next thing you know, they are in bed “making love”—often without benefit of marriage. But is that really love? Songs rarely depict what happens after the brief romantic fling is

over—except perhaps for a few (especially in the Country & Western genre) that honestly portray the pain, bitterness and hurt of sexual infidelity.

The truth is that what the popular culture often calls “love” is not really love at all. Most people in the world today have confused “love” with lawless, selfish desire—what the Bible calls “lust.”

Physical attraction, of and by itself, is not love. Yes, it can provide a spark to draw two people into a relationship in which they can get to know each other. Once married, partners ought to keep that romantic spark alive, which they can do by sharing their lives together in regular communication, striving to stay in shape and practicing good hygiene. Yet a happy, fulfilling and lasting marriage must be built not on mere physical attraction, but rather on two people committing their minds and hearts to consciously build love into their lives together.

In the Greek New Testament, the primary words for love are *agape* and *philia*. The New Testament primarily uses *agape* to describe the unbounded divine love that originates with God, which manifests itself in many different ways. The word *philia* concerns love among brethren or within families. Each of these aspects of love is essential for a fulfilling, happy marriage.

“*Agape* has to do with the *mind*: it is not simply an emotion which rises unbidden in our hearts; it is a principle by which we deliberately live” (*New Testament Words*, Barclay, p. 21). Although *philia* may come somewhat more naturally to us, it too must be deliberately cultivated and nurtured to reach full flower. The Bible tells husbands to, “love [*agapao*, the verb of *agape*] your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25). In marriage, a husband must commit himself to unselfish concern for his wife’s well-being, and devote himself to fulfilling the needs of his lifelong mate. Young women are also admonished to “love their husbands [*philandros*], to love their children” (Titus 2:4). To fulfill these requirements takes conscious, lifelong commitment and diligent *work* on the part of both husband and wife, but the rewards are worth the effort.

The Bible is full of scriptures that provide insight into the real meaning of love. We read, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). There are many ways to lay down one’s life for friends, but this kind of love begins with saying “no” to self—including to your own selfish, carnal lusts. You lay down your life for your future mate by keeping yourself sexually pure until marriage. That means not engaging in any form of adultery or fornication, and not abusing your mind or body sexually.

Jesus said, “Whoever looks upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart”

(Matthew 5:28). It is wrong to say that you have avoided adultery simply because you “didn’t go all the way.” Acts of sexual foreplay, such as passionate kissing, necking and petting—as well as other sexual abuses, including masturbation—are all sin, as they violate the principle of the commandment against committing adultery. Viewing pornography also violates this commandment.

Pornography can become addictive, and it distorts one’s view of the opposite sex. Pornography often plays a role not only in routine sexual infidelities, but also in sexual crimes such as rape and child molestation. We have an obligation to say “no” to pornography, and to all other forms of illicit sexual experimentation. Do this out of love for God, for others affected by your conduct and for the one you will someday marry.

Another key scripture to remember is, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). Something called “love” is *not love at all* if it involves breaking any of God’s commandments. It is deception and fraud. Lusts that lead to breaking God’s commandments do not in any way constitute love. Indeed, they are the very opposite of love, leading not to tranquility and happiness but rather to ultimate misery and death.

Paul told the Galatians, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:13–14). Love serves and gives to others. Your virginity should not be something you lose in illicit sex; it should be something you give in service to your husband or wife after you marry.

Many want to rush foolishly and blindly into premature romantic liaisons—or even into marriage—without preparing themselves by taking the time to develop emotional, social and spiritual maturity. In preparing for marriage, it is usually best to become acquainted with the variety of personality and character types you find within your particular group—generally those of similar age and ethnicity within God’s Church. Do not be in a hurry to “pair off”—get to know individuals as part of your group, through group activities, before you reach the stage of individual dating.

Do you go to a store and buy the first dress or shirt you see? Even if you like it, you will usually look around to see what else is available before making up your mind. This is just common wisdom. If you rely on Him, God will lead you to the proper mate for you (Proverbs 19:14). But He expects your cooperation, and in American culture this generally means that you should date as widely as possible within your own group.

When you date, think unselfishly. Be concerned with what you can give on the date, not just what you may get. Sincerely seek to give to the other person in stimulating and enjoyable conversation. Do your best to make the other person comfortable and at ease. Give deference to the other person's needs and desires. Plan your date to include activities that both you and the other person will enjoy. Date with an attitude of service and giving. This

if you are not yet married, you would be wise to weigh all such potential pitfalls carefully before marriage.

As you consider these points, be sure that you are putting your relationship with God first, and taking every possible step to develop your relationship with Him. "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:6). God's direction and guidance in every phase of dating and preparation for marriage is vital

Lusts that lead to breaking God's commandments do not in any way constitute love. Indeed, they are the very opposite of love, leading not to tranquility and happiness but rather to ultimate misery and death.

can help both you and the person you date grow toward greater maturity and godliness, and will make your dates rewarding and fun experiences for you and your partners.

The PROPER WAY to Approach Dating and Marriage

Why do half of the marriages in the U.S. fail? One key reason is that many marry without being prepared for the responsibilities and demands of marriage. People often also fail to weigh realistically any circumstances that might hinder a stable and long-lasting marriage relationship.

"Some marriages fail because the man and woman married when they were young and inexperienced in many ways. People who marry before they are 18 years old are much more likely to have unsuccessful marriages than if they had waited until they were older. A man and woman also have less of a chance of achieving a happy marriage if they marry primarily because the woman is pregnant. In addition, if a man and woman are of a different age, nationality, religion, or background, their chances of a successful marriage drop significantly" ("Marriage," *World Book Multimedia Encyclopedia*, 1998).

Of course, not every marriage that begins under such circumstances fails. However, the chances of success are poor when people marry at too young an age, or when a wide age gap exists between the partners, or when there are ethnic or religious differences. A marriage under those circumstances involves powerful sources of potential conflict set in motion from the start. God's word discourages marriages involving divergent ethnic and religious backgrounds (Genesis 24:1–4; 26:34–35; 27:46–28:5; Exodus 34:12–16; Deuteronomy 7:1–5; Nehemiah 13:23–30; 2 Corinthians 6:14–18). Such marriages are not doomed to failure, and partners already involved in such marriages can and must strive to make them successful (1 Corinthians 7:12–17; 1 Peter 3:1). But

to your permanent well-being and happiness. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). This includes, of course, the right mate. Ask God to guide you in preparing for marriage, and in helping you to find the right person to marry. Since real love is not getting, but is actually giving and serving, you should prepare yourself for the responsibilities that come with marriage. Get a good education. Prepare yourself to earn a living. This applies to young women, but it is especially important for young men, who should prepare to be the primary breadwinner for the family.

Wives, especially during their child-bearing and child-rearing years, should ideally be devoting themselves first and foremost to those responsibilities (Titus 2:5). This is certainly a radical departure from current trends in our decadent and corrupt culture, and may not be feasible for some in difficult circumstances. But it is not just the ideal; it is God's ideal. Sound homes and marriages are central to the long-term well-being of individuals and society. It is not always wrong for a wife to work outside the home, but the needs of the children and the home should come first. Young men should prepare themselves to earn a sufficient living to provide for their families, so wives can devote themselves to the home as God instructs.

Once you are married, you will need to devote yourself to work and family, and your horizon may narrow as you focus on meeting your responsibilities. So, while you are young and single, take opportunities while you can to broaden your horizons. Travel widely if you can, and meet new people. Also, date widely within your group, as mentioned above. Doing so can help you build an understanding of what love is and is not, and can help you to better love and serve your future mate and children. As you get to know more people, you can gain a better sense not only of how to evaluate other people as potential mates, but you can also look at yourself

more realistically—are you mature, and are you prepared spiritually, emotionally, mentally, educationally and financially?

When you think you are ready for marriage, be sure to seek the counsel of your parents, your Church pastor, and perhaps others whose counsel you have learned to trust. We all have “blind spots” and can benefit from wise counsel from those who have experienced what we are just beginning to experience. Parents normally want their children’s lives to be happy and successful, and in most cases they will not intentionally throw unnecessary roadblocks in their children’s search for real happiness. Through their wisdom and experience they may alert you to warning signs and pitfalls you ought to heed. If someone—especially a potential mate—tries to put a barrier between you and your parents or other trusted adults, beware! What are this person’s qualifications for giving wise counsel? What are this person’s motives? The hardearned wisdom and insight of elders you respect might just save you from a disastrous mistake (Proverbs 4:1–6; 5:1–14; 7:1–5; 11:14).

When it is time for the wedding, plan it together. Do not spend so much money on your wedding that you can-

not afford to meet your other needs. If properly planned, a wedding need not be terribly expensive. You can achieve a quality ambiance and have a memorable experience on a reasonable budget. Here, too, you can seek the counsel of your parents and other trusted advisors who may have special talents and a lifetime of experience from which to draw.

Once you are married, remember that sex within marriage, practiced in love, is clean and pure. “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Hebrews 13:4, NIV). Remember that sex is designed to bind husbands and wives together, and that as you add new beings to your family, you are reflecting God’s very purpose for creating human beings to join His family.

Your marriage will be the second most important step you take in your life—only baptism is more important. Marriage is a commitment for life, and how you prepare for it will greatly affect the success and happiness you are able to have throughout your life. Prepare wisely! ☐

Lessons of Atonement

(continued from page 5)

the important step in God’s plan that the Day of Atonement pictures.

The Apostle Paul explained *how* we can become *at one* with God and with Jesus Christ. He wrote: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Jesus Christ” (Philippians 2:5). With the mind of God, Jesus humbled Himself and “made Himself of no reputation” as He obeyed God and fulfilled His mission on this earth (Philippians 2:7–11). Many problems within society, within the Church and between people would disappear if people would be willing to *humble themselves* as they serve others, instead of seeking attention and promoting their own agendas. Paul pleaded with Church members in Corinth, who were divided into factions, urging them to “all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judg-

ment” (1 Corinthians 1:10). Paul later explained that when we are able to understand the truth of God, and share the same perspectives on spiritual matters, it is because “we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:7–16).

If we have the mind of Christ, we will be humble and teachable. We will want to do things God’s way, instead of insisting on our own way. We will reflect the attitude of Jesus Christ who, when faced with a difficult decision, said to His Father, “not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39). Paul had this same attitude when he urged the Galatians to let Christ live His life through their lives by guiding their minds and actions (Galatians 2:20). In similar words, Paul urged the Church in Rome to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” and to “walk properly”—living their lives as Jesus Christ would live His, according to the laws of God (Romans 13:12–14). As we develop the mind and perspective of God, our lives and thoughts and

actions will begin to radiate the very nature and character of God. This is an essential element in how we become *at one* with God, which is God’s ultimate goal for human beings.

As we reflect on the Day of Atonement, we should remember its biblical significance in the plan of God—that Satan will be bound, and the peoples of this earth will have the opportunity to become *at one* with God. In order to become *at one* with God, we must learn to recognize, resist and overcome the deceptive, divisive and destructive influences of Satan. We must also develop the very mind and perspective of God, so we will be able to think and act like a member of the God family. This is why God created us as human beings. Are you making progress toward this goal? Will you be ready for what the Day of Atonement pictures—the time in the future when we will ultimately become *at one* with God? ☐

Loyalty Builds Unity

(continued from page 11)

On the human level, we must remain loyal not only to those we support, but to those who support us in the various chains of authority God has established. Husbands and wives must be faithful to each other, and their children must be loyal—both to one another and to their parents. Employees must be loyal to their employers, and employers must be loyal to those who work for them. Loyalty, when practiced faithfully within God's law and will, brings about a unified family, workplace, nation and Church.

God's word requires Christians to be loyal *even when others are not loyal to them*. "Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good

and gentle, but also to the harsh" (1 Peter 2:17–18). The word "harsh" is translated from the Greek *skolios*, which has as its base meaning "warped" or "winding" or "perverse"—or, as used in the KJV, "crooked" or "froward" or "untoward" (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* #4656).

When Lucifer failed to obey his Creator with a loyal heart, he fell away and became Satan. God tests our loyalty to ensure that no future adversaries will arise from within the spiritual family He is creating. As we approach the end of the age, God's people will face challenges similar to those that confronted Amaziah, Asa, David and Hezekiah. How will we respond—individually, and as a Church? Will we turn away from God and seek our safety in human beings? Or will we humble ourselves in deep, heartfelt repentance and trust in our King and Creator—standing strong in faith, loyalty and unity with Him and with our brethren? ☞

What Does Christ's Death...

(continued from page 3)

top of the mountain with Abraham, and apparently *did not resist* as Abraham tied him up and laid him on top of the altar as a sacrifice. At the very last minute, as Abraham "stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son," God called out to Abraham to *stop*, and told him, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him, for *now I know* that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your *only* son from Me" (Genesis 22:9–12).

Later, as God directed Israel to keep the first Passover, He told the Israelites to slay "an unblemished lamb." This unblemished male lamb was, of course, a *direct type* of Jesus Christ who would later become the "Lamb of God." The lamb's **blood** had to be shed, for God told the Israelites to take some of the blood and put it on the doorposts and the lintels of the houses where they were to eat the Passover. He stated: "Now the **blood** shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the **blood**, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt"

(Exodus 12:13). The Bible makes it exceedingly clear that God will not "pass over" *our* sins unless we are truly "under the blood" of Jesus Christ our Savior. Brethren, we must always—*always*—remember and appreciate this stark fact!

And, *much more* than most of us probably do, we should constantly

promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the **blood** of Christ" (Ephesians 2:12–13).

Similarly, as Paul wrote to the Colossians, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the

The Bible makes it exceedingly clear that God will not "pass over" our sins unless we are truly "under the blood" of Jesus Christ our Savior. Brethren, we must always—always—remember and appreciate this stark fact!

think about and appreciate the sacrifice Jesus Christ made in literally giving *His blood* as payment for our sins! For, again and again, we find the New Testament writers focusing on this vital realization. The Apostle Paul wrote, "In Him we have redemption through His **blood**, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). Later, Paul told the Ephesians that, when they were unconverted Gentiles, they "were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of

Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His **blood**, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13–14). *Only* through Christ's shed **blood** can we have genuine forgiveness of sins. And how much we need constant forgiveness of our sins, dear brethren, *all through the year!*

Near the very end of the New Testament, the Apostle John wrote, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one

another, and the **blood** of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:6–7). Notice John’s wording that Christ continually “cleanses us” from all sin. It is **not** that we have only our past sins forgiven. Rather, as our High Priest, Christ *continually* cleanses us and purges us so we can truly reflect the nature of God. For, “if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the Truth is not in us!” So, we must “confess” our sins—**repent** of our sins. Then, Christ will continue to clean us up, fashion and mold us, and work with us through the remainder of our lives (vv. 9–10).

Brethren, it is very easy to become spiritually “uppity”—and to **forget** that we are simply living within God’s grace because of the **horrifying** suffering our Savior went through when *He shed His blood for us!* Remember, we **did** deserve to die. For we **did** sin—and, if we are honest, we will acknowledge that we **all continue to sin** in many ways through our selfishness, vanity, lust and greed! May God help each of us to focus on this fact more frequently, all through the year. May God help us to constantly **appreciate** what He did for us through Jesus Christ. May he give us a more full and **personal** appreciation of Jesus Christ as our **personal** Savior, living Head, High Priest and coming King! May God help all of us to focus on **all** of these facets of Jesus Christ—what He *has* done, what He *is* doing, and what He *will* do as our *continuing* Savior, High Priest and coming King.

For me, one of the most motivating passages of the New Testament is found in Philippians 1:19–21. Here Paul showed the Philippians that—through their prayers and the Spirit of Jesus Christ—God would undoubtedly deliver him from the “chains” he was in. Paul purposed that “with all boldness, as always, *so now also Christ will be magnified in my body,*

whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

Do you and I fervently wish that our Savior may be “magnified” in our bodies—whether by life or by death? Are we willing to **give** our lives as living sacrifices now—*really*? Are we willing to give our lives—if need be—as *martyrs* to honor Christ in death, if it comes to that?

Can we say, with Paul, that “for to me to live is Christ?” Is our *entire*

2:5–8). As we have so often explained, Christ knowingly and deliberately “emptied Himself” (v. 7) in **giving up** the totality of the glory and power He had shared with the Father from eternity.

Jesus Christ—our Savior—was willing to *empty Himself* of the awesome glory and magnificence He had shared with the Father, because they together had planned to *reproduce* themselves through human

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purpose in living to *reflect Jesus Christ*, to do *His Work* and to *honor His name* because He died for us? Obviously, **not one** of us does all of this perfectly! But this is an ideal—a realistic **goal**—for which we should all strive and pray! Daily, each of us should ask God to cleanse our mind and heart, and to help us *genuinely* focus on His purpose in giving us life and breath. We should ask the Father to help us focus on *His purpose* in allowing His Son to **die for us**. In doing so, we should become willing and even *anxious* to **glorify Christ** in everything we think, say and do!

As Paul wrote a little later, “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, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians

beings. For God, as we know, “created all things through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:9). From eternity, the Word and the Father had planned to make human beings in their image, “as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4). Because of this unfathomable love for us—which, in our own selfishness, we find difficult to understand—God and Christ were willing to go to tremendous lengths to enlarge their family. They decided that the Word would **die** for the creation, through *shedding His blood* as a human being. They decided to accomplish this through crucifixion—one of the most slow, agonizing and humiliating deaths ever invented by a depraved humanity under Satan’s influence!

We all know this. We have all heard this. Yet we often forget to *focus* on this, and we fail to get down on our knees *every morning* to *thank* God and *thank* Christ—with deep

appreciation—for what they have done, are doing and will do. Brethren, we are *Christians*. That is the focus of our entire calling—we are “bought and paid for” by the **blood** of Jesus Christ. Let us **never** forget that. Let us **never** become so spiritually proud of ourselves that we lose the deep sense of humility we ought to have as *forgiven sinners*.

Through this realization, we can keep our spiritual balance much better. We can better sense our own day-to-day **need** for God. We can more easily **forgive** one another when a brother or sister sins, and we

ought to forgive them as God has forgiven us.

May God help each of us truly **focus** on this wonderful realization. Let us build the habit of honoring, praising and *worshiping* Jesus Christ—for what He did for us, for what He **is** doing now in our lives as He fashions and molds us and helps us overcome, and for what He **will** do as He works with the Father in deciding “where we fit” as kings and priests in His coming Kingdom.

Remember, dear brethren, God will **never** be “jealous” of our affection for and *worship* of His Son. For

God tells us in John’s gospel, as in scores of other similar places in His word, “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, *that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father*. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him” (John 5:22–23).

Truly, brethren, we should *honor* the Son deeply as we go forth all over this world in preaching His message, as we do His Work and as we live His way—bringing genuine *honor* on the name of Christ who died for us. ☞

A “Missing” Part of Christ’s Gospel

(continued from page 2)

that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Therefore, dear brethren, we all need to *stir ourselves* and strive to heed Jude’s exhortation to “*contend earnestly for the faith* which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Yes, we must recapture *the* true faith and approach to God in general. But we must in particular **fight earnestly** for the *personal faith* to be *healed*, and to be *delivered* from the coming Great Tribulation and from every one of the devil’s devices. We must all focus honestly on the **fact** that Jesus Christ is the only real Healer, and that God **alone** can truly *forgive* our transgressions of His physical laws and make us truly well.

Yes, doctors can often help. We definitely acknowledge this. They can frequently remove the physical symptoms of pain and suffering. They sometimes literally *cut out* a part of the body that is not working properly. But **only** God can *supernaturally* remove a disease, *heal* a cancer and make us **completely well**—with **no** side effects! And much depends on the degree of genuine **faith** we have in Yahweh *Ropheka*—the “*God who heals*.”

As the dreaded avian flu and other modern plagues begin to strike in earnest within the next few years, we need more than ever to recapture the genuine **faith** that was in the original apostolic Church! We must remember that divine **healing** was a fundamental part of the ministry of the original apostles—and of Jesus Christ Himself. We must remember that when Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong led the Church, *thousands* of people were healed of all kinds of sicknesses, ailments and maladies. I *know*. I

talked to them. I read the letters that came pouring in during those days. I was sincerely *moved* in meeting many of these people who were not sentimental or hysterical, but were *actually healed* by the great God of the Bible!

Brethren, we in the Living Church of God must truly *feed* on Christ’s Word (John 6:57). We must *cry out* to God for genuine **faith**, so we may receive *all* of His blessings—and especially the “*gifts of healings*” (1 Corinthians 12:9).

Mr. Armstrong often quoted George Mueller’s definition of faith—a definition we should all review thoughtfully. As Mr. Armstrong wrote in his booklet, *What Is Faith?*: “Faith is the assurance that the things which God said in His Word are true! And that God will act according to what He has said in His word. This assurance, this reliance on God’s word, this confidence, is faith!” That’s George Mueller’s definition. And it is a true Bible definition.”

May God help *all* of us get back to the kind of genuine **faith** that was demonstrated by Christ, by the original apostles and by *thousands* in the early Church and—in my experience—by *hundreds*, at the very least, during the years when I first came into the Radio Church of God. Let us *all surrender* more fully to the **true** Christ of the Bible, and seek to emulate Him in *every possible way*. Let us spend much more time in **prayer** and in **fasting**. And let us then **believe** God, and believe in the teachings and the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



Local Church News

Baltimore Singles Weekend

Approximately 40 LCG singles gathered in Baltimore, Maryland, for a special singles weekend from July 21–23. The event began on Friday evening with an enjoyable wine tasting social hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Clore.

After morning Sabbath services, the group enjoyed a covered dish meal with the friendly Baltimore congregation. An interactive Bible study followed the lunch; singles split into small groups to discuss and apply biblical principles to real-world issues. On Saturday evening, after the Sabbath, the group gathered for country line dancing lessons and even more fellowship.

Sunday, July 23, was filled with other fun events. The day began with a trip to Fort McHenry, where singles learned about the fort's history and also about the

origin of the United States' national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner." The group then proceeded to Baltimore's World Trade Center where, from 27 stories above the Baltimore skyline, they enjoyed an amazing view of the city and surrounding areas. Afterward, the singles split into smaller groups to tour other sites of interest; some visited the famous National Aquarium, some took a walk around Baltimore's scenic inner harbor and some enjoyed a leisurely lunch.

As the event came to a close, prizes were awarded to those who had learned the most about their fellow singles, and the group then parted with many warm goodbyes. Special thanks go to Baltimore's Bob Kelly and Robin Collins for all the hard work that went into planning this memorable event!

—Tad Walls



Births

Weldon and Holly Bussey are pleased to announce the birth of their son *Owen Oliver Ralph Bussey* on May 12. He weighed 7 pounds, 4 ounces.

Geoff and Mandy Cox of Covington, Georgia are happy to announce the birth of their second child, *Alan Joseph Cox*. He was born on July 26, weighing 8 pounds, 10 ounces, and measuring 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. Mother and baby are doing well.

Joseph and Wanda Ross of Dubuque, Iowa are excited to

announce the birth of their son *Joseph Winston Stephen Ross* on May 21. He weighed 7 pounds, 6 ounces and measured 20 inches long. Thanks to all who prayed for his birth; he is now healthy and growing, and is a delight to grandparents Raymond and Joan Waller of Dubuque, Iowa, and Joseph Ross of Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada.

Pete and Dawn Rothenbacher, of the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation, are thrilled to announce

the birth of their son, *Zachary Hans Rothenbacher*, on May 19. He weighed 7 pounds, and measured 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. His six-year-old sister Gaby is excited to "finally" have a baby brother.

Dennis and Heather Shipley, of the LCG congregation in Russellville, Arkansas, announce the birth of their son *Darren Shipley*. Born on February 7, he weighed 8 pounds, 6 ounces, and measured 21 inches long. The Shipleys also have a daughter, Abbie.

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@lcg.org).

Wedding

While cruising on the beautiful coastal waters of Newport Beach, California, on February 26, *Mr. Edward Sheret and Miss Susie Stewart* became husband and wife. Dr. Jeffrey Fall conducted the marriage ceremony, after which guests enjoyed a luncheon and reception aboard Ed's boat "Destiny" with music and dancing enjoyed by all. The couple reside in Huntington Beach, and attend the LCG congregation in Garden Grove.

Anniversary

Scott and Jenny Lyons, deacon and deaconess in the Walterboro, South Carolina congregation, baptized members of God's Church for more than 20 years, celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary on September 6.

In Loving Memory

Ruth Fischer, of the Houston, Texas congregation, died on July 26. She was 85 years old. Her husband John preceded her in death in 2003. She and her husband, baptized members of God's Church for more than 30 years, are both missed by many friends and brethren.

John E. Kittilson, of East Helena, Montana, died on June 4. He was 81 years old. A veteran of the United States Navy, he served during World War II and the Korean conflict, then after his discharge he worked for the State of Montana as a scale master until his retirement. Active in his congregation, he was always willing to lend a helping hand to anyone in need. He will be missed by all who knew him.

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
September 3	Prepare for Christ's Second Coming
September 10	Framework for Prophecy
September 17	Who Is the Beast of Revelation?
September 24	Does God Heal Today?
October 1	Danger in the Middle East
October 8	Seven Keys to Effective Prayer
October 15	Life After Death?
October 22	Signs of the Second Coming
October 29	Unlocking the Mystery of Revelation

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

Commentary

A War of Weapons, a War of Words

By Gary F. Ehman

The eyes of the world are once again riveted to the escalating fighting and chaos erupting in the Middle East. As expected, the tiny nation of Israel once more finds itself fighting a war on both physical and political fronts.

Those who had mistakenly misread Israel's pull-back from occupied territories as a promise of coming stability and peace are getting a wake-up call that when it comes to the Middle East, there is no peace. Arabs misreading the pullbacks as the growing weakness of the Israeli government, and fading will of its people, now find missiles and bombs falling in profusion around them.

Arab militias backed by Syria and Iran— Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon—are dedicated to the annihilation of the nation of Israel, and have pushed hard to destabilize the shaky Middle East peace process. These militant groups now find themselves being targeted, with deadly accuracy, by war planes responding to missile attacks on Israeli cities.

While the United States refuses to condemn the Israelis defending themselves, even some Arab groups have begun to question the methods of militant Islamic groups attempting to destabilize peace efforts. Several European countries, in surprisingly muted tones, have deplored what they call Israel's "overreaction," perhaps realizing that it is Muslim militants who continue to unsettle the region, not to mention Europe itself.

Words, weapons; more words, more weapons—and even more words followed by even more weapons. It has become glaringly obvious no one really has a solution to this conflict. While world leaders

grasp hopefully at every proclamation of peace, they appear ignorant of the underlying causes—those described in Bible prophecy.

The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed: "Why do we sit still? Assemble yourselves, and let us enter the fortified cities, and let us be silent there. For the LORD our God has put us to silence and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and there was trouble!" (Jeremiah 8:14–15; c.f. Isaiah 59:8).

Tomorrow's World presenter Richard Ames, in his booklet *The Middle East in Prophecy*, wrote: "Arabs and Israelis have been at war since the modern state of Israel was established. Peace has often been proclaimed in the region, but has never been realized. More than 25 years after Egyptian President Anwar Sadat gave hope to the world, flying to Israel to offer a dramatic overture of peace, the process he hoped to encourage has stalled, if not stopped. At present, there is little human prospect for lasting peace among Middle East nations."

Weapons of war and words of peace are like oil and water; when shaken together they appear to mix, but they soon settle into their distinctive components because they lack the main ingredient to neutralize their distinct properties. Mankind, of itself, does not have the solutions to its problems because it rejects the true solution—the main ingredient—the word of God (Psalm 119:165).

Mankind's problems are not just physical; they are deeply spiritual and require a spiritual solution. It will take the return of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, to neutralize the war of weapons and the war of words (Isaiah 9:6–7).

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.