

Living Church News

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You Are an Ambassador for Christ!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

Even as we begin to turn our attention to preparing for the Passover, which we will take this year after sunset on April 1, I am still hearing comments about how enjoyable last year's Feast of Tabernacles was, how powerful and helpful the sermons were, and how it gave most of our brethren a "recharging" of their spiritual batteries. All of us need to thank God for this. But, close as we were to God during the Feast, we must draw even closer to God during these winter months so He can use us—as a Church—far more powerfully as instruments to preach His Truth to the world, and to warn our people of the horrifying events soon to befall their beloved nations.

One thing I should mention, that for some was a "negative" during the Feast, was that some of our people—even after years in the Church—sometimes were dressing very inappropriately. I have written and preached repeatedly that we should not "judge" the new people coming in—especially young people. On the other hand, it is important that we get our "balance" on this matter and **not** allow a "licentious lifestyle" to gradually overtake our people. During these last years of what is, in fact, Satan's society, it becomes so easy to descend to a lower level of behavior along with the rest of the world. We must not do this!

Dear brethren, I do want all of our ministers and brethren to be "gentle" and to be patient with people in matters of dress and grooming. However, this does **not** mean we should go to the opposite extreme and begin to look and act and dress just like the world!

So I hope all of you will read the following words of the Apostle James. Parents, if you are able, discuss them with your teenagers! Here is what our Father in heaven inspired the Apostle James to write: "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously'? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (James 4:4–8).

When you analyze this inspired scripture, it becomes obvious that we are **not** to try to "be like" the world in the whole approach we have to life. Yet, in our modern media-oriented world, it is extremely difficult for people to get their balance in this matter because they are literally **surrounded** by the world and its influences through television, radio, films and now the ever-pervasive

Internet. So, we need to do all that we can to guide people, and help them realize that as "Ambassadors for Christ" we should be pleased to set a higher standard! As the Church of the living God, we should not be ashamed to let the world—and our worldly friends—know that we stand for something. This should be reflected in the overall wholesomeness and purity of our dress, our grooming, the kind of films we see, the kind of music we listen to and our entire lifestyle.

Young people, **please take heed!** I say this to all of you as a father and grandfather who loves young people and who deeply enjoyed teaching so many hundreds of Ambassador students over a period of 35 years! For your happiness and well-being, it will be much better for you to reflect the Jesus Christ of the Bible than to reflect the "lifestyle" of this world under the influence of Satan the Devil!

One of our long-time Church ladies recently wrote me the following: "Some churches in the world have strict dress codes. It seems strange to me that the minister can't say something to these women when they come in halter tops and spaghetti straps or strapless dresses, slits up the side way up to the thigh and short, clinging dresses. They should ask the greeters to ask people who come improperly dressed to go home and get dressed and come back. If it offends them then maybe they shouldn't be there. These are not new people. They are people who have been coming for years and know better."

This lady—a mother herself—is sincerely interested in helping—not hurting—our young people to have a good marriage and a good life in the future. She knows our young people are **not** going to improve their lives by getting involved in the world and reflecting it!

Even "mainstream" religious people have also become deeply concerned about the "sexualization of society" that is going on—especially as it affects susceptible young women. Notice this report from AgapePress: "An analyst with Concerned Women for America says the culture is putting the squeeze on the dress styles of young American females. Dr. Janice Crouse, senior fellow with CWA's Beverly LaHaye Institute, says from this week's Halloween costumes to everyday dress, young women—including those as young as seven or eight—are being forced to buy skimpier clothes because of agendas from the liberal segments of society. Crouse believes the reasoning behind the move toward more revealing apparel is simple: the ongoing sexualization of society. 'There is an agenda, even in the fashion world, to pass along to our teenage girls the skimpy kind of clothing that the world considers appropriate and fashionable,' she says" (November 1, 2006).

Remember that the Apostle Paul told us, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

All of our brethren—and especially you young people—need to realize that this present society is the very society Jesus described as being like

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But by Prayer and Fasting

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

These are trying times. Make no mistake about it; we need God's help and His direct intervention—now.

For times such as these, the Apostle Paul instructs us to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:10–12).

That is exactly what we are fighting. A higher power—Satan the devil—is our real antagonist. It is time we all recognize that.

“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (v. 13). We need that armor of God.

We need spiritual help in resisting ourselves, in overcoming the world (which strikes us from many different directions) and in resisting and overcoming Satan the devil, who is also striking at us in remarkable and unusual ways he has never used against us before.

A Means to Spiritual Help

Scripture tells us what our Savior did to acquire spiritual

strength, in connection with the devil's attack on Him: “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted [or tried] by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry” (Matthew 4:1–2). Notice—He fasted!

Moses, who was a “type” of Jesus, took neither bread or water when he fasted (Deuteronomy 9:9, 18). In like manner, the Son of God fasted to humble Himself, to be close to God spiritually, lest He forget how weak He was in the flesh.

“Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread’” (Matthew 4:3). Imagine how hungry Jesus was after 40 days and nights of total fasting! The very cells of His body were crying out in a type of hunger that you and I have never experienced. But still He kept His wits, fasting for the right reason and in the right way, through prayer and meditation. In doing so, He was close in spirit to the invisible God.

Responding to the devil, He answered and said: “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (v. 4). That is what you and I need to learn to live by, more and more as these days continue, before the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The devil had to leave Christ alone because of the spir-

itual strength He expressed even in His physical weakness. We, too, can live by the same strength Jesus had.

But Should Christians Fast?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His disciples to give generously from the heart, and to pray to God continually. Notice that He said, “Moreover, when you fast...” (Matthew 6:16). He did not say “if” you fast; He took it for granted that His disciples would fast. Christ said, “when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward” (ibid.) In other words, their reward is whatever praise they receive from other people for showing off their fasting.

He continued: “But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” (vv. 17–18). Truly, God Almighty will do that for those of us who come before Him in fasting, as Jesus Christ said we should.

Later, the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your

disciples do not fast?” (Matthew 9:14). Jesus explained that as long as He was with them, it was like a wedding—a time to rejoice. “But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast” (v. 15). Although it was not yet fitting for His disciples to fast, as He explained in the next couple of verses, they would fast when their time came, yet they would do it for different reasons and in a whole new situation, with a whole new attitude and a whole new approach to God.

We Christians are not to punish ourselves, thinking that this will force God to hear our prayers. God is not interested in penance. That is just as if you or I would take whips and beat each other’s backs, saying, “Look at our suffering, God, so hear us.” The idea behind our fasting is quite different from that. We seek the invisible God. We fast to humble ourselves—to make ourselves realize how weak we are, and that we are little children, saying, in effect:

“Father, we are up against a great army, and there are great forces around us. We don’t always know what we should do, and we need your help. We need guidance. And we need deliverance. We recognize that we are merely flesh that is slowly decaying toward death, and so we are fasting. You are our God. You are our banner. You are our shield. You are our refuge. You are our high tower. You’re our champion. You’re our deliverer. We are your little children. Please help us draw near to You.”

When Nothing But Fasting Will Do

I think most of us are familiar with the story that begins in Mark 9:17–29. A man came to Christ and addressed Him, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit.

And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not” (vv. 17–18).

And so Jesus said, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me” (v. 19). And then, the unclean spirit threw the son on the ground where he lay foaming at the mouth, while Jesus questioned the father about him and reassured him, “If you can believe, all things are possible” (v. 23). Then He rebuked the foul spirit. He did not talk to the boy. He talked directly to the demon, “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!” (v. 25). And the spirit obeyed.

But what connection does that have with fasting? Notice: “And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’ So He said to them, ‘This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting’” (v. 29).

The word fasting here should be in all your Bibles, though a few modern translations like the NIV incorrectly leave it out. Some of the big problems in our lives, and in God’s Church—and some of the attacks by Satan the devil—can only be overcome by prayer plus fasting. We must not leave out fasting.

Remember, we are fighting “spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”—not just human beings. That is why we must have the spiritual power that can come only from God. But to receive it, our own attitudes must be right.

The Acceptable Fast

In many places, the New King James Version, though generally quite accurate, is not as easily understand-

able as it might be. The Living Bible puts Isaiah 58 in a way that may be especially meaningful. “‘We have fasted before you,’ they say. ‘Why aren’t you impressed? Why don’t you see our sacrifices? Why don’t you hear our prayers? We’ve done much penance and you don’t even notice it!’ I’ll tell you why! Because you’re living in evil pleasure even while you are fasting, and you keep right on oppressing your workers” (v. 3).

We need to be sure to treat the people around us well—and not hate them and fight them and gossip against them and put them down and judge them.

“Look, what good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. Is this what I want—this kind of penance and bowing like reeds in the wind and putting on sackcloth and covering yourselves with ashes?” (vv. 3–5).

You know how it goes: just showing an outward, “Oh, God! Oh, God!” Is this what God wants—a lot of hollering and Pentecostal-type fervor? No! Isaiah continues:

“Is that what you call fasting? No, the kind of fast I want is that you stop oppressing those who work for you and treat them fairly and give them what they earn. I want you to share your food with the hungry, and bring right into your own homes those who are helpless, poor and destitute. Clothe those who are cold and don’t hide from relatives who need your help” (vv. 5–7).

Yes, we need to do these things, to help others when we can. Isaiah goes on:

“If you do these things God will shed his own glorious light upon you. He will heal you; your godliness will lead you forward and goodness will be a shield before you, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind. Then, when you call, the Lord will answer, ‘Yes, I am here,’

He will quickly reply. All you need to do is to stop oppressing the weak and stop making false accusations and spreading vicious rumors! Feed the hungry! Help those in trouble! Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be bright as day. And the Lord will guide you with all good things, and keep you healthy too; and you will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring” (vv. 8–11, Living Bible).

Indeed, brethren, we do need to fast. We do need to grow closer to God. But we can only do this by restraining ourselves—not only from food and drink, but also from pride and strife, and quarreling and

vindictiveness and oppressing one another. Instead, we should help and serve one another.

Prayer and Fasting Go Together

There was a time when the prophet Daniel really, desperately wanted to know what would happen in the future: “Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes” (Daniel 9:3). Prayer always goes along with fasting.

How often in my Christian life have I somehow become caught in a wrong mood or situation just before a

day of fasting, and gone through the day in more or less a carnal manner? Perhaps I did my work, but I did not set aside extra time to study the Bible, maybe on my knees, or to pray to God a long time, or to meditate and drink in of God’s ideas and attitudes.

So, what did I get out of it? A bad headache, sometimes. Perhaps I lost a little weight, and maybe my body was a little more purified. Maybe there was a certain help God gave me in spite of my weakness the next day, because as the food comes back in, the physical strength flows back, and one has a little extra zest. You know the saying: “When you quit hitting

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Prepare for Your Fast Physically

1. Before you fast, prepare your body for the shock. Do not eat a great big meal (certainly not one including a big, sweet dessert), or indulge in a pepper steak or some spicy hot Mexican food just before your fast begins. These make you crave water, and all during your fast this will distract you into thinking, “Oh, no, I’m going to die!” For a profitable spiritual fast, you need a clear but humbled mind. So it is best to taper off on food, especially sweets and strong spices. Drink a lot of water the day before, to help begin to cleanse your system.
2. Take steps to ensure your digestive system is as free of poisons as it can be during your fast, so any headaches and other symptoms of hunger will be as mild as possible. Make sure you take proper care of your individual health needs before you fast, so you can obtain the maximum benefit and feel the fewest possible physical distractions when you fast. You may wish to consult your physician if you have a health condition that fasting can affect.
3. Fast regularly enough for your body to adjust itself to the practice. Some people who think they are “about to die” when they fast could actually find fasting much easier if they did it for a day every month or two, if their health allows.
4. After your fast, begin eating again slowly. Do not swallow a huge steak in the first ten minutes. It

will actually do you more good if you eat a smaller, lighter meal, or eat a meal spread out over a couple of hours in stages—maybe beginning with a warm, creamy soup. If your fast has lasted for longer than a day, it may be far better—or even necessary—to end it with something very small, like some stewed prunes or maybe a poached or soft-boiled egg.

Spiritual Keys to Fasting

1. Do not fast to get. And do not think you are fasting “for the Work.” We fast to grow closer to God, and the Work benefits from our closeness to God. God does not bargain with you, as if He will do your will if only you will fast for a few days! That is not how He works! Fast to humble yourself and to seek God’s will—yes, God’s correction and God’s guidance in your life—and to grasp God’s perspective on your situation.
2. Consider dividing your time during the fast as Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong indicated in his Autobiography. During a fast, he used to divide his waking time among three activities. He would study the Bible for about an hour. Then he would meditate on what he had studied for about an hour, sometimes sitting, or sometimes walking around. Then he would pray for about an hour. Bible study, meditation and prayer—these are the keys to a successful spiritual fast!

Develop the Mind of God

By Douglas S. Winnail

Are you prepared for what is coming in the years just ahead? Do you grasp how major trends that are developing today are going to dramatically alter the world in which we live? Do you believe what God has revealed in the Bible about future events that are going to change the course of human history in the twenty-first century? While many prefer not to think about the future because it can appear ominous and uncertain, you can prepare now for a challenging and exciting role in bringing real changes to this world—if you develop the mind of God!

Ominous Trends

People who look at the future today see a number of sobering trends that spell trouble on the horizon. The alarming rise in Muslim terrorism on a global scale is truly frightening—especially when you realize that these religious fanatics seek nothing less than the conversion or conquest of the Western so-called “Christian” world. The warriors of Islam swept out of the Middle East once before in history and nearly conquered Europe, and they are aiming to do it again! Armies of immigrants are also invading America, Canada and other European countries in search of a better life—yet in the process they are often undermining and destabilizing the host countries where they settle. Last summer, France was rocked by riots fanned by frustrated, unemployed immigrants who have not integrated into French society. This kind of discontent is spreading, and will continue to foster a backlash, as people in Europe and America begin to fear and resent the loss of their cultural values and freedoms. The ongoing efforts to unify Europe and build a European army, and the appeals of the Pope to revive Europe’s Roman Catholic roots, are leading towards the revival of a European superpower linked to religion. The Bible has long predicted that this will occur just before the second coming of Jesus Christ (see Daniel 2; Revelation 17).

Today, economists worry about a global financial crisis as they consider the increasingly precarious state of the world economy, and observe the instability of the American dollar as a result of the U.S. government’s deficit spending. A crash of the dollar could send financial shock waves around the globe. Many today are concerned about the spreading moral decay that has been fostered by the decline in religious influence and the rise

of amoral secularism. When morals decline, the decline of nations is not far off. Along with all these woes come increasing concerns about a growing environmental crisis—extremes of weather spurred by human activities, catastrophic climatic conditions, collapsing oceanic fisheries, widespread droughts and famines and the rise of drug-resistant diseases like HIV-AIDS and tuberculosis. Yet, there is a much more hopeful future which Scripture reveals to those who have the mind of God and are able to understand!

An Exciting Vision

The Bible states, “Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint” (Proverbs 29:18). It is not surprising that many who contemplate the future in the face of so many ominous trends often turn to drugs, alcohol or mind-numbing entertainments, because the future can look hopeless from a purely human perspective! Most people today have no idea of what the future holds, but God long ago revealed to the prophet Daniel “what will be in the latter days” (Daniel 2:28). Daniel saw in a vision that the return of Jesus Christ would occur at the time when the world would witness the final revival of the Roman Empire in Europe (Daniel 2:41–45). The Apostle John revealed that a prominent religious figure would play a major role in bringing about this final revival of a system that has links to ancient Rome and ancient Babylon, and that it will be built around a core of ten European leaders who surrender their sovereignty to a deceptive, beast-like leader (Revelation 17:1–13).

However, the Bible reveals that this end-time, humanly devised political-economic-military system will be short-lived (Revelation 17:12). It will be defeated and replaced by the returning Jesus Christ, who will establish the kingdom and government of God on this earth (Revelation 11:15–18). Scripture reveals that the saints—those who are being called and trained now—will reign with Jesus Christ as “kings and priests” on this earth (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; Matthew 19:27–30). The saints, as future rulers in the Kingdom of God, will play an important role in restoring justice to this earth, and showing human beings the real way to lasting peace (Isaiah 9:6–7). If we learn how to live by the laws of God today (Matthew 4:4), we will be able to share those lessons with all the people on earth in the Kingdom of God (Isaiah 2:2–4;

30:20–21). But how should we prepare for these exciting opportunities in the soon-coming Kingdom of God?

An Essential Key

The Bible plainly reveals that Jesus Christ will return and reign on earth as “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:16). He will fulfill this role because He has the very mind and perspective of God (John 10:30). While on earth, Jesus prayed for His disciples, “that they may be one as We are” (John 17:11). The Apostle Paul advised aspiring Christians, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). Paul admonished members of God’s Church in Corinth that they should “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:2, 10).

Scripture emphasizes, “Seek the LORD while He may be found” (Isaiah 55:6–7) and, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8). It is simply not possible to develop the mind of God unless we first come to know and begin to obey the real God!

The second vital step in developing the mind of God is to prove to yourself that the Bible is the actual word of the real God! While many critics today scoff at this idea, the evidence clearly shows that the Bible is the inspired word of God. The Bible is unique and like no other book written by human beings (see our booklet *The Bible: Fact or Fiction?*). Notice what David—“a man after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22)—said of Scripture: “Your law is truth... The entirety of Your word is truth” (Psalm 119:142, 160). Paul wrote, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). One of the most

While many prefer *not* to think about the future because it can appear ominous and uncertain, you can prepare *now* for a challenging and exciting role in bringing real changes to this world—if you develop the mind of God!

Paul also explained that Christians are able to understand the plan of God, which is a mystery to the world (see 1 Corinthians 2:7–8), because “we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:9–16). The question for us, then, becomes: “What can we do to develop the mind of God, so we can prepare to reign with Jesus Christ?”

Seven Vital Steps

The first and most important step in developing the mind of God is to come to know the real God! David wrote, “Among the gods there is none like you, O LORD... All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O LORD... You alone are God” (Psalm 86:8–10). Jeremiah said, “But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God” (Jeremiah 10:10). Even the pagan kings of ancient Babylon came to know the real God! After God humbled him, the renowned monarch Nebuchadnezzar wrote, “I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him” (Daniel 4:34–37). After King Darius saw God deliver Daniel from a den of lions, he issued a decree that “in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel” (Daniel 6:26). Prophecies in the book of Ezekiel indicate that God will bring punishments on backsliding Israelites and other pagan nations, at the end of this age, to teach an important lesson: “Then they shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezekiel 7:27; 25:7, 11; 28:24). The nations of this world will come to realize that Baal, Zeus, Diana, Buddha and Allah are false gods, and are powerless before the real God of the Bible! This is why

powerful proofs of divine inspiration, which sets the Bible totally apart from other humanly authored books is fulfilled prophecy. No other book on earth contains hundreds of specific prophecies that have come to pass and are coming to pass! God issues this challenge through the pen of Isaiah: “I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying ‘My counsel shall stand’” (Isaiah 46:8–10; see also 41:21–24). When you have proved that the Bible is the actual word of the real God, you will begin to realize that you can develop the mind of God by prayerfully studying and learning to apply the word of God in every aspect of life.

The third key step in developing the mind of God involves learning to fear God. The Hebrew word for “fear” means to revere, respect and fear to disobey. God told Moses to teach His laws and statutes to the Israelites, “that they may learn to fear Me” (Deuteronomy 4:9–10, 14). David wrote, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word” (Psalm 119:9). Isaiah plainly records what God seeks from each of us: “On this one will I look: On him who is poor [humble, teachable], and of a contrite spirit [repentant, wanting to change and do better], and who trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:2). If we approach the Bible with this kind of attitude—seeking to be taught and corrected by what is written in the word of God—we will begin to develop more of the mind of God.

An essential fourth step in developing the mind of God is to grow in wisdom. Job wrote, “God is wise in


heart” (Job 9:4). Paul gave glory to “God, alone wise,” (Romans 16:27) and said that “God is wiser than men” (1 Corinthians 1:25). Solomon revealed that “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10). If we are willing to look into Scripture for the fundamental principles guiding every area of life, we will be pointed in the right direction and we can begin to develop the mind of God in each area. The Bible reveals the mind of God about the roles of men and women in marriage, and explains the proper way parents and children should relate to each other (Ephesians 5:22–32; 6:1–4). The Bible also reveals that God “hates divorce” (Malachi 2:16) and that He condemns adultery (Exodus 20:14), fornication and any form of sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:13–18). Paul reminded Timothy that “from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation” (2 Timothy 3:15). As we grow in our knowledge and ability to apply the instructions of Scripture, we will grow in wisdom as we develop the mind of God.

A vital fifth step in developing the mind of God involves building godly courage. As God prepared Joshua to replace Moses as Israel’s leader, He told him to “be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go” (Joshua 1:7). Ezekiel needed courage to deliver God’s warning message to a rebellious people who did not want to hear (Ezekiel 2:1–9). Daniel and his friends acted courageously when they chose to obey God in the face of persecution for their beliefs (Daniel 3; 6). Queen Esther acted with wisdom and courage when she risked her life to save her people (Esther 4:11–17). Scripture tells us that “the righteous are bold as a lion” (Proverbs 28:1) because they have the mind of God, and they have faith that God will deliver them—in His time and in His way (Daniel 3:17; 1 Corinthians 10:13). If we hope to reign with Jesus Christ in the kingdom of God, we must develop real courage in our convictions and actions (Matthew 10:32–33).

A crucial sixth step in cultivating the mind of God involves developing a clear vision of the future. Solomon was inspired to record, “Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint” (Proverbs 29:18). When people have no knowledge of right or wrong, and no idea of what the future holds, their lives become chaotic and unprincipled—and society comes apart. However, those who develop the mind of God will come to understand that God has a plan and a purpose He is working out on this earth (Isaiah 46:10; Ephesians 1:3–11). God’s plan is to send Jesus Christ back to this earth to set up a kingdom

that will bring peace and justice to the peoples of this world (Isaiah 9:6–7). The returning Christ, with His saints, will set about “restoring” the knowledge of God’s true way of life (Acts 3:19–21). We can play exciting roles in this plan as “kings and priests” (Revelation 1:6; 5:10) and as teachers who will explain the laws of God to all mankind (Isaiah 30:20–21)—if we develop the mind and character of God, and we develop the capacity to apply the laws of God. Those who have the mind of God will keep their focus on the reality of this exciting vision of the future.

The seventh step in developing the mind of God is to gain a true sense of history. The God of the Bible is a just God, who is working out a plan on this earth that will ultimately encompass all people (Isaiah 45:21; 46:9–10). The Scriptures reveal that God chose Abraham and his descendants, and gave them His laws so they could become an example to the world (Genesis 12:1–3; Deuteronomy 4:1–10). Modern Israelite nations have enjoyed so many physical blessings (Genesis 48; 49) because their forefather Abraham obeyed God (Genesis 18:17–19; Hebrews 11:8–22). However, Scripture reveals that just as the ancient Israelites were punished because they forgot God and His laws, and failed in their mission to be lights to the world (Leviticus 26:14–39), so too will our modern Israelite nations again be punished and lose our blessings for the same reasons (Deuteronomy 4:30; 31:29; Jeremiah 30:24). While God has not yet been working directly with gentile nations, He is now calling individuals from all nations to become “spiritual Israelites” and “heirs according to the promise” He made to the children of Abraham (Galatians 3:26–29; 6:16; Ephesians 3:1–6). Those who are called now and develop the mind of God will become the “firstfruits” who will reign with Christ when He returns to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth (John 6:44, 65–66; James 1:18; Revelation 14:1–5). Then, during Christ’s future thousand-year millennial reign, and in the White Throne Judgment, billions will have their first opportunity to learn the truth of God and the real purpose and way of life (Revelation 20:4–15; Isaiah 30:20–21). By understanding Scripture, as we can only do if we develop the mind of God, we can gain a true perspective on the history of this world and what lies ahead.

Brethren, we need to take advantage of the incredible opportunity we have been given to understand the plan of God (Ephesians 5:8–21). If we follow the steps outlined above, we can develop the mind of God and prepare to play an active part in the coming Kingdom of God—when Jesus Christ and the saints will begin to change the course of human history and bring peace and justice to the peoples of this earth. 

Let God Handle It!

By Dibar K. Apartian

Are you resisting God because you do not understand some facet of His truth? Obedience to your Creator must come through faith.

The Bible again and again relates the stories of two different kinds of people: those who questioned God and disobeyed His orders because they were displeased with His answers, and those who obeyed Him without questioning. The first way leads to eternal death; the second way leads to eternal life.

Be honest with yourself. How do you ask questions about the Bible? How do you seek the truth? Is it wrong to ask questions? Why do you ask questions—to learn, or to argue? To understand, or to rationalize? To obey, or to rebel?

More often than not, people ask questions not because they are truly interested in the answers, but because they are looking for an excuse to disagree, or to reject instruction, or simply to pretend they are intelligent.

For instance, to the carnal mind, Sabbath-keeping does not make much sense. What is so holy about the seventh day of the week? Why should the Sabbath be different from any other day? What difference does it make whether God rested on that day or not?

The answer, of course, is utterly simple for those who believe in God and are honestly searching for the truth. If for no other reason, we keep the Sabbath because God says to!

Faith Does Not Require Understanding

Strange as it may seem, your obedience to God does not depend

upon His answers to your “whys.”

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Notice! The Bible does not say, “Faith is the answer to all of your questions” or “faith is the satisfaction of your intellectual curiosity.” Faith is implicit trust in God and His word—whether you understand its meaning or not. You believe God without questioning, and do what He says.

“For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (vv. 2–3). The understanding is through faith, and not by arriving at some answer that is plausible to you—the answer that humanly you may have wanted.

When you grasp this truth, your attitude will change, and you will have a totally different outlook on life—a depth of faith in God that you have never experienced before.

Adam and Eve Missed the Point

Our first parents questioned God’s orders and refused to believe Him. God commanded Adam: “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16–17).

As Adam and Eve let doubts enter their minds, they gradually

became vulnerable to Satan’s destructive deceptions. Why, indeed, had God given them such an unfair order? Why, out of all the trees in the garden, should fruit from that one be forbidden? Adam and Eve were unable—actually unwilling—to understand God’s reasons, and they refused to obey Him without fully grasping the purpose of His order—and agreeing with it.

And so came about, as Herbert W. Armstrong called it, the first “scientific experiment.” It was based on distrust of God’s word! Adam and Eve yielded to their intellectual curiosity—to vanity. “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate” (Genesis 3:6).

Think. Where did the pair get the idea that the tree was good for food, and would “make one wise”? Had God told them that? No. Under Satan’s influence, Adam and Eve convinced themselves that they could reach the goal of Godship without submitting to God’s order. They rejected the Holy Spirit—which, in time, would have caused them to understand everything they needed for salvation.

Do you see how this can also affect all of us as Christians? If your obedience to God depends on His answers to your questions—answers that will satisfy you—then you are most vulnerable to Satan’s attacks. Even today, Satan is trying to divide the Church by putting

doubts in the minds of some of God's people!

Noah Did Not Ask “Why?”

Noah was righteous before God. How can we be like him? The Bible simply states, “Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God” (Genesis 6:9).

Unlike Adam and Eve, Noah did not question God's orders. He did not doubt His Creator's intentions and words. “Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did” (v. 22).

Simple, yes? Noah had a child-like faith. Yet, ironic as it may seem, many people today, swayed by their intellectual vanity, claim that the biblical account of Noah's ark is not scientific. They are convinced—despite what God says—that the ark could not have been big enough to shelter all of the animals. Or they raise questions about how the animals of their own accord came into the ark. None of this, in the minds of the “wise” of this world, is scientific. In short, they distrust God's word.

But Noah did not. He faithfully obeyed God's order, went ahead with the construction and after many years of hard labor, completed it—just in time, before the waters came. Noah trusted God's scientific mind!

Abraham's Obedience

Abraham's life is one of the most difficult stories for a carnal mind to accept. In some ways, it may even sound illogical to a converted mind. Just imagine! Abraham was 75 years old when God told him, “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:1).

But why? Why should an older man be ordered to leave his homeland and settle in an unknown country? Why would God not choose a

younger man? After all, Abraham was prosperous and blessed in his native country. He was a happy man. Why did he have to move? Surely God could have blessed him or his children in some other ways—ways that would have been more humane and more logical?

However valid these questions may seem, our forefather Abraham did not ask them. He trusted God and obeyed Him. “So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him” (v. 4).

And how about the unthinkable order God gave the old patriarch to sacrifice Isaac, the son he loved? Does that really make sense? Is it just—is it godly—to kill a son and burn him as an offering?

Surely Abraham could have found numerous reasons to argue with God—even to doubt Him. *Why* did God have to put him through such difficult tests? Can you possibly obey a God who tells you to kill your son, when He Himself has emphatically ordered you, “Thou shall not kill”? Why in the world would God give such an impossible order?

Again, humanly speaking, these are logical questions, but Abraham knew that his obedience to God was not subject to his perfect understanding of God's orders. He unconditionally trusted and obeyed his Creator, who knows all things best.

“So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him” (Genesis 22:3).

What an attitude! Would you have acted the same way? Would you have obeyed God without raising all kinds of objections? No wonder Abraham is called “the father of us all” (Romans 4:16)—in faith! Now compare his attitude with that of Saul, the first human king of Israel.

Obedience Is Better than Sacrifice

Unlike Abraham, King Saul did not choose to walk with God. He questioned the orders he received, rather than obeying in faith.

Saul was instructed by the prophet Samuel: “You shall go down before me to Gilgal; and surely I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and make sacrifices of peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, till I come to you and show you what you should do” (1 Samuel 10:8).

The order was clear. It needed no explanation. But Saul had neither Abraham's obedient attitude nor Noah's patience. He allowed his vanity to lead him into disobedience. He asked why Samuel—and not he, the king—should perform the burnt offerings. What difference would it make? And why should the waiting period be seven days? What if Samuel were delayed? There was no obvious reason for him to follow the order exactly.

In fact, Samuel was delayed. For some reason, he did not show up at the appointed time. King Saul needed no better excuse to disobey. Since the prophet did not come at the appointed time—and since “the people were scattered from him” (1 Samuel 13:8)—he took things into his own hands and offered the burnt offerings.

However, no sooner had he undertaken the task than Samuel arrived. “You have done foolishly,” he told the king. “You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever” (1 Samuel 13:13). Saul failed to pass the test. His heart was not right, and God rejected him.

Saul's character was also tested when God ordered him: “Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant

and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey” (1 Samuel 15:3).

Once again, Saul and his people had something to say. Why did God want to smite every single Amalekite and utterly destroy their belongings? Was that a kind thing to do? Moreover, why take vengeance on the oxen, sheep, camels and donkeys?

To King Saul’s carnal mind, none of this made sense. Surely, he must have thought, any responsible human being would simply not obey such an order, even if it came from God. Consequently, “Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed” (v. 9).

How strange! King Saul and his people thought they knew better than God. Their reasoning prevented them from obeying Him.

“So Samuel said: ‘Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams’” (v. 22).

What a lesson for all of us to learn! And what a pity that some of God’s people have forgotten it. Partial obedience is not sufficient. With God, it is all or nothing.

How Not To Be Healed

Naaman, a commander of the Syrian army, was a leper and sought to be healed. “Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha’s house. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, ‘Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean’” (2 Kings 5:9–10).

Naaman’s healing from leprosy required only that he wash himself seven times in the Jordan. But

Naaman did not like that. He disagreed with the procedure. Why the Jordan, he asked himself, instead of some other river? And why seven times? Surely once would have been enough! Naaman had totally different ideas as to how his healing should take place. He would not accept the prophet’s order. Then “Naaman became furious, and went away and said, ‘Indeed, I said to myself, “He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy”’” (v. 11).

However, some of Naaman’s men had more sense than he, and convinced him of his foolishness. “And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, ‘My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, “Wash, and be clean”?’” (v. 13).

So Naaman went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, “according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean” (v. 14).

If Naaman had decided to wait until he understood the exact reason for God’s order, he probably would never have been healed. And there are, in God’s Church today, some spiritual Naamans. They will only accept an answer if it pleases them. If they disagree, they may decide to turn away, dissatisfied, unhappy—and prone to leaving the Church!

Where Shall We Go?

Christ’s disciples, before their conversion, also had some doubts about certain matters. They would often question Jesus, expecting some answer that would satisfy their curiosity and their carnal minds.

On one occasion, the disciples and several others were totally con-

fused when Christ revealed to them that He was the “bread which came down from heaven.” Just what did He mean by that statement? Some murmured against Him, while others argued with Him.

Patiently, Christ explained: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world” (John 6:51).

That was the breaking point. Not only could they not understand the explanation, but they were offended. How could they follow a man whose teachings made so little sense? “From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked with Him no more” (v. 66).

Does this remind you of the attitude of anyone you know? Yours, perhaps? Would you turn away from God or leave His Church because something is hard to understand?

When Jesus saw that some of His disciples left Him, He turned to the Twelve and asked them: “Do you also want to go away?” But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life’” (vv. 67–68).

This is the basic, clear truth we all need to remember. If you have this attitude, God will always be with you, and will protect you against doubts and fears.

Peter meant exactly what he said. During the last Passover, as Christ was washing His disciples’ feet, Peter objected when his own turn came. It was unthinkable that Jesus, the Master, should wash his feet.

But Christ answered: “What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this... If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me” (John 13:7–8). Notice that Christ did not

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Modest Attire: Our Christian Responsibility

By Rod McNair

Why talk about something as superficial as dress, when attitude, heart and substance are what we should focus on? After all, we are not to judge just on appearance, right?

In the Church of God, we strive to focus on the “inner man” (Ephesians 3:16). We ask God to renew and regenerate us daily through His Spirit. God tells us that He looks on the heart, and not the outward appearance (1 Samuel 16:7). Yet, as we look at instructions in Scripture, we see that modest attire is a vital part of a Christian’s walk. It is even a part of apostolic Christianity!

The Apostle Paul—the same apostle who taught the “big” issues like the need for works and faith, and circumcision being of the spirit—also explained and stressed certain Church traditions. Notice how he valued them: “Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you” (1 Corinthians 11:2). Also: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

Although traditions may not be listed in the Ten Commandments, they are right and decent standards derived from biblical principles. Modesty in dress was one of the traditions that the Apostle Paul

taught. In the context of warning men not to be angry or faithless, Paul also reminded Timothy to teach this principle to ladies in the first-century Church of God.

“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel [also translated “proper,” “respectable” or “decent”], with propriety and moderation...” (1 Timothy 2:8–10). The word translated “modest” in 1 Timothy 2:8–10 is the Greek word *kosmos*. It comes from the root word *kosmos*, which is also translated “world,” relating to the orderly arrangement of the whole universe. God has not just thrown the world together haphazardly—He has created it in an attractive form, and has decorated it to make it beautiful! That should give us a sense of what God meant when He inspired Paul to use the word translated as “modest.”

God looks on the heart. But outward expressions—our words and actions, for example—reveal things about us on the inside. Jesus said that “out of the abundance of the heart [the] mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45). In the same way, our attire makes a statement about the inner man or woman. Appropriate dress is not righteousness in itself—but it can be a reflection of character. Several years ago in the Living Church News, Dr. Douglas Winnail wrote: “God does not alter biblical standards because

society decides to change. What we wear... is important to God—because it reflects what is in our heart...” (“Dress for Services,” March-April 2003). Remember, Jesus revealed: “And to her [the Bride, Christ’s wife] it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Revelation 19:8). The fine linen was a reflection of godly character. By contrast, the woman of Proverbs 7:10 wears “the attire of the harlot.” Clothing is significant—it presents clues about a person’s identity. Certain roles are signified by specific attire, as in the case of judges (Judges 5:10), priests (Exodus 40:12–13) and brides (Jeremiah 2:32).

Our attire is not only a reflection of character—it can influence character as well. In recent years, some school districts in the United States have reinstated school uniforms for this very reason. Educators have observed a clear relationship between attire, attitudes and actions. California’s Long Beach Unified School District reinstated school uniforms in 1994. The results were better overall behavior and scholastic achievement—effects that were “immediately noticeable,” according to a school district spokesman. (“Custom-made fit for school: Dress codes, student uniforms back in style,” www.cnn.com, August 15, 2006). While some see clothing as only “the cover of the book,” it is far more than that. It can

reflect and influence character in a person, for good or for bad.

But who decides what is appropriate and what is not? Does “apostolic Christianity” require that women today wear the styles of Paul’s day? Of course not! It is the principle that counts, especially since we find ourselves in an end-time world of decadence and hedonism. Paul wrote to Timothy: “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves... unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...” (2 Timothy 3:1–4). Paul prophesied of an alarming time—like that of ancient Sodom—when up would be down and down would be up, morally! How does one function in a society that has over-sexualized dress—and is shameless about having done so? This is a challenge and responsibility for Christians today.

What Are Clothes For?

What is the purpose of clothing? Is it to cover the body and convey good taste and discretion? Or is it to strategically show skin and to stimulate desire—even inappropriate desire? What do clothing designers and marketers believe? Author Jeff Pollard notes: The fashion industry does not believe that the principal purpose of clothing is to cover the body; it believes that the principal purpose of clothing is sexual attraction...” (Christian Modesty and the Public Undressing of America, pp. 52–53).

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong taught the Church to “recapture true values.” Our Presiding Evangelist, Mr. Roderick C. Meredith, has also admonished us to maintain high, godly standards. In a sermon late last year, “What

Would Jesus Really Do?” he said: “We ought to have high standards... in the way we act, in the way we dress, in the way we talk, in the way we conduct ourselves, the way we think... How would Jesus dress? How would Jesus’ sister dress?... Would Jesus’ sister be showing off her body in some semi-vulgar way? No, she would not!” (October 28, 2006).

When Adam and Eve sinned, they became acutely aware of their own nakedness. They first attempted to solve that problem by using fig leaves! But God showed His kindness and love by fashioning “coats” or “tunics” for them from the skin of an animal. The word translated “coats” is the Hebrew *kuttoneth*, which comes from a root word meaning “to cover.” This act was also symbolic of Christ covering our sins through His atoning sacrifice. As M. L. Chancey writes: “The fig-leaf ‘aprons’ fashioned by our first parents were not enough... When Adam and Eve covered their private parts, God replaced their inadequate coverings with coats to completely clothe their bodies” (“Modesty and the Christian Woman,” www.patriarchspath.org).

By contrast, many fashions today are not designed to cover and complement, but rather to reveal and tease. “In both cut and cloth [many styles today] selectively expose and emphasize certain areas of the body. Whatever fashion statement the wearer intends to make, it certainly can’t be ‘I’ve got a secret.’ Instead of being appreciated for her well-ordered taste and feminine beauty, her ‘adorning’ will more likely arouse an unholy interest, even lust, in the minds of male onlookers” (“Modesty: Virtue Ignored,” Jim Harmon, www.patriarchspath.org). This is the provocative social environment in which we find ourselves today.

Coming Out of the World

God’s people are to be coming out of the world (Revelation 18:3–4). We are in the world, but are not to be “of” the world (John 17:15–16). If we look to the world’s media for our cues on what is good and right, we will go off the track. Even being “more conservative than the world” is not enough. We must honestly evaluate each decision not on the rules of society, but on godly principles.

This world’s fashions and styles—which are often motivated by the lust of the eyes—will soon pass away (1 John 2:15–17)! And yet, saints in God’s Church are preparing to lead in a whole new world. What do you imagine the dress will be like in Tomorrow’s World, in your city? Will pornographic advertisements be displayed on magazine covers and billboards? The resurrected saints under Christ’s direction will teach and guide people in how to dress appropriately. Certainly, clothing styles under Christ’s rulership will change dramatically from what they are today! If we are preparing to rule in the Kingdom of God, we must be applying the principles of modesty in attire now.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a wonderful foretaste of the coming millennial reign of Christ. The Festival Site Coordinators Manual provides guidelines on modesty and decorum for functions organized and attended by Living Church of God members. Regarding “fun shows,” it says: “We must avoid any off-color jokes, lewd dancing, sexual references, questionable lyrics and costuming, etc., that may be construed as distasteful” (Festival Site Coordinators Manual, “Family Event,” May 11, 2006). The manual also sets forth guidelines for beach activities. “The Living Youth Camp

swimwear policy has been adopted for LCG Festival sites. Appropriate attire for women is a modest one-piece suit; and men should wear boxer-style trunks. Two-piece outfits for women and ‘speedo’-type bathing suits for men are unacceptable” (ibid.). Upholding modest dress standards at the Feast teaches and reminds us that we are there to reflect God’s coming Kingdom.

Coming Before God

When the children of Israel were preparing to meet God at Mount Sinai, Moses told them to prepare themselves in regards to their attire—to wash their clothes (Exodus 19:10). The Israelites needed to think about how they presented themselves physically when coming before God. When we worship God on His Sabbath, we are to come to Him in an appropriate and discreet way. We are to be cognizant of the One to whom we are presenting ourselves. Coming before dignitaries—and the King of the Universe is the most important dignitary of all—requires our attention to modest and discreet dress.

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong taught, as a Church tradition, that we are to wear our best at Sabbath services. He often looked to the business world for accepted norms of balanced and respectful dress. Today, employment and interview advisers are increasingly encouraging women to be careful to maintain modest attire in the workplace. Betsy Olinger, founder of Marketing-U (www.marketing-u.com), a Charlotte-based executive coaching firm, said: “If it’s something you think you look ‘hot’ in, it’s wrong” (“Would you hire these people?” Charlotte Observer, June 16, 2006).

What are some of the guidelines job counselors recommend for

women? Interview experts counsel women to wear skirts or dresses that come to the knee when seated. One of the top ten mistakes made by female interviewees is wearing “skirts and shirts that are too short or revealing. When you sit, it should hit or cover your knees” (ibid.). Another interview-guidance article explained, “Forget what some of those gals on ‘The Apprentice’ are wearing. Your skirt should cover your thighs when you are seated” (“What Not to Wear to an Interview,” www.careerbuilder.com).

Necklines should be modest as well. According to career advisors, this means no cleavage. “There are very few legitimate jobs where showing off your chest is a good career move... Cover up... If you can’t part with your V-neck shirts, simply buy a few camisole shirts to wear underneath them” (“10 Crimes of Work Fashion,” www.cnn.com, September 11, 2006). One Texas school district issued this new dress code in 2006: “The display of cleavage is unacceptable. Low cut blouses, tops, sweaters, etc. with plunging necklines are not allowed” (“Texas School District Bans Cleavage,” www.keyetv.com, August 4, 2006).

A recent study by University of Lawrence professor Peter Glick found that “risque dress on the job is viewed as inappropriate for those in all positions” (“Are You Too Sexy for Your Job?” www.cnn.com, December 6, 2005).

Overly snug, visibly tight clothing can also be immodest: “Make sure there is at least one-inch of room between body and fabric and that it is long enough to conceal your midriff. Stomach, breasts, back and shoulders should be covered. Fabric should not be overly sheer and a bra should be worn (with no straps revealed)” (ibid.). The publication “Modesty Heart Check,” encourages women to ask

these questions about their clothing: “Does my midriff (or underwear) show when I bend over or lift my hands? If so, is it because my skirt or my pants are too low? Either my shirt needs to be longer or I need to find a skirt or pants that sit higher” (“Modesty Heart Check,” Carolyn Mahaney and Nicole Whitacre, *Girl Talk: Mother-Daughter Conversations on Biblical Womanhood*). Girls attending Living Youth Camp are instructed to avoid wearing overly short shorts as well as “tank-tops or midriff shirts or low-slung Britney Spears style pants” (“Camper Checklist of Personal Items,” Camper Acceptance Packet 2006).

Even “mainstream” employment experts are pointing out the importance of maintaining basic dress standards to please a potential or current employer. Reasonable, minimum standards are also appropriate in our worship of God and in our Church activities. As Paul reminded the brethren in Rome, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

Loving Your Brothers

Like most women, most men attend Sabbath services for the right reasons—to worship, learn from, be challenged by and be corrected by God. Why is dressing modestly so important for women at Church services? Because it affects their relationship with their brothers in Christ, and their brothers’ relationship with God.

Of course, though everyone deals with the pulls of human nature, most men at Sabbath services are not on the verge of committing spiritual fornication every second. Men in God’s Church are striving to

live God's way and guide their thoughts according to His Spirit. On the other hand, for a woman to dismiss the fact that God created men—"hard-wired" them—to be visually stimulated by an attractive woman is to show extreme naivete and foolishness.

One man not in God's Church, yet focused on obeying God as he knows how, put it this way: "I rejoice whenever I see a girl or woman that is attempting to serve the Lord (and guys) by dressing modestly. You have no idea how sweet and challenging it is when I see a woman who has

tudes will affect their children's perspectives about modesty and attire. Men need to teach their sons to flee fornication (1 Corinthians 6:18) and to "identify flirty behavior and avoid being with flirty or touchy girls" ("Waging the War for Sexual Purity," Patrick Hurd, www.fortifyingthefamily.com). Fathers need to take an active role in teaching their daughters to be modest and to "discern the motives of boys who seek their attention" (ibid.).

Both men and women should avoid creating stumbling blocks for

provocative in their mimicry of grown-up fare..." ("Fashion world expanding options for pint-size clients," *Charlotte Observer*, September 8, 2006). As editor of the pre-teen magazine *Cookie*, Pilar Guzman writes, "You get this idea that there is a kind of lost innocence," when racy adult fashions are being worn by ever-younger girls (ibid.). In a world where media marketers seek to introduce adult fashions to younger-and-younger clients, it is more important than ever that mothers, older sisters, teens and adult female friends in

Why is dressing modestly so important for women at Church services? Because it affects their relationship with their brothers in Christ, and their brothers' relationship with God.

decided not to flaunt her body—like the culture shouts for her to do—but rather she has decided that serving the Lord and her brothers is more important." ("Additional Comments and Testimonies on Modesty," C. J. Mahaney, www.sovereigngraceministries.org).

Men must be vigilant to maintain a high standard in what they put before their eyes, to keep a pure and clean heart (Job 31:1). As author Joshua Harris says: "So what is God's standard when it comes to lust? How much lust does God want us to allow in our lives? Are you ready for this? The answer is not even a hint" (*Not Even a Hint: Guarding Your Heart Against Lust*, p. 22). Men also need to be aware of the signals they send to the women in their lives. Taking sidelong glances at immodest women, or making casual remarks about scantily clad actresses, sends a message—the wrong message—about what they value in a woman. Fathers' atti-

each other when coming before God on the Sabbath. That is showing love and service to others—which is fulfilling God's law to love your neighbor as yourself (Galatians 5:14).

Setting a Good Example

Another reason why women in God's Church dress modestly is because of the power of example. Women in God's Church are to be a light to others—including younger women and girls who are seeking role models. Younger girls often want to wear what the older girls wear—and at earlier and earlier ages. How important is it, then, that women of all ages set a good example in the Church?

Our culture today attempts to sexualize girls' attire even in their pre-teens. Designers and retailers are now targeting girls between the ages of four and nine! "The conventional sugar-and-spice girls' style formula is laced these days with sass, the clothes... candidly

God's Church set a good example for the younger girls.

Holding Fast

Christ tells the Church of the Philadelphia era to "hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" (Revelation 3:11). They are to hold steady to doctrinal purity and scriptural, biblical traditions, and transmit them to the next generation (2 Timothy 2:2). God is not against His daughters looking nice and dressing well. In fact, the Bible records how He adorned and decorated His bride, Israel, in Ezekiel 16:10–14. Modesty in attire can both reflect and influence godly feminine character (1 Peter 3:4). Modesty as a tradition in the Church can include dressing attractively, but always in good taste and propriety. The Living Church of God is committed to setting high standards in regard to modesty in dress, and using love and patience to achieve it. LGM

Sin No More...

By Don Davis

When we examine ourselves in preparation for the Passover, we look for the sin in our lives. Some of that sin comes from our own actions, when we disobey God's law and seek the world more than we seek God's kingdom. Sometimes, too, others' sins can lead to our sickness, even when we have not personally sinned. God's creation has been suffering from sin ever since Satan, the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) rebelled against his Creator, and this world still suffers from the consequences of Satan's rebellion and the sin of Adam and Eve.

We know that in a world free from sin, we would not suffer from disease. As God told the Israelites: "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you" (Exodus 15:26). Sadly, our world does not diligently heed His voice, and many—even in His Church—suffer the effects of both spiritual and physical sin.

As Christians, we understand that God does not want His children to suffer from the effects of sickness and injury. Christ inspired the Apostle John to write, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 2). So, if we find sickness in our lives, we may wonder: why does God allow physical suffering to afflict His people? How can we eliminate it from our lives? And if we cannot eliminate it, what should we do?

Have You Repented?

Some of us may be paying a physical penalty for bad decisions we are making, or that we made when we were younger. Perhaps in the past we ate too much sugary "junk food," drank alcohol to excess or consumed substances that are illegal in the eyes of God and man. We might carry the effects of old sports or war injuries, which handicap our ability to enjoy life today. No matter what our ailment, God can heal it; He can even restore damaged parts of our bodies. "Then He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other" (Matthew 12:13). Many of us have heard our Presiding Evangelist, Mr. Roderick C. Meredith, tell the story of a woman he met on a baptizing tour who had received a similar healing of a withered arm, after receiving an anointed cloth from Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong.

Repentance, however, is a vital element in the healing process. At the pool of Bethesda, after healing a man disabled for 38 years, Jesus emphasized that sin had caused his long-suffered affliction. "Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, 'See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you'" (John 5:14). If, having been healed, we return to our old sinful habits, we cannot expect to remain healthy. And if we have not been healed, we should ask ourselves: "Am I truly repentant? If I were healed, would I go right back to the physical sins I committed when I was healthy, and be worse off than before?"

Christ healed to restore the afflicted, and to reveal God's true nature to the deceived religious leaders of His day. Jesus' healing miracles were a witness that His words and power came from the Father in heaven. "Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.' And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, 'This Man blasphemes!' But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," or to say, "Arise and walk"? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'—then He said to the paralytic, 'Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men" (Matthew 9:2-8). Notice that the paralytic's healing took place only after his sins had been forgiven.

But what if you have repented, yet God has not healed you?

God Can Even Use Disease

God uses disease and healing for a variety of reasons—even as one of His many tools to bring us to a deeper repentance. He may allow disease to correct us if we have violated His physical and spiritual laws. God may even grant a healing to someone who does not know Him, as a witness to His great power, as He did for Naaman the Syrian, through His prophet

Elisha. For his lying and stealing, Elisha's servant Gehazi received Naaman's leprosy (2 Kings 5:1–27).

Job was not a wicked man, as Scripture tells us: "Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?'" (Job 1:8). Yet this "blameless" man was self-righteous, and God needed to show him his problem so he could repent, be forgiven and be reconciled to his Creator. God allowed Satan to inflict a horrible plague upon Job's flesh, which He knew would help him grow spiritually. "So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he [Job] took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes" (Job 2:7–8).

God took no pleasure in seeing His servant suffer. Rather, He used the affliction to show Job his proper relationship with his Creator, until he finally understood: "Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:4–6). Once Job repented, he no longer considered his righteousness worthy of God's praise. He understood that, compared to God, "we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is no one who calls on Your name, who stirs himself up to take hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us, and have consumed us because of our iniquities" (Isaiah 64:6–7). Once Job understood who and what God was, took his mind off

himself and prayed for his friends, God healed him and blessed him with twice the physical blessings he had before (Job 42:10–17).

God does not owe us healing. He wants to see us in vigorous physical health, but His greater concern is for our spiritual health, and He can even use our illnesses for our benefit. As we examine ourselves, let us each ask, "Am I learning every lesson God wants me to learn from my physical infirmities?"

God Favors the Humble

The Apostle Paul came to understand that God withheld a healing from him so he could develop greater humility. "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations [God had given Paul so many spiritual insights, and gifts, that also giving him perfect health might have gone to his head], a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:7–10).

God reveals His great love, mercy and power as a witness when He shows pity to the humble, weak and helpless. "And when He [Jesus] came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had

compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise.' So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother" (Luke 7:12–15).

Do You Have Faith?

When Jesus' disciples could not cast out an evil spirit that was grievously afflicting a young boy, Christ took over, saying, "'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.'... And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth" (Mark 9:19–20). The father explained to Jesus that his son had been possessed since childhood, and the demon had tried to destroy the youth by throwing him into fire or water. The father pleaded for his son, saying: "But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us" (v. 22). Then Jesus said to him, "'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!'" (vv. 23–24). The lesson here is that we cannot "work up" the faith we need for healing. The power to believe that God exists, and that He is our healer, must come from Him. However, we can build on—and reinforce—that gift of faith, by reading the Bible's many descriptions of the healings He has performed for others.

This passage also reveals another vital clue about the need to be properly prepared spiritually before we ask for healing. When Jesus was away from the crowd and had gone into a house with His disciples, they asked Him why the demon would not come out at their command? He

replied, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting” (v. 29). Fasting to grow closer to our Father is a good way to prepare before we ask for healing for ourselves or others (see “But by Prayer and Fasting” on page 3 of this issue).

Before God will heal us, we need to believe that He will. As His obedient children, we must have faith that He will not withhold from us anything that will be for our ultimate good. “If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:11–13). Yes, we can confidently ask our Father in heaven to heal us, and trust that His will be done!

Love Your Neighbor

If we seek healing, we must desire it for others as much as we want it for ourselves (Galatians 5:14). Prayers for our own healing that do not include the needs of others reflect a “get” attitude. God rarely looks with favor upon selfish prayers. “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:3–5). If you are in good health now, are you praying for the healing of those who are sick or injured? When you are in ill health, you will certainly want others to offer prayers on your behalf—but are you showing that same concern for others today?

Trust God for the Best Answer

We have already seen that God wants us to be in good health. However, sometimes, because we need to be humbled or learn lessons in faith and patience, we may not receive the answer we want right away. Sometimes, God may even have decided we have run our course and should rest from this life’s struggles until Christ returns (Ecclesiastes 3:1–3). If we have God’s Spirit and Christ is living in us, we can be assured that our Heavenly Father and Jesus are doing what is ultimately in our best interest. “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Romans 8:31–32, 35, 37). We need to be deeply thankful that God gave His Son for all of us—for others, as well as ourselves.

Even if we ask in great faith, our prayers for healing can be hindered if we have an unforgiving heart. “So Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be removed and be cast into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if

you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mark 11:22–26). We need to have a continual Passover attitude, if we expect a healing to occur.

Then, when we are healed, we need to express our gratitude to God. After Jesus cleansed ten lepers, only one chose to come and thank Him. “So Jesus answered and said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?’ And He said to him, ‘Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well’” (Luke 17:17–19).

Go to God First

God’s ministers are saddened when they see some who are ill exhaust every avenue of physical healing offered by human science and medicine, then ask for an anointing only **after** they have given up on every other alternative. Yet Scripture is clear: “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:13–16). Even if you are far away from one of God’s ministers, you can ask for an anointed cloth and trust that God will heal you according to His will (Acts 19:11–12).

Healing in the Last Days

Jesus Christ commanded His chief disciples to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. “And as you

go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:7–8). Later, He told them that those who believed in Him—and by extension, His message regarding the coming Kingdom of God—would also do the same and even greater deeds than He was doing. “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:12–15).

As we enter the last days of this age, God will use those who are diligently seeking to obey Him, and who have the faith, to do “great exploits” (Daniel 11:32)—to perform miracles by the power of Christ in them. The sick will be healed, lepers will be cleansed and the dead will be brought back to life. To perform these exploits, God will never use those who seek healings out of vanity or to exalt self. He will only use those servants who give Him the glory, honor and credit for all Christ does through them, acknowledging that as human beings they can do nothing of themselves. Peter knew who was doing the healing when he said, “‘Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.’ Then he arose immediately” (Acts 9:34).

As Philadelphian members of God’s Church, we need to be striving mightily to prepare ourselves—individually, and as the body of Christ—to take on the great responsibilities that await us. If we do, we can expect an ever-increasing number of much-needed healings in the Church, now and on into the future. And we must remember always, when a miracle of healing occurs, who it is that gets the credit. It is our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24). As we prepare for the Passover, let us never lose sight of Christ’s awesome sacrifice—and let us always trust in His promise of healing! LCM

Let God Handle It!

(continues from page 11)

stop to explain the exact spiritual meaning of the foot washing.

So, what was Peter’s sudden reaction? He said to Him, “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!” (v. 9). Are you beginning to see what God expects of you? Whether your “whys” are answered or not, the question remains, “Are you willing to obey God?”

God’s Way, Not Ours

There are some things that we in God’s Church do not yet fully understand. We do not always know why God does things the way He does them. But one thing is sure: He always knows best. Let Him handle it—His way, not yours!

Some in the Church today demand that all their questions be fully answered before submitting themselves to God and His government. They cannot comprehend the Church’s simple faith in God’s leadership, so they get into bad attitudes.

Remember, so-called “intellect” is not required for salvation. Curiosity for the sake of pleasing your intellect—your human vanity—will only draw you away from God and His truth.

God has already clearly revealed everything you need to know and understand for salvation. You do not need to search for the answers to those “whys”—they

are already made plain in the Bible. However, for the time being, God has chosen not to reveal certain things—He has chosen not to answer some of your questions—for your own good. Let Him take care of things. Do not lose your salvation by demanding that He explain everything He is doing—God has no such responsibility.

God Knows Best

We have come to God’s Church to learn His ways—not to impose ours on Him or on others. We did not come to His Church to reason with Him, but to surrender to Him—totally and unconditionally. We have been called to obey and serve. Servants do not argue with their masters. They simply do what the masters say. Sadly, some of our friends and brethren have not quite understood this fundamental truth. That is why they are no longer with us.

Individually and collectively, we have a job to do. Are you doing your part? Or are you perhaps hindered by your doubts, questions and worries? Obviously, all of us would like to see God’s Kingdom come as soon as possible. We may even wonder why the waiting is so long! But God knows best. Let Him do things His way. Wait patiently, trust Him, submit your will to His—and you will truly know that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). LCM

But by Prayer and Fasting*(continues from page 5)*

yourself on the head, it feels so good when you stop.” You get the picture.

But the fasting did not do me nearly as much good as if I had really been drinking in of God’s word, and praying and meditating during that day of fasting. That is what Daniel was doing.

Daniel went on: “And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, ‘O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, we have sinned...’” (vv. 4–5). Notice he did not say, “Oh, we’ve been good, and we’ve done no wrong, and You don’t have any right to punish us.”

Rather, he told God he was sorry, and that “we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly

and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments.... Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face” (vv. 5, 7).

Then: “Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord’s sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate” (v. 17). Daniel called on God, not on his own righteousness—he had (and we have) none. When we reach that attitude like Daniel’s, our fasting is doing some good.

Notice the result of Daniel’s prayerful fast. An archangel came to him and told him: “At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved” (v. 23). Why was Daniel so greatly loved? Because he humbled himself sincerely before God.

There are certainly “health fasts” you can undertake, but do not

attempt a spiritual fast unless you truly intend to use it to grow closer to God. Be sure you take plenty of time to study, to meditate and to pray, or you will not receive the good out of your fast that you would—and you should!

Remember James’ caution, “do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously’? But He gives more grace [grace greater than the lust of the human spirit]. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble’” (James 4:5–6). This is a vital point. Then: “Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” (vv. 9–10). Brethren, that is God’s promise to us! We must not let down in the matter of prayer and fasting! LCN

Upcoming *Tomorrow’s World* Telecasts

WGN: Sunday, 6:00 AM ET

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

WGN

Air Date	Broadcast Title
January 7	Keys for Christian Success
January 14	Seven Satanic Deceptions
January 21	Beware of the Antichrist
January 28	The Power of Prophecy
February 4	Armageddon and Beyond
February 11	Satan’s Attack on the Bible
February 18	Are They All Lost Forever?
February 25	Prayer: Your Lifeline to God

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

You Are an Ambassador for Christ!*(continues from page 2)*

“the days of Noah” (Luke 17:26–29). In other words, we are in a time when God is about to intervene and **shake** this entire world to its senses—just as He did in Noah’s day, although this time He will not destroy nearly everyone, as He did back then.

People in the world—and even our Church members—are constantly “bombarded” with the idea that homosexuality is okay. They hear experts say that homosexuals are “born that way” and cannot help themselves. This is a damnable lie, coming straight from Satan! It really is. For, using this argument, the world could also begin to say that people who get into other perversions—into bestiality, child molestation, murder and other sins—are “just born that way!”

They are **not!** For the God of the Bible clearly tells us: “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but **God** is faithful, who will **not allow** you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). God will **never** tempt anyone or cause them to be born so that they “need” to sin! That should be very clear! And yet, millions are being deceived along these lines—especially by the so-called “gay” activists who are trying to force their perverted lifestyles upon our young people!

So, again, we should lovingly work with our young people and help them, in a “balanced” way, to **come out** of this present society.

Of course, young people need to have friends in their schools and neighborhoods. Of course, they can see an occasional film or watch an occasional television show besides the news—if they are careful to check that it is a “decent” film or show. They need to get their balance, and be sure that they increasingly and sincerely try to reflect Christ in all that they do.

That is the “key”!

One of the most masculine and exciting warriors and personalities of all time was King David. He certainly lived a “full” life—even making a few terrible mistakes. Yet the vast majority of his time was obviously spent “seeking God.” As you read the Psalms, you can clearly see that. And King David wrote: “I will set **nothing wicked** before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness” (Psalm 101:3–4).

Brethren, as prophetic events continue to speed up, and the **end** of this present age becomes more obviously near to us, I hope we can encourage **all** of our young people—and ourselves also—to **focus** more on Tomorrow’s World and the **glory** we will share at that time. Even the physical people then—living under the rule of Christ and the spirit-born

saints—will have wonderful blessings and exciting and exhilarating lives! Let us all picture the tremendous processions of great leaders from all fields of life parading up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, as God’s word describes: “And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:16).

Imagine the human leaders of nations—the great artistic leaders, sports heroes and other outstanding individuals—coming up to the majestic throne of the glorious King, **Jesus Christ!** Picture the beautiful choirs, the bands and orchestras, the outstanding soloists and the beautiful spectacle that will await their arrival on such majestic occasions! Our Father in heaven clearly describes in His word the kind of majesty that is good, by describing the beauty, wealth and glory of Solomon’s kingdom. There was **gold** everywhere. Beautiful music was heard and appreciated. Gorgeous gardens and decorations must have been available at many of the stately occasions under King Solomon—long before he turned away from God.

God is not “against” gorgeous music, beautiful things and majestic and deeply enjoyable occasions. Picture the magnificent **glory** around Jesus Christ at the throne of God even now! Read the description of the beauty and magnificence of God’s “Holy City” in Revelation 21!

Jesus Christ said, “I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more **abundantly**” (John 10:10). In this verse, the “abundant” life does not mean “eternal life.” Rather, it is talking about a full, enjoyable and **glorious** existence—which God obviously wants all of us to have now and in the future.

So, let us all set a higher standard—looking forward to the coming Government of God where we will be the **leaders** in Tomorrow’s World!

The Apostle Paul instructs us: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth (Colossians 3:1–2). As we truly meditate on the genuine future and the coming glorious government over the earth under Jesus Christ, our lives can have more meaning. Our **standards** can be raised. And we can focus, with enthusiasm, on how God will use us as leaders at that time—and how He can use us as Christ’s “ambassadors” even now, as we look forward to fulfilling the **purpose** for which God created us and called us—and in which He is blessing and leading us today.



Local Church News

Anniversaries

The Baton Rouge and New Orleans congregations recently honored three couples for their wedding anniversaries: **Mark and Dorothy Waggoner** celebrated 50 years on November 21, 2006. The Waggoners have been members of God's Church for 34 years. **Tom and Evelyn McGaha** celebrated 40 years of marriage on August 13, 2006. They serve the Baton Rouge congregation as deacon and deaconess and have been members of God's Church for 38 years. On December 25, 2006, **J.R. and Carolyn Wells** celebrated 30 years of marriage. Mr. & Mrs. Wells have been members of God's Church for 23 years. At a reception on December 16, 2006, the three couples were presented with a cake, refreshments and cards from the congregation.

Bob and Joyce Thiel, video hosts of the Arroyo Grande, California video group, celebrated their 25th wedding

anniversary during the Feast of Tabernacles in Antigua, Guatemala. The Thiels have been baptized members of God's Church for more than 25 years; they were married on October 10, 1981 at Ambassador Hall in Pasadena, California. Dr. and Mrs. Thiel were pleased to be able to celebrate their anniversary in Guatemala, where they found an elegant restaurant that had a private cave for their anniversary dinner.

Richard and Donna Tripp celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on October 27, 2006. Mr. Tripp is a deacon in the Chanute, Kansas video group. The Tripps have been members of God's Church for more than 33 years. The Tripps, who had taken a cruise earlier in the year to celebrate their anniversary, were guests of the Joplin, Missouri congregation at a reception in their honor on the Sabbath of November 4.

Births

Sergio and Vanessa Carvajal announce the birth of their son, **Sebastian Andres Carvajal**, on October 28, 2006. He weighed 6.4 pounds and was 20.4 inches long.

Mr. & Mrs. Sam Stingley of Rossville, Indiana are happy to announce the birth of their second daughter, **Cara Renae Stingley**, on November 24, 2006. She weighed 6 pounds, 10 ounces, and was 19 inches long. Her sister Emma Jo helped to welcome her home. The Stingleys attend the Indianapolis, Indiana, congregation

John and Amber Whitfield of Three Forks, Montana are pleased to announce the birth of their first child, **Samuel Hatch Whitfield**. He was born on September 22, 2006, weighing 5 pounds, 14 ounces. Grandparents Ron and Linda Colcord of Loyalton, California, and Ben and Mary-Pat Whitfield of Rawlins, Wyoming, were blessed to spend time with their first grandchild at the Feast of Tabernacles in Copper Mountain, Colorado.

Ordinations

Terrence Kennell of the Fort Lauderdale, Florida congregation was ordained as a deacon on the Sabbath of December 9, 2006, by Area Pastor Paul Shumway. Mr. Kennell will be serving the brethren in the Miami-Fort Lauderdale area.

On the Sabbath of November 18, 2006, **Errol C. Wade** of the Minneapolis, Minnesota congregation was ordained as an elder by Area Pastor Sheldon Monson. Mr. Wade had been serving as a deacon since May 1994. He will continue to serve the brethren in the Minneapolis area.

Wedding

Larry Smith and Kelly Mitchell of the Little Rock, Arkansas congregation were joined in holy matrimony on September 3 by Area Pastor Mr. Charles Ogwyn. The couple joyously celebrated with brethren, family, friends and co-workers. The happy groom (formerly of Las Vegas) and bride reside in Jacksonville, Arkansas.

In Loving Memory

Janelle Nell Cormier, 67, of the Lafayette, Louisiana congregation went to sleep in the peace of her home, surrounded by family, on October 1, 2006. She had courageously battled cancer for more than two years, always exhibiting faith. Baptized in 1981, Janelle Cormier was a member of God's Church for more than 25 years. Her zeal and dedication to God's way of life, her serving attitude and her profound love for her daughters will always be remembered. She will be greatly missed. She is survived by three daughters, Debbie (Clay) Griffin of Broussard, LA; Peggy Domingue of Lafayette, LA; and Living Church of God member Monica Cormier of Charlotte, North Carolina. Funeral and graveside services were conducted on October 3 in Scott, Louisiana by Mr. Charles Ogwyn.

Felix Dicum, 74, a long-time member of the London, England congregation, died on December 13, 2006. Felix had been a faithful member of the London congregation since 1963. He was born in a French enclave in India, and endured the occupation of Malaya by the Japanese. He first read the Plain Truth magazine in Malaya in 1947, at 15 years of age. He came to England soon after, then went to Ireland where he studied at Trinity College. The London congregation will sadly miss his kind, soft voice, and his faithful attendance right up until late October, when pancreatic and liver cancer disabled him from coming to services.

Funeral services were conducted on December 20 by Regional Pastor Rod King.

James F. Howell, 71, of Lafayette, Indiana, died October 21 of liver cancer. A retired high school math and chemistry teacher, he was baptized on a baptizing tour in 1960. Following retirement, he became very active in several local history projects. He is survived by two brothers and two nephews. Funeral services were conducted on October 27 by Mr. George Dellinger, of the Indianapolis, Indiana congregation.

Darrell Morrison, a deacon serving in the Phoenix, Arizona congregation, died suddenly on December 24, 2006. He was 46 years old. Though his death was very sudden, he did not seem to be in any pain. Well respected and full of zeal, his love for the brethren and the Work was evident to anyone who talked with him, and he served his family and the Church faithfully. He will be sorely missed.

Julia Hansen O'Neil, of Big Sandy, Montana, died November 6 following a two-year battle with cancer. She was 82 years old. She was an accomplished seamstress and was renowned for her cooking skills, especially her delicious homemade breads. She is survived by husband Frederick, son Kurt (Thelma) Hansen and daughter Carolyn (John) Boyd. She was preceded in death by her first husband, Charles

Hansen. A memorial service was conducted on November 10 by Mr. Arnold Lalum.

Joseph Stevenson, 78, a deacon serving the Living Church of God congregation in Northern Ireland died on December 17. A member of God's Church since 1958, he was ordained a deacon for the newly-established Irish congregation in Belfast in 1966, and served God actively until he was overcome by dementia in the final two years of his life. Mr. Henry Cooper conducted the funeral service on December 20.

Mary Elizabeth Hegvold died on December 17, 2006, at her daughter's home in Alpharetta, Georgia. She was 80 years old. Baptized in August 1955, she served as head of the Home Economics Department at each of Ambassador College's three campuses—Big Sandy (1964–73), Bricket Wood (1973–74) and Pasadena (1979–1989). She was preceded in death by her husband Sidney, a long-time faithful minister in God's Church, whom she met while serving as head of the Home Economics Department at the University of Tennessee. She is survived by her son Stephen, daughter Theresa Fenton (Niall) and two grandchildren. Mrs. Hegvold was a dedicated servant of God who touched the lives of thousands of students and Church members in a positive way through her teaching and her wonderful example. Mr. Davy Crockett conducted her funeral in her hometown of Pikeville, Tennessee, on December 21, 2006.

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 lcnc@lcn.org).

Commentary

Turkey Visit: A “Win-Win” Scenario for the Pope

By Wallace Smith

The world watched with interest (and, perhaps, apprehension) last November when Pope Benedict XVI undertook his first excursion to a Muslim nation. The common thought was that the Vatican had large stakes riding on the visit, and that the pope had to tread carefully.

However, if one takes a step back to look at Rome's long-term goals for the future, the final analysis suggests the visit to Turkey was a “win-win” scenario for Benedict.

On one hand, the pope has stressed a desire for “reciprocity”—that is, he wants Roman Catholics in Islamic nations to possess the same expansive freedom to worship and spread their faith that Muslims possess in “Christian” nations. Seeing how desperately Turkey—a generally secular Muslim nation—wishes to be a part of the European Union (EU), this would be just the place to focus his effort to achieve major concessions on this front.

However, the presence in Turkey of abject poverty and other factors that promote the growth of religious extremism makes such concessions a “hard sell.” As a 43-year-old Turkish computer salesman stated, “He's coming to advance the ambitions of the Christian world. I don't want him to come” (Associated Press, November 27, 2006). Comments such as this—as well as the many protests the pope's visit inspired—only encourage the conclusion that concessions are, at best, very unlikely.

Yet, while it might seem like a failure if Turkey refuses to yield to the pope's call for increased religious liberty for non-Muslims, this failure would actually provide support for a different victory Benedict is

seeking: increased European resistance to Turkey's bid for EU membership.

The Vatican wants a Roman Catholic Europe—a fact visible to anyone with eyes to see. Pope John Paul II strongly admonished a slowly uniting Europe to return to its Roman Catholic “roots,” and his successor to the papal throne has previously offered strong words in support of such an idea.

The Associated Press article cited above reminds us that in 2004, the man now called Pope Benedict XVI firmly stated, “Turkey has always represented a different continent, in permanent contrast to Europe.” In fact, he even encouraged Turkey to unite with neighboring Arab nations to form their own union (EUobserver, August 16, 2004)—exactly the outcome that many Western politicians fear would transpire should the EU reject Turkey. A very bold stance, indeed, in today's environment—but bold stances are born out of firm convictions, and Benedict is firmly dedicated to seeing a Catholic Europe come to pass.

Some commentators have noted that Turkey's Prime Minister, Tayyip Erdogan, claimed that the pope while in Turkey expressed his church's support for that nation's entrance into the EU—an apparent reversal of Benedict's previous stance. But a careful reading of the Vatican's meticulously crafted official response to Erdogan suggests another interpretation—that the pope will be glad to do what he can to help Erdogan's nation enter the EU—if Turkey continues to make the concessions that have been demanded, which include increased religious freedom for the spread of Roman Catholicism in that nation. Win-win.

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.